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The Story of Us

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"For you, a thousand times over"

- Khaled Hosseini

Abstract

Global atrocity and conflict has dramatically increased the number of displaced persons, refugees, and asylum seekers looking for resettlement opportunities. Throughout history, the United States has resettled the most refugees despite lack of public approval. In recent years, xenophobia has been exacerbated by vehement attacks of refugees by the media and people in power. *The Story of Us* set out to study the use of storytelling as an intervention method for toxic cycles of xenophobia. The event was held in Manchester, NH, a city with a long history of immigrant and refugee presence which has faced recent backlash. The event was free and open to the public. It utilized storytelling and an art gallery to demonstrate the vivacity and diversity of refugee experiences in the United States. The results of *The Story of Us* suggested that storytelling is an engaging way to educate people about the experiences of refugees in the U.S and raised questions about how it can contribute to the development of more inclusive and welcoming communities.

Executive Summary

Since 1975, the United States has resettled over three million refugees, making it the leading refugee resettlement country in the world. Despite this, the country has lacked public approval of their resettlement efforts. Over the last seventy years, the United States has both passed and rescinded geographically and ideologically discriminatory legislation that restricted certain demographics of people from entering the country. All the while, the presence of xenophobia has made become increasingly visible and dangerous. In 2016, Dictionary.com announced that "xenophobia" was the word of the year, following a presidential election that was founded on vehement attacks of refugees and immigrants.

Xenophobia is toxic to individuals and communities. It hinders growth and development through the promotion of division. Literature suggests that storytelling is a medium of communication that encourages empathy and challenges biases often perpetuated by the media and other people. *The Story of Us* is rooted in theories that combat uninterrupted cycles of "othering". It set out to identify and intervene in cycles of xenophobia using the timeless art of storytelling.

The two-hour event was held at Jupiter Hall in Manchester, NH, a city with a long history of immigrant and refugee presence which has faced backlash in recent years. It featured an art gallery displaying the portraits, stories, and personal belonging of ten refugees from seven different countries; as well as interactive storytelling sessions with four refugees from local communities. The event was both free and open to the public. It attracted over 120 attendees and the attention of news outlets such as NHPR and ManchesterInkLink.

The results of the event were positive. Participants agreed that storytelling was an engaging way to educate people about the experiences of refugees in the United States. Many

participants identified that they would be taking future action in refugee issues. It is important because it implies the power and universality of storytelling as a low-cost means of engagement. It also suggests that the logistical framework worked and could be adapted and used to educate people about other underrepresented communities. Most importantly, the event alludes to the significance of community engagement in fostering more inclusive and welcoming communities.

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The Story of Us

The United States has a complicated history with refugee resettlement. During the years 1948 to 1960 the United States passed geographically and ideologically discriminatory legislation to restrict certain demographics of people from entering the country. It was not until the Refugee Act of 1980 that the United States incorporated the inclusive and neutral definition of "refugee" set forth by the 1967 United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The U.N. defines a refugee as any person outside of their country of nationality who has "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion..." (United Nations, 1967). The adoption of the U.N's definition of refugee and the unanimous support of the 1980 Act alluded to a future of equitable admission of refugees in the United States (Anker, 1983).

Conflict and humanitarian crisis in nations like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cuba, Soviet Union, Vietnam, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Burma, Syria, Somalia, and Iraq have greatly increased the number of refugees and asylum seekers across the globe. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that 65.3 million people were displaced by the end of 2015. Of that total, roughly 21.3 million were refugees while the rest were internally displaced persons or asylum seekers. In response to the rise of global mass displacement, the United States raised the refugee admission ceiling from 85,000 to 111,000 in FY 2017. This conveyed the message that the United States was opening her arms to people looking for relief (Zong & Batalova, 2017).

Despite the United States' seemingly welcoming policies for refugee admission, the citizens have seldom approved of resettlement there. In the early years of the Second World War,

nearly 67% of Americans disapproved of granting admission to political refugees escaping

European dictatorships. Public discontent persisted as nearly 57% of Americans expressed

disapproval of domestic European refugee resettlement in a 1948 poll. Congress dramatically

raised immigration quotes for European refugees under the 1948 Displaced Persons Act despite

public dissatisfaction (Desilver, 2015).

Notwithstanding circumstances of global conflict, Americans maintained their

displeasure of refugee resettlement efforts. When South Vietnam collapsed in April 1975,

President Gerald Ford promptly established a task force to oversee resettlement of Indochinese

refugees. Within a few months, over 131,000 refugees were resettled in the United States (Elliot,

2007). Nonetheless, a poll taken in May 1975 revealed that 49% of participants did not support

Indochinese refugee resettlement in the U.S (Desilver, 2015). Similarly, 62% of participants in a

CBS News/New York Time poll disapproved of President Carter raising the immigration quotes

for Vietnamese, Chinese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees in June 1979, only four years later.

Evidently, the Ford and Carter administrations' enthusiasm to assist refugees was not shared

amongst the general public (Desilver, 2015).

The dissonance between public opinion and policy implementation heightened in the late

20th century. When Fidel Castro opened the port of Mariel in 1980, 125,000 Cubans came to the

United States to evade communism (Capó, 2017). According to a CBS/New York Times poll,

nearly 71% of people disapproved of them (Desilver, 2015). This discontentment increased to an

80% opposition rating during the second Cuban emigration in 1994 (Desilver, 2015). The

disapproval ratings were the highest recorded in nearly fifty years.

Disapprobation continues to rise. A recent poll administered in October 2016 revealed

that 87% of Trump supporters believed the United States does not have a responsibility to admit

Syrian refugees despite ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria (Krogstad, Radford, 2017). Unlike

prior periods of disapproval, recent policies have adopted the popular opinion. In January 2017,

President Donald Trump suspended the US Refugee Admissions Programme and banned

admission of Syrian refugees indefinitely.

      Clearly, the adoption of anti-refugee sentiments in United States policy is not without

precedence. However, it is imperative to consider the rationales behind such exclusionary

measures. Oftentimes, people have misinformed understandings of refugees and the challenges

they face. A common myth communicates that refugees willingly immigrate to the United States.

However, "refugees", as defined by the United Nations, are people escaping persecution (United

Nations, 1967). In 2015, 25% of applications submitted to the United Nations Refugee Agency

were survivors of torture or violence. Additionally, 34% of applicants were refugees in dire need

of protection (IRC, 2016). Another myth maintains that refugees do not contribute to society. In

truth, refugees invest money into their communities by starting businesses and paying taxes just

like U.S citizens. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) affirms that 85% of the refugees

they resettle begin working within 180 days (IRC, 2016).

      Myths and other misunderstandings construct false narratives of refugee identity and

experience that reinforce and perpetuate stereotypes. These fallacies can develop into toxic

xenophobia which manifests into both overt and covert discrimination and dehumanization by

communities at individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels (UN High Commissioner for

Refugees, 2015). Individuals who preserve xenophobia are less likely to engage with people

identified as refugees, or support laws and programs that assist them (Mayo, 2017). This is

clearly demonstrated by public opposition to refugee resettlement and legislation in America

after World War I (Desilver, 2015). Thus, communities morph into exclusive entities where

racism, nationalism, and religious intolerance separate "us" from "them". In result, the xenophobic chasm between refugees and communities deepens.

Addressing the division between refugees and communities seems daunting, but it doesn't need to be. Restoring a cultural divide can start on an interpersonal level with conversation. This project will explore the use of refugee alternative narrative to start dialogue within a community. By harnessing the power of storytelling, people are introduced to the idea that "they" are not so different from "them". If there was a space for refugees to tell their stories, individuals would have the opportunity to confront their own biases. Community discourse can be the first steps in addressing a society that is increasingly fearful of what and who they do not know.

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate that cultural divisions can be combated by dialogue. By harnessing alternative narrative and creating a space for proactive conversation, individuals will increase interest and understanding of refugee identities and experiences. This knowledge will give people the tools to combat prejudice, racism, and xenophobia in their communities. In result, communities will work to change exclusive and xenophobic culture thus allowing refugees to thrive in a welcoming and inclusive society.

Literature Review

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees identifies the United States as the leading refugee resettlement country in the world. Despite resettling over three million refugees since 1975, the U.S maintains a complicated relationship with refugee legislation (UNHCR, 2017). In the face of impending humanitarian crises, refugee resettlement has always been circumstantial to the self-interest and inherent biases of the United States

(Anker, 1983).   In result, refugees and immigrants have been "othered" by means of isolation and mistreatment as a result of xenophobic practices and policies (UN High Commissioner for Refugees 2015). This is best depicted through chronological analysis of United States' refugee legislation after World War I.

History of Refugee Legislation in the United States

At the end of the First World War, the United States experienced an influx in immigration. The Emergency Quota Act of 1921 was passed as a reactive measure and reflected the fears Americans had about the foreigners (Immigration Act of 1921, 2012). This legislation established a 350,000-immigration ceiling, less than half of the legal immigration traffic seen the previous year. Strict quotas were implemented for all countries aside from northwestern Europe. Additionally, the policies continued to ban Asian immigrants from entering the United States (Immigration Act of 1921, 2012). Such ideology was reiterated when further restrictions were implemented under President Calvin Coolidge in 1924. President Coolidge spoke upon the newly decreased immigration ceilings at his Presidential Nominee address and said, "Restricted immigration is not an offensive but purely a defensive action" (Coolidge, 1924).

Immigration restrictions remained in place until the Second World War. Mass atrocity and widespread destruction of Europe uprooted millions of people. The Roosevelt administration was pressured to accept refugees during this time (Zhao, 2017). Franklin D. Roosevelt took decisive action and established the War Refugee Board on January 22, 1944 via Executive Order 9417. It was meant to streamline refugee resettlement procedures by helping non-governmental agencies with their respective processes (Zhao, 2017). While delivering the executive order, Roosevelt claimed that the United States needed to, "take all measures within its power to rescue the victims of enemy oppression who are in imminent danger of death and otherwise to afford

such victims all possible relief and assistance" (Roosevelt, 1944). This is indicative of a shift in immigration sentiments in the United States.

When the Second World War ended, doors for refugee resettlement in the United States opened both figuratively and literally. The United States and other global leaders needed to resettle over seven million dislocated Europeans (Zhao, 2017). In response, President Truman issued a directive in 1945 allowing over 40,000 displaced persons to enter the United States. Additionally, President Truman granted lawful permanent resident status to over 1,000 refugees who had already been resettled (Refugee Timeline, 2017). This was the beginning of a series of *ad* hoc refugee legislation that was implemented into the framework of immigration quotas. Acts such as the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 admitted more than 305,000 people in two years, nearly as many as the total the Emergency Quota Act of 1921 (Zhao, 2017).

Immigration and refugee parameters relaxed during the Cold War years that followed (Zhao, 2017). The United States allowed waves of refugees and asylum seekers to resettle within her borders. The Refugee Act of 1953 and 1957 issued non-quota immigrant visas to those fleeing communist countries such as China, Hungary, and Cuba (Refugee Timeline, 2017). President Lyndon B. Johnson admitted Cubans under the attorney general's parole authority in an "open-door" fashion despite dissolvent of diplomatic relations (Refugee Timeline, 2017).

It was not until the 1965 Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act that the United States added a refugee-specific admissions category to immigration law (Anker, 1983). The United Nations gave legal parameters to the term, "refugee" in the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and then amended the definition in the 1967 United Nations Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. The Protocol established a refugee as any person outside of their country of nationality who has " a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race,

religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion..." (United

Nations, 1967). The new definition ensured the 1951 Convention could be used universally.

Despite the large number of refugees resettled, the United States did not adopt the new definition

until the Refugee Act of 1980 (Refugee Timeline, 2017).

In April 1975, the fall of Saigon ended the Vietnam War and sent a wave of Southeast

Asian refugees to the United States. From 1975-1980 multiple refugee programs were passed by

executive authority allowing over 300,000 refugees from Vietnam and Cambodia to enter the US

(Zhao, 2017). In response to the continuous humanitarian crisis, Congress passed The Refugee

Act of 1980. The law adopted the UN definition of refugee, attempted to make the admission and

resettlement a more equitable process. Furthermore, the legislation put forth comprehensive

protective measures for refugees. (Anker, 1983).

In 1978, Congress created the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy to

evaluate the "social, economic, and political" effects of existing immigration legislation and

processes (Martin, 1982). The Commission collected data for two years before publishing their

final report in 1981. The report presented Congress with 67 recommendations to stabilize

immigration volume (Leibowitz, 1991; Martin, 1982). Their suggestions predicated the

Immigration Act of 1990, which raised the ceiling for admission of legal immigrants and

imposed strict regulations on illegal immigration (Leibowitz, 1991). The legislation gave

preference to immigrants that were family sponsored or employer based. Despite the seemingly

altruistic increase in available immigration visas, Lawyers Brian Alder and Beth Jarrett argue

that the Immigration Act was discriminatory (Alder & Jarrett, 1992). The act set forth selective

requisites that were partial to highly skilled workers and affluent immigrants. The predilection

for "elite" immigrants consequently restricted admission for "unskilled, semi-skilled, and

refugees" (Alder & Jarrett, 1992). The Immigration Act of 1990 demonstrated America's bias for those they deemed the most valuable or productive.

Laws that adversely affected immigrants and refugees were adopted in 2001. On September 11, 2001, nearly 3,000 people died in a large-scale terrorist attack orchestrated by al-Qaeda, a radical Islamic terrorist organization (Taylor, 2011). Just weeks after the attack, President George W. Bush signed in Public Law 106-56, Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism, also known as the Patriot Act of 2001, on October 26, 2001. The new legislation expanded the legal definitions of "terrorist", "terrorist organizations", and what constituents support of such agents; while granting the federal government power to detain any person who, as determined by the Secretary of State, meets criteria involving them knowingly in crimes relating to terrorism (Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism, 2001).

The new legal understandings of terrorism organizations and what actions support them had inadvertent effects on the refugee community. The Patriot Act did not account for context or circumstances under which "material support" was given to newly identified terrorist organizations. The law categorized "pro-democracy anti-authoritarian organizations" as terrorist groups; thereby criminalizing any refugee who may have supported them in protest of communist, dictatorial, or fascist regimes. Further, it did not account for material support of terrorist organizations under duress (Sinnar, 2003; Sridharan, 2008). In result, only 27,110 refugees were resettled in fiscal year 2002, less than half of 69, 304 refugees resettled in 2001(Sridharan, 2008).

To further protect national security, George W. Bush enacted the Homeland Security Act in November 2002 (Pearl, 2004). The legislation dissolved the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) agency and reorganized twenty-two federal agencies under a Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The agency's purpose is to prevent terrorism, reduce vulnerability, and develop terrorist attack recovery methods and procedures (The Homeland Security Act, 2002). DHS oversees all national security measures; including immigration services, border patrol, investigations, detention, and deportation of noncitizens (Arnold, 2011). Prior to September 11, 2001 the refugee processing time was roughly one year. Establishment of the Patriot Act and creation of DHS has increased processing time to two years due to heightened security measures (U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 2017). Today, The Department of Homeland Security remains an active player in the United States' refugee resettlement process.

The Refugee Resettlement Process in the United States Today

Out of all the people entering the United States, refugees are the most carefully screened for potential security and public health threats (U.S Department of State, 2017). Despite years of legislation and joint international effort, the refugee resettlement process in the United States is arduous at best. The resettlement practice is separated into two processes, overseas and US agency adjudication (Refugee Council USA, 2004). Both processes are comprehensive and highly regulated. In its entirety, the procedure involves nine resettlement agencies and eight US Federal Government Agencies in addition to multiple interviews, security, background, and biometric tests (UNHCR, 2017).

The first half of the process is orchestrated solely by the UNHCR outside of the US. All refugees complete a standard UNHCR registration and interview process. Women, girls, and

children at risk, survivors of violence and/or torture, families in need of reunification, and those with medical needs are deemed the most vulnerable The UNHCR identifies those cases and refers them to host countries such as the United States for relocation. Out of the entire global refugee population less than 1% are referred for settlement (UNHCR, 2017).

Those that are referred to the United States for resettlement begin a comprehensive vetting process that can take up to two years. During this time, refugees are often living in refugee camps or urban areas with lack of access to food, water, and adequate shelter. Refugees are at high risk for arrest for detention, exploitation, gender-based violence, and human trafficking in both camps and urban areas (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2009).

In the first step of the resettlement process, the Department of State funded Resettlement Support Center (RSC) receives UNHCR case files and conducts preliminary interviews. RSC's Refugee Admission Processing System (WRAPS) stores, cross references, and authenticates all the information before sending relevant data to other US agencies for conduction of background checks. Refugees are subjected to multiple security checks by national security agencies such as the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Department of Defense, Department of State, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the National Counterterrorism Center. These agencies identify potential and existing security threats such as criminal history or ties to terrorism. All data is sent back to DHS for further review (U.S Department of State, 2017).

The Department of Homeland facilitates the third step of the resettlement process by analyzing the results from the security checks and conducting in-person interviews. These are strategic approaches in cross referencing information with data that has was conducted by RSC. If the refugee provides consistent information, the DHS is asked to make a decision of whether or not the refugee will continue with the resettlement process If so, biometric data is taken,

compared to the FBI, DHS, and U.S Department of Defense databases, and reviewed by DHS. Refugees that are flagged during this screening are removed from the resettlement process (U.S Department of State, 2017).

Cases approved for continuation are subjected to further medical screening in search of contagious diseases. Those who pass must complete a cultural orientation class which introduces American cultural beliefs, practices, and norms. Then, the nine refugee resettlement agencies review applicant case files and choose a resettlement location. Once a location is agreed on, the International Office of Migration (IOM) arranges travel. Representatives from the resettlement agencies meet the refugees at the airport upon landing and assist them in settling into their new homes (UNHCR, U.S Department of State, 2017).

Despite a lengthy journey to America, not everyone is received with kindness. Such notions are depicted at the institutional level through racist and xenophobic refugee legislation in the United States. These attitudes are not unique to institutions as they disseminate throughout society.

Defining and Explaining Xenophobia

The term xenophobia is derived from the Greek words, "xenos", meaning "stranger" and "phobos", meaning "fear". It alludes to an aversion of strangers and is characterized by the attitudes and behaviors that malign those deemed non-native of a dominant social or national identity. (Yakushko, 2009; Inter-Agency, 2001). In recent years the term has come to understand attitudes and behaviors towards new immigrants and refugees in the United States. The upsurge in xenophobic sentiment is thought to be related to conflicting worldviews and truths between native and incoming populations. (Yakushko, 2009; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2017).

Causes of Xenophobia

When considering the root causes of xenophobia, it is imperative to analyze ideology that perpetuates fear in out-group members. Nativism has historically referred to the animosity towards non-native people on the basis of national, cultural, or religious difference (Friedman, 1960). The term's history is rooted in the Protestant American antipathy towards Catholic immigrants in the 19th century (Friedman, 2017). Since then the word has become synonymous with phrases like, "xenophobic nationalism" which advocates for political and cultural coherence. Such notions expand upon the non-native opposition of 19th century nativism to encompass norms and ideas that are non-native (Friedman, 2017). Sentiments of this nature establishes and reaffirms the divisions between in-group and out-group members. This process of "othering" perpetuates negative information, increases cultural gaps, and cultivates fear of non-natives therefore embodying xenophobia.

Ethnocentrism, like nativism, sustains divisions in society relevant to their social identity. Ethnocentrism is defined by ideology that values one's ethnic group and deems it superior to other groups ("Ethnocentric"). The term was introduced in 1906 by William Graham Sumner to explain the way in which fear of outsiders maintains social order by virtue of group loyalty (Kleg, 1993). Sumner suggests that ethnocentrism is a unifying ideology for in-group members and detrimental for out-group members. It is characteristic for ethnocentric groups to isolate themselves from the "other" as the disunions are exacerbated by maintenance of social hierarchy (Kleg, 1993). This perpetuating stereotypes and lack of familiarity which results in xenophobia as in groups fear strangers.

The International Labour Office, International Organization for Migration, and Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights argue that xenophobia and

ethnocentrism are byproducts of rapid globalization (Inter-Agency, 2001). Globalization refers to

the dissemination of people, technology, knowledge, and financial markets across borders

(Machida, 2012). Globalization offers global social, economic, and political opportunity for

growth. However, it also exposes migrants to xenophobia and violence (Inter-Agency, 2001). A

group processes and intergroup relations study was conducted by Dr. Gal Ariely in 2001 which

directly correlated increase in migrants with increases in xenophobic attitudes and behaviors

(Ariely, 2011). This could correspond with increased ethnocentric or nativist ideology as their

roots might suggest. Regardless, they are not the only explanations for xenophobia.

Theories behind Xenophobia

Xenophobia can be traced to social psychological theories explaining the perception,

establishment, and maintenance of social hierarchies (Sanchez-Mazas & Licata, 2015). Realistic

Conflict and Social Identity Theory explore the ways in which people relate to each other and

engage with their environment. Both theories maintain in-group and out-group hierarchies.

Realistic Conflict Theory conceptualizes intergroup conflict as a product of competition

over limited resources. With a finite amount of supplies and services, native or "in-group"

members are hesitant or unwilling to give up what they believe to be entitled to. The addition of,

"out-group" members into society increases the demand of theoretically finite resources but not

the supply. Correspondingly, in-group members cultivate and encourage anti-out-group attitudes

and behaviors in light of the competition. Such sentiments can manifest themselves into

xenophobia as demonstrated by contemporary media suggesting refugees exploit the welfare

system and steal jobs from Americans (Yakusho, 2009; Sanchez-Mazas & Licata, 2015).

Social Identity theory, like realistic conflict theory, values group membership. It suggests

that a person's social category is defining of their being and relational to the assumed

characteristics of the social group (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). It emphasizes the relationship between social identities; such as national, political and religious, and the notion of one's self concept. This theory assumes that people maintain or improve their self-image by constantly comparing their social identity to those around them. Out-group identities are concretized through perpetual reaffirmation of in-group identities and establishment of homogeneity norms. Social Identity Theory can cause xenophobia sentiments, behaviors, or actions if the in-group feels their social identity is threatened by a shift in social or cultural values and practices (Sanchez-Mazas & Licata, 2015). This is exemplified by Americans who demand immigrant and refugees to speak English in public settings; different languages threaten the homogeneity of the United States therefore threatening the social identity of the majority group.

Storytelling as a Pedagogy

Human experiences are shaped by identity; the sense of self that encompasses beliefs and values. Jessica Senehi and contributing authors of, *Dreams of our Grandmothers: Discovering the Call for Social Justice through Storytelling*, assert that human identity is multifaceted, intersectional, constantly evolving, and therefore incoherent (Senehi, et al., 2009). According to social identity theory, the developmental process of identity can promote exclusionary ideology such as xenophobia (Sanchez-Mazas & Licata, 2015). Senehi, reaffirms that group identities' can internalize intercommunal conflict and reinforce division if negative cycles are not intervened (Senehi, 2002). Thus, interventions for intercommunal conflict must encompass "in-group"-"out-group" reconciliation of identity and experience.

Authors and peace builders, Jessica Senehi and Lloyd Kornelsen, advocate for the use of storytelling to address intercommunal conflict (Senehi, 2012; Kornelson, 2013). Certainly, humans have used storytelling to communicate, educate, construct identity, and convey

experiences for millennia (Senehi, 2002). Researchers Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin argue that humans are "storytelling organisms" by nature and that people understand the world within the narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Humans are attracted to stories because they are expressions of identity; as they are articulations of culture, values, and beliefs (Senehi, et al., 2009). Narrative is the method in which people make sense of chaos and assign meaning to identity and experiences that would otherwise have little in isolation. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Storytelling is transformational because it cultivates mutual recognition through awareness. Expression of personal narrative challenges the perceptions of morality and identity through dissemination of knowledge and memory in a way that is accessible to all (Senehi, 2002). Similar sentiments are expressed in by Kornelson in, *The Role of Storytelling at the Intersection of Transformative Conflict Resolution and Peace Education*, where he argues that storytelling elicits mutual recognition which acknowledges agency, offers dignity, fosters trust, and encourages understanding of differences (Kornelson, 2013).

Simultaneously, storytelling acts as socialization mechanism in which the audience can challenge their biases and perceptions of identity and power (Senehi, 2002). This process uses an alternative narrative to challenge myths, stereotypes, and false perceptions perpetuated by realistic conflict theory. Through exposure, storytelling works to de-escalate conflict through cultivation of empathy which reduces, "stereotyping, dehumanization, and demonization" of "out-group" members" (Sanchez-Mazas & Licata, 2015; Kornelson, 2013).

Arguably one of the most important aspects of storytelling, is the ability to transform "in-group"-"out-group" mentality. Storytelling combats negative manifestations of social identity theory by encouraging commonality in the midst of diversity. Kornelsen argues that personal

narratives address the opposing human desires of autonomy and independence (Kornelson, 2013). According to Senehi, the balancing of these desires correlates with the human desire for shared identity (Senehi, 2002). The storytelling process encourages vulnerability and empathy necessary to connect with another person. Thus, the storyteller-listener relationship shifts from "us-them" to "I-thou". This shift is attributed to new recognition of, and agency assumed by, former out-group members. It is symbolic of early relationship building between parties (Kornelson, 2013; Senehi, 2002).

Storytelling deconstructs barriers preventing communities from engaging with each other. The expression of personal narratives allows people to acknowledge history, challenge biases, and recognize various systems of oppression (Chin & Rudelius-Palmer, 2010). Thus, storytelling could be a method of intervention for intercommunal conflict such as xenophobia as it promotes empathy, growth, understanding, and relationship building.

Thinking Forward

The United States has a complicated history with refugee resettlement; and the American people have an equally conflicted relationship with foreigners. Humanitarian crises and global conflict has greatly impacted the volume of refugee admissions in America despite public opposition (Desilver, 2015). Refugee resettlement and other immigration patterns have greatly diversified American communities. This transformation has attributed to increasing prevalence of xenophobic behaviors, practices, and policies that target refugees and other noncitizens (Inter-Agency, 2001).

The cultural divide between refugees and community is a product of division, absence of relationship, and miscommunication. Solutions to such intercommunal conflict can be found in community discourse opportunities that encourage empathy, educate, and foster trust (Kornelson,

2013). By utilizing the alternative narrative of refugees through storytelling, communities can cultivate safe spaces that are conducive to cross-cultural dialogue. Exposure to refugee's personal narrative will foster interest and nurture understanding of refugee identities and experiences. In the process, people will challenge their prejudices and biases by recognizing platforms of commonality. Thus, storytelling will bestow the knowledge and tools necessary to combat prejudice, discrimination, and xenophobia for more inclusive communities.

Project Plan

The project plan utilized storytelling to prevent and intervene cycles of xenophobia. It is important to challenge the public's conception of refugees in an age of increasing division and fear. It aimed to raise awareness and understanding of the experiences of refugees in the United States through spoken word and a photo gallery.

Situation Statement

Global atrocity and conflict has dramatically increased the number of displaced persons, refugees, and asylum seekers looking for resettlement opportunities. Historically, the United States has been the biggest receiver of refugee families and individuals. In 2016 alone, the U.S. resettled 85,000 refugees from 79 countries (U.S Department of State, 2017). While the US has a deep history in refugee resettlement it also has an equally pervasive history of xenophobia.

Today, we see an exacerbation of fear and hatred towards refugees manifesting itself into United States policy and civil society. In November 2016, Dictionary.com announced that 'xenophobia' was the word of the year alluding to a sharp increase in prevalence and threat (Steinmetz, 2016). Increasingly, our communities are divided by what we don't know or understand about those who look, speak, and act differently than expected.

Statement of Purpose and Goals

This project used alternative narrative to educate the Manchester community on the realities of the refugee experience. *The Story of Us* created space for local refugees to tell their stories and dialogue with community members. Thus, gave participants an opportunity to reflect on and challenge their implicit biases while building trust and reciprocity with new people. The community event also gave attendees the tools to combat prejudice, racism, and xenophobia in their community thus fostering more inclusive and welcoming environments for all.

Gallery Walkthrough

- Participants will observe productions of refugee's stories

- Participants will compare and contrast refugee alternative narrative to their own experiences

- Participants will recognize the impacts of xenophobia on refugee experiences

Panel

- Participants will recognize the impacts of xenophobia on refugee experiences

- Participants will engage in honest dialogue with refugees

- Participants will practice intergroup communication skills such as listening well, expressing emotion, and asking clarifying questions

- Participants will compare and contrast refugee alternative narrative to their own experiences

- Participants will identify tools they can use to combat prejudice, racism, and xenophobia

Target Audience and Stakeholders

Audience	Refugees living in Manchester, Manchester residents, local high school students, local/state politicians, Merrimack students

Stakeholders	Local refugee resettlement agencies, ethnic community organizations, Jupiter Hall, local high schools, local businesses,

Incentive for Engagement

Stakeholders: Refugee Participants

Incentive: Refugee individuals and families living in Manchester are looking to combat xenophobia, foster a welcoming environment, and increase the accessibility of alternative narratives. This event was an opportunity for refugees to share their stories with dignity and respect. *The Story of Us* deconstructed barriers preventing refugees and other community members from engaging because of fear or lack of accessibility. In the process, participants were given tools to combat xenophobia in the community and encourage welcoming spaces.

Stakeholders: Manchester Residents

Incentive: This event educated and engaged the residents of Manchester by channeling their own self-interests and encouraging them to participate. Many residents are concerned with the refugee resettlement happening in Manchester and its impact on the overall quality of life there. This event gave residents the opportunity to break down cultural barriers that inspire xenophobia and tension within the community. Such prejudices elicit fear and foster negative community presumptions such as lack of safety and general city decline. This event gave residents and refugees an opportunity to build trust and reciprocity in effort to combat implicit biases, build community, and neutralize tensions.

Stakeholders: Refugee Resettlement Agencies

Incentive: Local refugee resettlement agencies were incentivized to engage in *The Story of Us* because it was a low-involvement commitment that reflected their missions, visions, and values. These agencies were interested in meeting the needs of their clients, attracting resources, positive publicity, and furthering the cultural competency of the community. Further, they had potential self interest in recruiting volunteers, staff, and board members. This event assisted in them in all of those endeavors through elimination of xenophobia, community building, utilization of key partner resources, engagement with participants, and assisting with the educational components of the event.

Stakeholders: Manchester Public Schools

Incentive: The public schools in Manchester, NH are incredibly diverse. There is a large refugee and immigrant population that attends them. However, there is still a clear division between the many ethnic, national, and religious groups that coexist within them. The Manchester public schools are interested in alleviating cultural segmentation through education and dialogue. This event gave students the tools to recognize their own biases and combat them in their daily lives. This opportunity also fostered cultural competency within the student and staff body to promote diversity and equity. Not only was this beneficial to the school environment but it was positive publicity for the district.

Stakeholders: Jupiter Hall

Incentive: Jupiter Hall promotes community engagements through diversity and arts. They are heavily involved in the Manchester community and support local initiatives that align with their mission and values. This event gave the public an opportunity for cultural diverse education and dialogue while being responsive to shifts in the community and

society. A partnership allowed the gallery to further their mission, gain positive publicity, and attract new clientele to their establishment.

Stakeholders: Local/State Politicians

Incentive: Local and state politicians such as Joyce Craig, Jeanne Shaheen, and Maggie Hassan did fulfill self-interests through engagement in *The Story of Us*. These politicians are attentive to community health and relations, advocating for their constituents, and recruitment of supporters for publicity purposes such as reelection. This event promoted community building, addressed major tensions in the community, and gave participants the tools to make their respective communities more equitable and welcoming. *The Story of Us* channeled those political self-interests through a targeted outreach, invitation, and partnership.

Stakeholders: Ethnic Community Organizations

Incentive: The ethnic community organizations in Manchester are very involved in local activities, service, and outreach. For many, they act as second and third resettlement agencies- working to further establish groups in the Manchester communities. *The Story of Us* gave these organizations an opportunity to fulfil their missions by promoting equity, community, and diversity. Additionally, this event was an opportunity to increase membership and member involvement through recruitment of event participants. Ethnic community organizations had an opportunity for good publicity and betterment of community relations,

Stakeholders: Local Business Owners

Incentive: Local business owners fulfilled self-interest through partnership and engagement with *The Story of Us*. Many business owners are constantly looking to attract

quality customers and expand their clientele. This event was an opportunity for free

publicity that expanded their customer base and improved their image through

community involvement.

Outreach Methods

In effort to maximize community engagement utilized a combination of targeted internal

and external community resources through traditional outreach approaches and social media.

Traditional Approaches:

Print, Save the Dates, Invitations, Flyers, Information half sheets

There is a large part of the Manchester community that relies heavily on printed material

to get their information. These was used to keep the community's attention for the event and

expand the demographic of participants beyond those who are reliant solely on media sources. In

addition, specific save the date marketing and invitations will ask for RSVPs by the end of

March to honor event capacity.

Local newspapers, Local news stations

Local news stations such as WMUR, NHPR, Manchester Ink Link, and the Union Leader

are receptive of community events and often highlight those organized by residents who come

back to engage in the community. Press releases were crafted in partnership with Jupiter Hall and

sent out to local news outlets. Local news sources attract large audiences or varying

demographics and greatly increased the turnout at the event.

Online Calendars

Residents of Manchester, among many other communities, utilize various online

calendars and event websites. Such databanks include, Manchester event pages, NHSpin360,

EventBrite, GoNH, Meet Up, and others. Many of the event sites were free and relatively easy to

create accounts on. Posting The Story of Us on these websites increased visibility and attendee

turn out.

Phone calls, Meetings

Emphasizing more personal means of communication in outreach effort helped build

rapport and encourage engagement. Methods suh as phone calls and meetings allowed potential

participants and stakeholders to dialogue about the inspiration and purposes of the event that

were not be conveyed by the poster. Personal relationship building encouraged people to invest

in this event.

Email

Email is a relatively effective method of community outreach and marketing. It is a quick

and efficient way to introduce the event and communicate updates about the planning process to

a large pool of people. Email was the main method of communication between event speakers,

performers, venue, and those interested in the event. My Merrimack College email was on the

event posters and all posts. Many people emailed me questions about the event using this email.

Social Media:

Twitter

The Story of Us utilized my personal twitter account and that of Jupiter Hall to give

updates regarding the planning process and event information will be posted. I also used this

platform to share news articles, pictures, and videos relating to refugee resettlement, the refugee

crisis, and fostering welcoming communities. Twitter offers high visibility rates and low-

commitment from those who want to share or favorite any tweets from our page. This will also

be a way to measure visibility of the event through likes, shares, and mentions.

Facebook

I used Facebook as a way to market the event, dialogue with community members, and share relevant information. I used my networks and their resources to market my event through the creation of a Facebook event page. The event page allowed me to post updates, excerpts of refugee narrative, and share relevant articles of events pertaining to the themes in *The Story of Us.* Additionally, was used to measure attendance and internet traffic. Sharing an event page is an easy way to generate wide publicity.

Responsibilities Chart

Name	Organization	Responsibilities	Contact Info
Kya Roumimper	Merrimack College	Logistics, communicating with partners about expectations and timelines, securing speakers, securing partners, coordinating donations, marketing, organizing musical performance	Email- roumimperk@merrimack.edu Phone: 603-268-2489
Daniel Berube Katie Berube	Jupiter Hall	Host, marketing partnership, advertising, printing costs, media, event refreshments, press release	dan@jupiterhallnh.com, katie@jupiterhallnh.com Phone: 603-669-6144
Alexandra Bye	Graphic Artist	Design logo and posters	alexandra@hitchco.xyz
Kile Adumene	Merrimack College &	Speaking at event, sitting on key partner panel,	adumenek@merrimack.edu

	Manchester Community Health Center	communicating event to others	
Olivia Babin	Merrimack College	Refugee profile, interview, wall display	babino@merrimack.edu
Chuda Niroula	Manchester Community Health Center	Refugee profile, interview, wall display discussion facilitator	chuda.niroula@gmail.com
Hassan Dayo	Keene State College	Refugee profile, interview, wall display	Hassan.dayo@ksc.keene.edu
Gulyetar Makhatdinova	Manchester Community College	Speaking at event, Refugee profile, interview, wall display	gmakhatdinova@gmail.com
Mohammad Mustak	Rohingya Society of Greater Nashua	Speaking at event, Refugee profile, interview, wall display	mustakroh@gmail.com
Bishnu Khadka	Bhutanese Community of NH	Refugee profile, interview, wall display	bkhadka@bhutanesecommunitynh.org
Tilak Niroula	Bhutanese Community of NH	Refugee profile, interview, wall display	tniroula@bhutanesecommunitynh.org
Hassan Essa	UNH Manchester	Speaking at event, Refugee profile, interview, wall display	hassanessanh@gmail.com

Anela Kruscica	Office of Health Equity	Discussion facilitator	Anela.Kruscica@dhhs.nh.gov
Namory Keita Lanssine Trore	Akwaaba Ensemble	Performer	(603) 831-9609

Tools and Measures to Assess Progress

Measures	Tools
Number of active community partner engagement	Excel Sheet
Email correspondences	
Number of RSVP's	
Number of event inquiries	
Promotion done without ask	Social Media Excel log
Conversations with community members	Evaluation Sheet

Target	Measures	Tools
Key Partner	Biweekly/weekly meetings check ins	Partner Excel Sheet Partner Evaluation Sheet
	Write in about meetings/progress	
Social Media	Blog attraction	
	Social media mentions	

	Facebook likes	Social Media Excel log
	Twitter follows	
	Event shares	
	Press Coverage	
During Event	Conversations with attendees	Monitoring evaluation sheets
	Live social media updates	Supervisory sheet
	Reflection Wall	Volunteers to observe/engage
	Walkthrough evaluations	Social Media Excel log
	Short survey for attendees	Feedback Collection Boxes
	On the spot interviews	
Post Event	Online surveys	Survey Monkey
	Interviews	Supervisory sheet
	Press coverage	Emails for interviews

Implementation Timeline

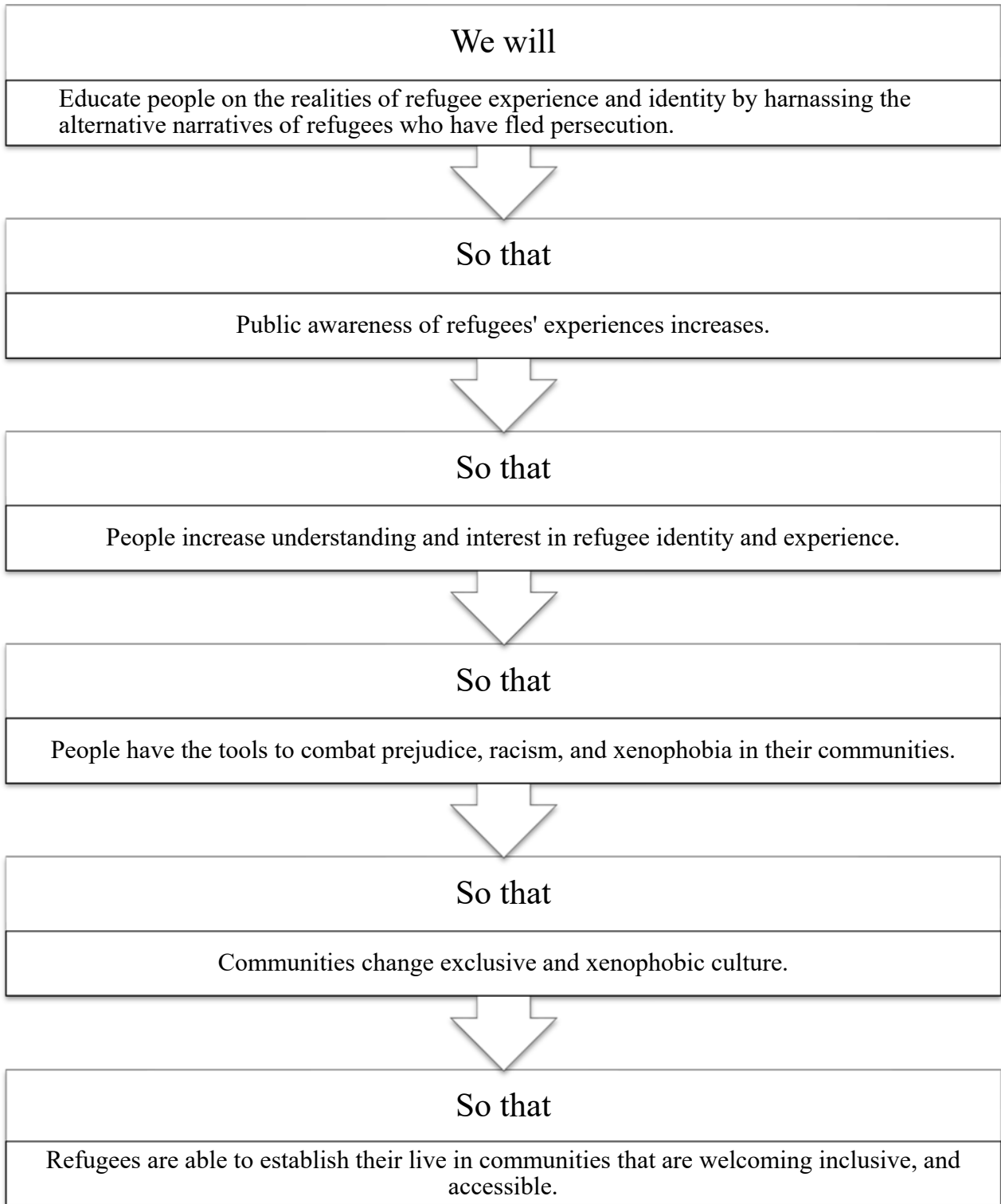| January 2018	Secure key partners
	Gather background information for marketing
	(biographies, logos, important information)
	Identify refugee panelist speakers
	Gather speaker biographies for marketing
	Gather background information on
	Identify speakers for panel
	Contact and confirm narrative participants
	Schedule interview times
	Schedule partner meetings (Jan-May)
	Identify guest list
	Compile contact into
	Establish email lists
	Identify and confirm venue
	Consider food for event
	Outline program
	Estimate budget
	Identify funding sources
	Design "Save the Date" marketing
	Bring marketing forth to key partners
	Design invitations and finalized marketing
	Finalize program outline
	Bring forth to key partners for sign off
February 2018	Complete final event marketing designs
	Bring forth to partners for approval
	Conduct biweekly meeting of partners
	Finish narrative collection
	Finish

	Meet with influential community internal resources
	    (service agents, houses of worship, school system, businesses)
	Move forward with asks for local food donations
	Move forward with asks for local florist donations
	Move forward with asks for local photographers
	Meet with influential community external resources
	    (active local/state politicians, large institutions, media)
	Begin event blog
	First round of printing
	Assemble print invitations
	Mail invitations
	First marketing blast
	Reach out to volunteers for event (first round)

March
2018
	Second marketing blast
	Make publicity announcements
	Facilitate bi weekly meetings with partners
	Meet with speakers to establish event vision
	    Receive input and adjust as necessary
	    Confirm order of speakers
	Reach out to volunteers for event (second round)
	    Finalize volunteers last week of March
	Order any supplies needed
	    (pens, name tags)
	Send marketing to print
	Send portraits and stories to print
	RSVP's due by the end of this month
	Follow up with phone calls and emails
	    Target pending guests
	Print out name badges
	    1st round last week of March

April 2018 *April 13th event!*	Facilitate weekly meetings with partners
	Meet with speakers to hear out questions or concerns
	Go over ceremony cues, times, transitions with speakers
	Draft and finalize script for MC
	Follow up with targeted internal and external community resources
	Arrange press release with local media
	Send programs to print
	Send out information to guests
	(ceremony outline, directions, maps, parking instructions)
	Purchase and prepare gifts for speakers, narratives, key partners
	Follow up with targeted internal and external community resources
	Confirm food
	Confirm photographer
	Meet to discuss vision for what is captured
	Confirm media presence
	Distribute guest lists to venue and key partners
	Set up an on-site run through with key partners
	Finalize evaluation and methods
Day of - 4/13/18	Set up early and navigate any bumps
	Have materials on site
	Ceremony outline, schedule, transition and cue sheets, paper evaluations
	Arrange sign in materials, programs, gifts
	Walk through the event with staff and volunteers
	Post Event
	Compile sign-ins into a final attendance spreadsheet with contact information
	Send out electronic post-event surveys
	Send out thank-yous
	Compile evaluations (electronic and print)
	Compile all materials for events

<table>
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Budget (predicted and final)

Receipts

Meeting notes

General event notes

All emails and marketing blasts

All printed mailings

Lists of partners and speakers

Schedule

Preparatory Materials

Meet with photographer to obtain photographs

Send out photographs to guests

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Logical Framework

We will
Educate people on the realities of refugee experience and identity by harnassing the alternative narratives of refugees who have fled persecution.

↓

So that
Public awareness of refugees' experiences increases.

↓

So that
People increase understanding and interest in refugee identity and experience.

↓

So that
People have the tools to combat prejudice, racism, and xenophobia in their communities.

↓

So that
Communities change exclusive and xenophobic culture.

↓

So that
Refugees are able to establish their live in communities that are welcoming inclusive, and accessible.

Methods

This event intended to measure the effectiveness of storytelling in raising awareness and understanding about the experiences of refugees in the United States. It utilized storytelling and an art gallery to demonstrate the vivacity and diversity of experiences.

Participants

The study was conducted at Jupiter Hall, a multi-purpose venue in Manchester, New Hampshire. All participants were members of the general public in the Greater Manchester area. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, Manchester's population is 110,506 as of July 1, 2016. The city's diversity is reflected in corresponding census reports. Approximately 13.2% of the Manchester population was foreign born, meaning not a U.S. citizen or U.S. national at birth. Moreover 19.8% of that same population speaks at language other than English at home. Similarly, 11% of businesses in Manchester were owned by minorities in 2012. Manchester's rates are nearly double of what the state data projects. In New Hampshire, only 5.8% of the total population is foreign born. Likewise, 7.9% of the state population speaks a language other than English at home and only 4.64% of businesses are owned by minorities (U.S Census Bureau, 2016). While New Hampshire's total population is 93.8% white, the racial and ethnic diversity is concentrated in areas such as Manchester.

The event was advertised through the networks of partner organizations, social media, and through printing means such as posters, flyers, and half sheets. Any participants interested were able to take part in the event. All participant data was collected on April 13, 2018 during the event.

Materials

The study utilized two different materials for data collection including a reflection wall and evaluation survey (see appendix A for all materials). The first material for data collection came from participant responses on a reflection wall. The back wall of the venue was designated as a space for people to share their thoughts, emotions, or questions. This wall was staffed by one volunteer who encouraged attendees to participate throughout the evening. The posts acted as individual data sets that were later categorized by themes in effort to identify event takeaways.

The second data collection material was the evaluation survey located on the back of the event cards given to the attendees upon entering the venue. The evaluation featured five questions that measured the impact of storytelling, educational components, and assessed the likelihood of seeking further education and action.

Procedure

The doors of Jupiter Hall opened to the public at 6:30pm. Two volunteers were stationed at the front of the venue to distribute program guides and greet attendees with the following message, "Welcome to The Story of Us. Inside the program guide you will find a schedule, biographies, and a removable event card. Instructions and the evaluations for this event are located on the event card. Please complete and return your evaluation to our event staff on your way out. Enjoy." Each volunteer used a hand-held tally counter to track the number of attendees *they* handed events cards to. The students were well versed in the event information and were be able to answer most questions from attendees. If they were unsure of an answer the students would direct the attendee to the program coordinator for further information.

As people arrived they were encouraged to mingle with other guests, help themselves to hor'dourves, and observe the personal reflection walls where refugee quotations, portraits, and

personal objects were displayed. One additional volunteer was staffed at the Reflection Wall to assist attendees with posting their reflections. During this time, two event staff observers began circulating the venue with their clipboards and observation sheets.

At 6:55pm, Namory Keita and his ensemble began a five-minute performance to indicate the beginning of the program. The drumming session demanded everyone's attention and drew their eyes to the front of the venue. Namory ended his performance at 7:00pm and signaled to the venue owner to play the xylophone, an indicator that a speaker was about to begin. The program coordinator took the microphone in the middle of the room and gave a welcoming announcement from the center of the venue. The welcoming statement was as follows:

"Good evening. Welcome to The Story of Us: reflections on the refugee experience. Tonight's event features the journeys of ten refugees from all over the world. Four of them are here with us to share their stories in the flesh, one of them will take the form of a musical performance. Tonight's event will use a combination of auditory and visual cues to move us through our program. A xylophone chime, followed by the dimming of venue lights and the appearance of a spotlight will signal the beginning of a speaker's story. When the venue lights are raised a question and answer session will be moderated. The audience is welcome to join the discussion or choose to observe the profile displays around the venue. We will have an intermission at 8:00pm that will feature a performance by The Akwaaba Ensemble! If you would like to ask a question but you do not know where to start, feel free to ask questions on your event cards. This event is meant to be reflective. We encourage you to express your thoughts and emotions honestly yet respectfully. This can be done on the reflection wall in the back that we urge you to visit before the event closes. Some of these stories may be familiar to you,

others may not. We ask that every speaker is given respect as they are speaking and

answering questions. Feel free to move chairs and sit so you are comfortable. Before you

leave us please fill out the evaluation on the back of your event card, it is greatly

appreciated. Let us begin...”

At 7:10 pm a chime and the dimming of the venue lights signaled the beginning of the

first story. The spotlight appeared on Storyteller 1 in the front left corner of the venue closest to

the front door. They had a ten-minute time slot to share their story. There was a five-minute

buffer window they could utilize if their story is long. Attendees were encouraged to gather

around the speaker, grab a seat, or sit on the floor. At 7:25 pm the venue lights raised, and the

first discussion session began with help of the designated Refugee Community Leader placed

beside Storyteller 1. This leader helped facilitate questions from the audience, offered personal

experience, and assisted answering questions from the audience. Those who moved away from

the discussion had the freedom to examine the displays, share on the reflection wall, eat, or chat

quietly away from the question and answer session. The staff observed conversations and

behaviors of the audience members in their assigned sections for the first storytelling session.

At 7:40 pm the second chime rang, and the venue lights dimmed to signal the beginning

of the second story. The spotlight appeared on Storyteller 2 in the back-left corner of the venue.

At 7:50 pm the venue lights raised to signal the opening of the second question and answer

session. This session was facilitated by the Refugee Community Leader who was in close

proximity to Storyteller 2 during their presentation. The event staff observers continued to

observe conversations and behaviors of the audience members in their assigned sections for the

second storytelling session.

The second storyteller ended their presentation at 8:00pm and handed over the mic to the program coordinator. They gave a brief introduction of the Akwaaba Ensemble, which included a biography supplied by the performers. The Ensemble performed West African dance and drumming for twenty minutes. Audience members stood up and danced with the performers. During the performance, the three event volunteers switched places between greeting and reflection wall duty. The Program Coordinator quickly revisited the closing program responsibilities with these staff before the fourth storyteller began.

At 8:20 pm the third chime rang and the venue lights dimmer to signal the beginning of the third story. The spotlight will appear on Storyteller 3 in the front back corner of the venue. At 8:40 pm the venue lights raised to signal the beginning of the third question and answer session. This session was moderated by the Refugee Community Leader who was in close proximity to Storyteller 3. Both event staff observed conversations and behaviors of the audience members in their assigned sections for the third storytelling session.

At 8:50 the fifth chime rang, and the venue lights dimmed to signal that the fourth and final story is beginning. The spotlight appeared on Storyteller 4 in the front right corner of the venue. At 9:00 the venue lights raised to signal the beginning of the final question and answer session. It was moderated by the Refugee Community Leader who was placed in close proximity to Storyteller 5. The event staff observed conversations and behaviors of the audience members in their assigned sections for the final storytelling session.

At 9:10 the Program Coordinator and Venue Directors gathered at the center of the venue to deliver the closing segment. The closing thanked the refugee communities for their bravery in the event's program, as well as Merrimack College, Jupiter Hall, and other people, organizations, and businesses that made the event possible. The closing segment reminded people that our

experiences are part of a larger human narrative we must actively seek opportunities to learn about. It also reminded people to complete the final evaluation on the back of their event cards and share their thoughts and emotions on the reflection wall. New cards and writing utensils were available to those who misplaced or discarded their old ones. As people left the venue they returned their evaluations to the event staff located at the front of the venue. The doors closed after the last people returned their evaluations.

Findings

The Story of Us investigated the efficiency and impact of storytelling in educating the general public about the experiences of refugees in the United States. Quantitative and qualitative data was collected by means of evaluation surveys and reflection wall. All data was classified into three categories; demographic, survey statement responses, and reflection wall responses. All responses were largely positive and supportive of the established project questions.

Demographics

On April 13, 2018, there were 120 attendees at the event. Sixty-six of the total participants completed evaluation surveys resulting in a 55% response rate.

Participants represented ages ranging from under 25 years old to over 65 years old. The largest age group represented was "Under 25" which made up 39.4% of the respondents (n=26). Eleven participants identified themselves as "65 and over" (16.7%). Nine participants self-identified with the age group "25-44" (13.6%). Another nine participants identified with the age group "35-44" (13.6%). Six participants identified with the age group "55-64" (9.1%). Only four

people self-identified with the age group "45-54" making it the smallest age group represented (6.1%).

Figure 1: Participant Breakdown by Age
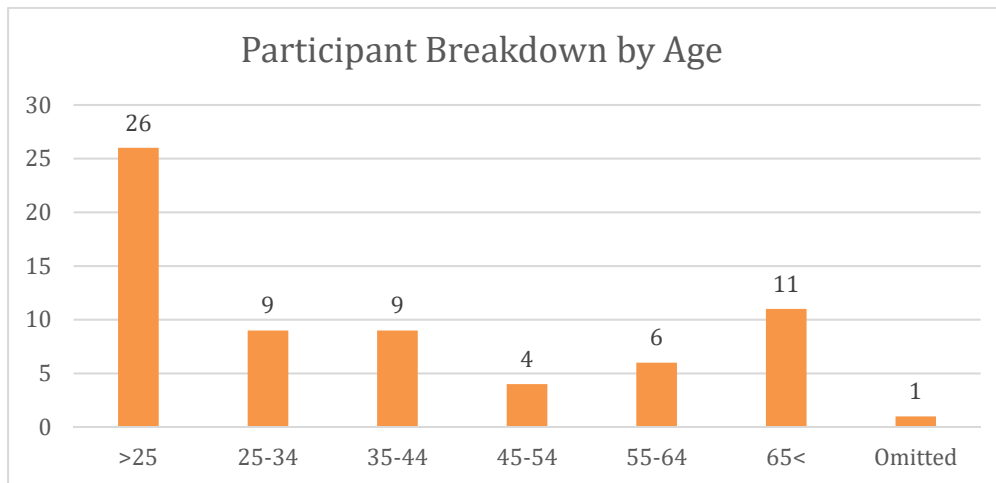
Additionally, participants were asked to self-identify their race as one of the following options; Black/African American, Caucasian/White, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Mixed Race. Of the 66 participants who completed surveys, 62 responded to the race question resulting in a 92% response rate. Four participants wrote in races that were not presented as answer options. The identities that were written in are factored into the figures and calculations despite not being options offered on the survey. Forty-three participants identified as Caucasian/White representing 65% of those who completed surveys. The next largest age group represented was "Mixed Race" with seven participants identifying as such (10.6%). Four participants identified as "Asian" (6.1%), three participants identified as "Black/African American" (4.5%), and another three participants wrote in "Latinx" (4.5%). One participant wrote in "Middle Eastern" under this question. Only one participant identified as "Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander".

Figure 2: Participant Breakdown by Race
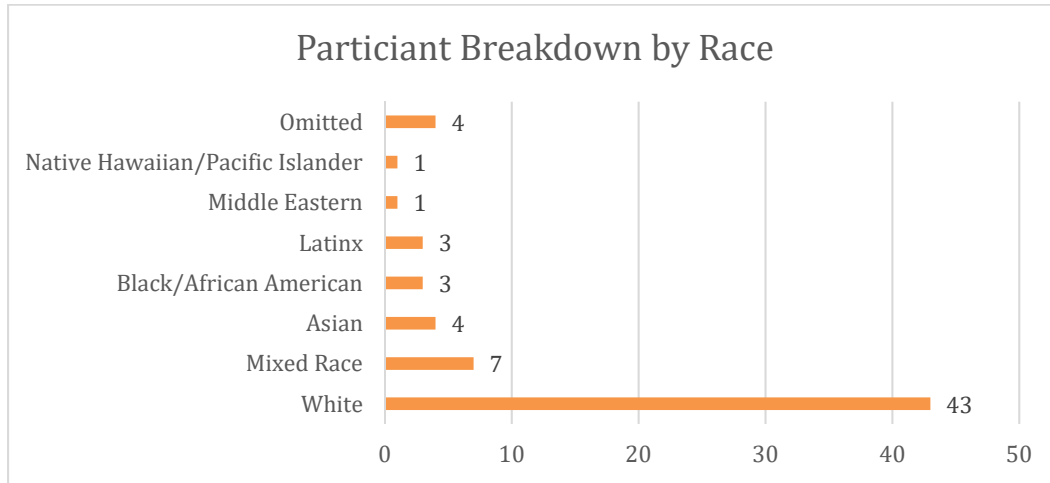
There is correlation between age of participants and the race groups they self-identified with. Those under the age of twenty-five comprised of 40% of participants but contributed 68% of participant racial diversity. This was not the case with the other age groups.

Figure 3: Participant Breakdown by Race within Age Groups
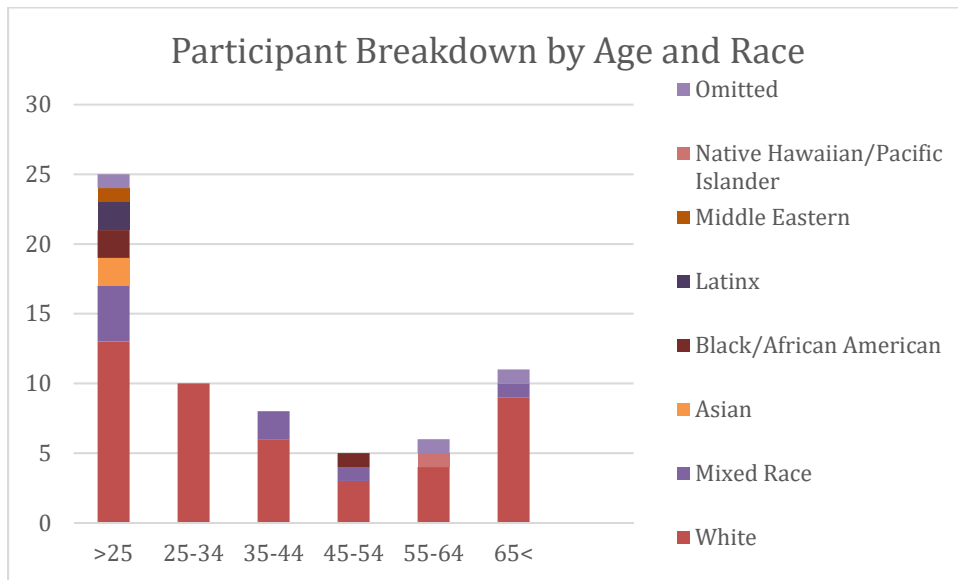
Attendees were invited to identify if they were an immigrant or refugee. Sixty-four out of sixty-six people responded to this question on the evaluation survey (97%). Fifty-three people identified that they were not immigrant or refugees, comprising 80% of the total evaluation

participants. Ten people self-identified as immigrant or refugees, constituting 15% of

participants. Four people omitted answers for that question.

Figure 1: Participant Breakdown by Immigration Status
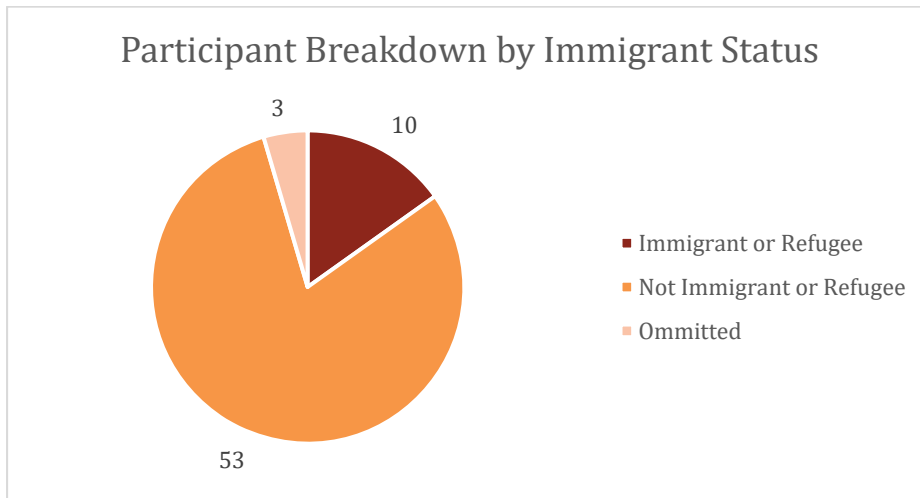
While the majority of participants did not identify as an immigrant of refugee, those who

did were concentrated within three age groups. Seven of the ten participants who identified as an

immigrant or refugee were under the age of twenty-five. Two participants who identified as

immigrant or refugee belonged to the "35-44" age group. Only one person identified as

immigrant or refugee identified with the "55-64" age group.

Figure 5: Participant Breakdown by Immigration Status within Age Groups
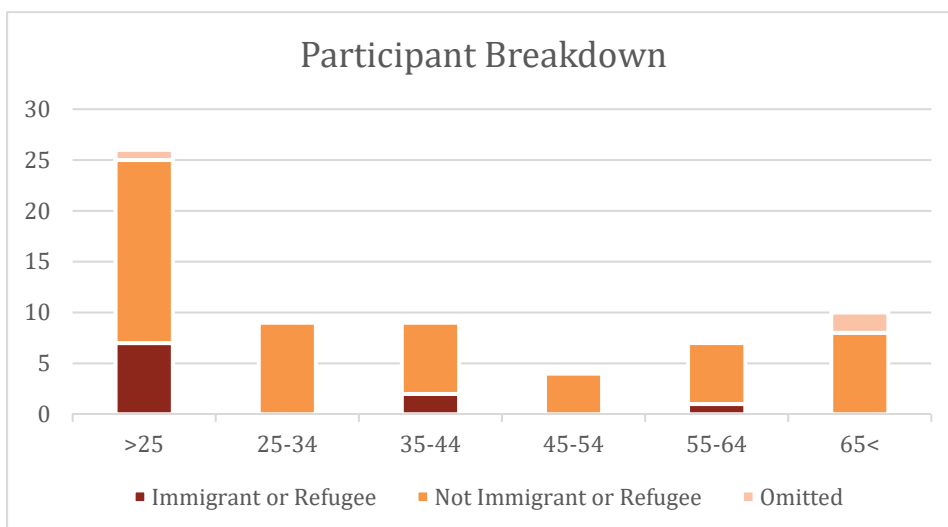
Survey Question Responses

Evaluation surveys asked participants to consider five statements measuring the appeal of storytelling, new information learned, and likelihood of future action. Participants were asked to rate the intensity of agreement using the following scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree. The responses of participants fell largely within the strongly agree or agree categories.

The second evaluation statement attempts to measure the allure of storytelling to the general public. It correlates with the first evaluation question, *is storytelling an effective pedagogy?* The statement reads, "Storytelling was an engaging way to talk about the refugee experience." Of the total participants who completed evaluation surveys, fifty-nine participants strongly agreed that storytelling was engaging; thus, 90% of participants responded as such. The other seven participants agreed with the statement, comprising of the other 10%.

Figure 2: Responses to "Storytelling was an engaging way to talk about the refugee experience"
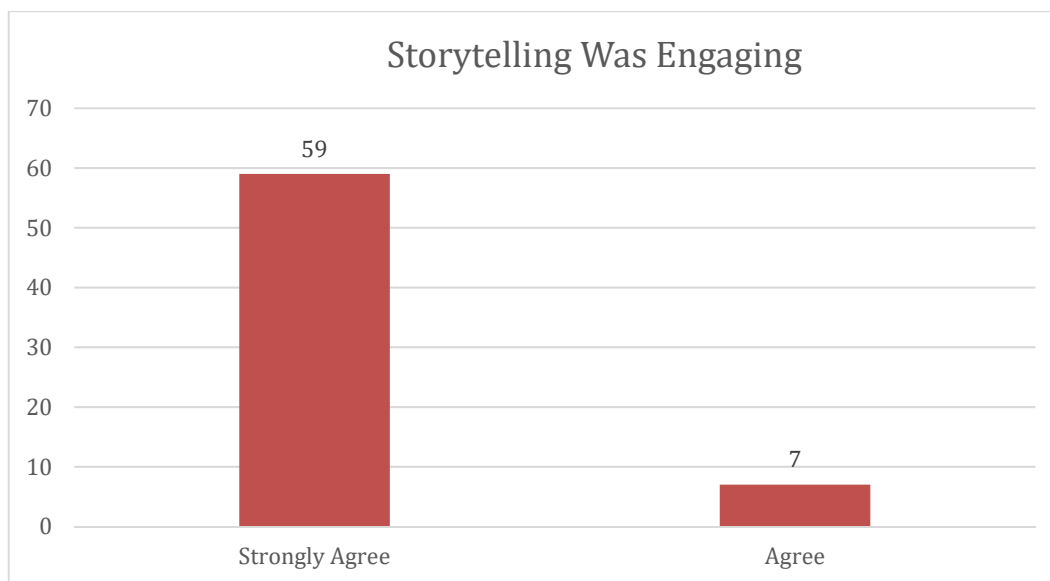
The first and third statements on the evaluation survey appraises the educational influence of the event. They correlate with the second and third evaluation questions; *does storytelling raise awareness* and *increase understanding of the experiences of refugees in the*

United States? Every participant recorded responses to the two statements. The first statement

read, "The event raised awareness about the experiences of refugees in the U.S." Fifty-five

participants strongly agreed with the statement, making up 83% of those who completed

responses. The remaining eleven participants agreed with statement, thus comprising the other

17% of participant responses.

Figure 3: Responses to "The Event Raised Awareness About the Experiences of Refugees in the

U.S."
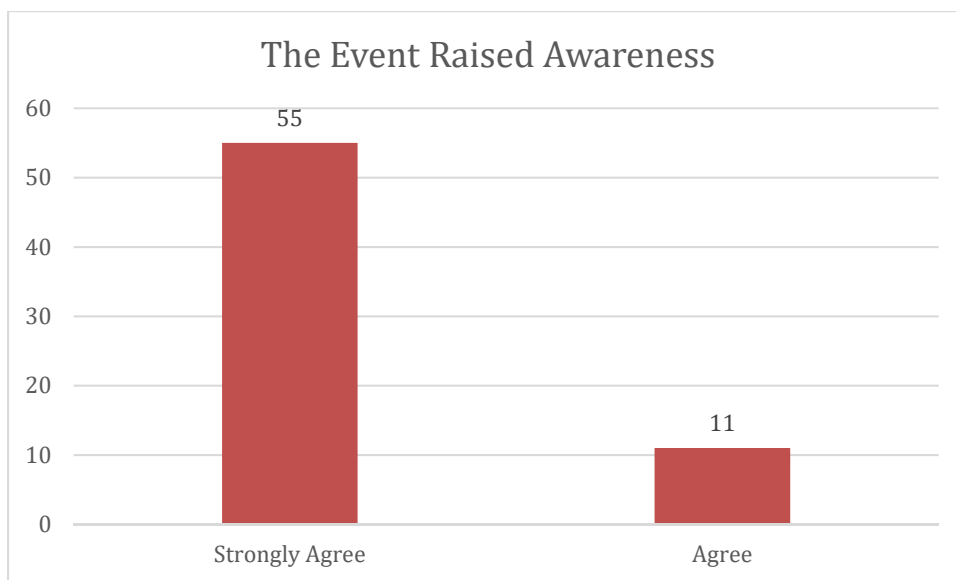
Comparable responses were recorded in the third statement, *the event taught me*

something I did not know about refugees in the U.S. Forty-seven participants strongly agreed that

they were taught something new, making up 71% of participant responses. Nineteen participants

agreed with the statement, comprising the remaining 29% of responses.

Figure 8: Responses to "The Event Taught Me Something Did Not Know About Refugees in the U.S."
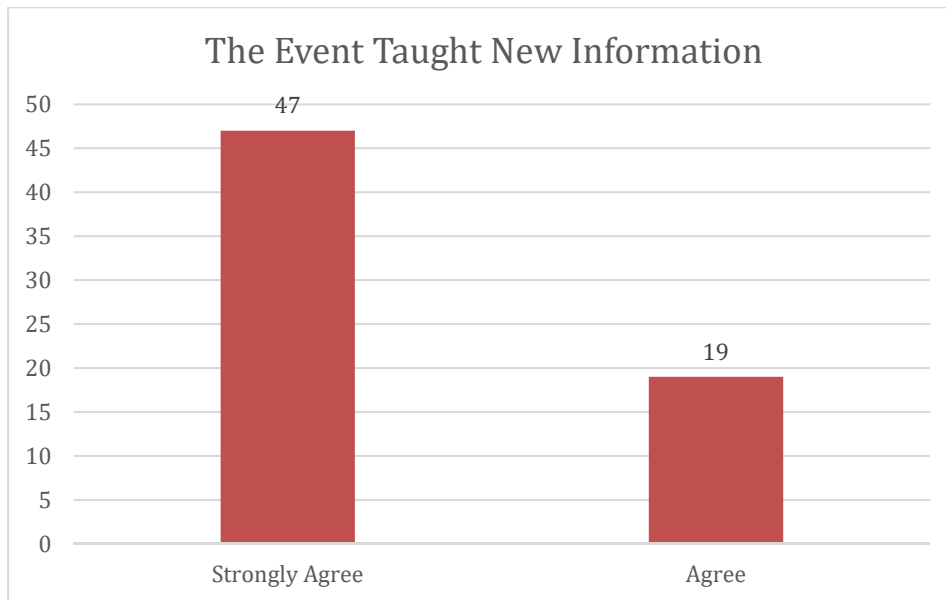

The final two statements on the evaluation survey assessed the probability that attendees would pursue further action regarding refugees in the United States. They address the evaluation question, *does increased awareness and understanding of refugee experiences in the United States encourage action?* The fourth question read, "After the event I will try to learn more about the refugee experience in the U.S". Sixty-four people recorded responses to this statement. Forty participants strongly agreed with the prospect of seeking further education, making up 61% of responses. Twenty-four of participants agreed to pursue additional information, comprising 36% of responses. Two people omitted responses to the statement.

Figure 4: Responses to "After the Event I Will Try to Learn More About the Refugee Experience in the U.S."

Likelihood of Seeking Out Further Education
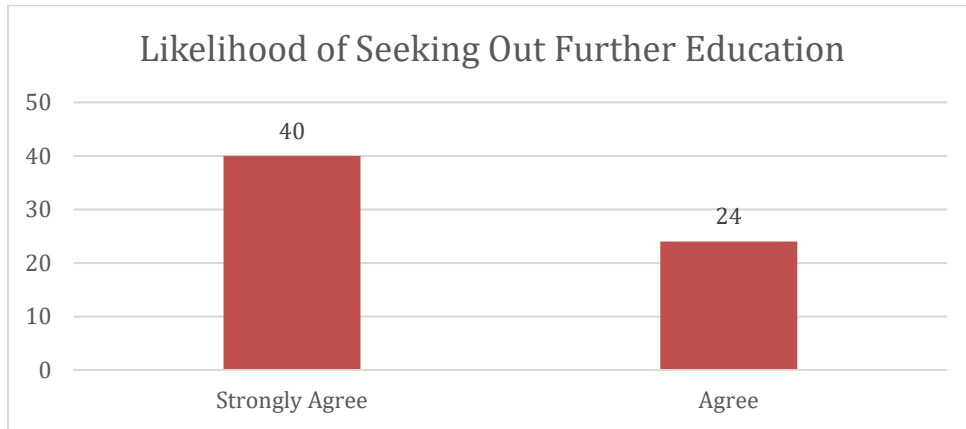
Very similar responses were recorded to the final survey statement which read, "After the event I will take action about the treatment of refugees in the U.S" Sixty-one participants recorded answers to this statement. Thirty-five participants strongly agreed to take action about refugee treatment, making up 53% of responses. Twenty-six of participants agreed to action, comprising 39% of statement responses. Five of participants neglected to respond to the statement.

Figure 10: Responses to "After the Event I Will Take Action About the Treatment of Refugees in the U.S."

Likelihood of Taking Further Action
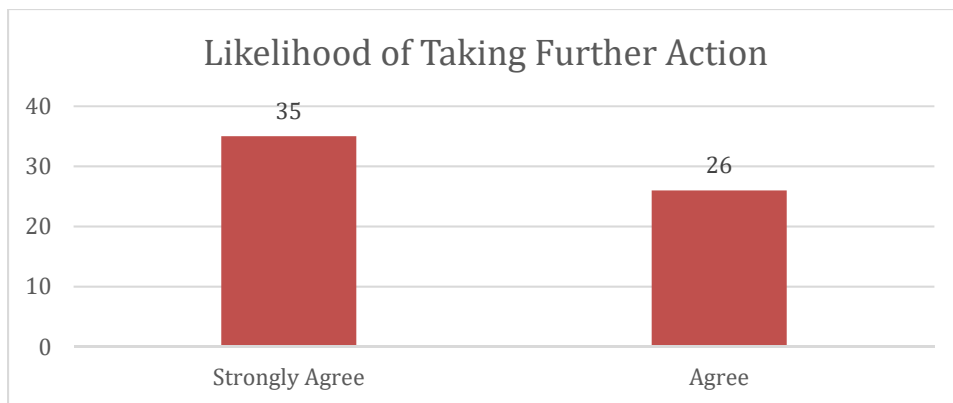
Overall, the responses to survey statements were largely positive. The statements were ordered in such a way that the last two measured continue engagement of participants. There was a digression in number of participants that strongly agreed with action-based statements. It should also be noted that the action statements were the only two statements that people omitted answers for. Participants were more willing to strongly agree or agree with pursuing further education about refugees than they were to take action about the treatment of refugees. Similarly, more participants omitted answers to the statement measuring the likelihood of taking further action. This raises questions about the level of influence the event had on future action.

Reflection Wall Responses

Participants were given the opportunity to share their emotions, thoughts, and ideas on a reflection wall. It should be noted that attendees could also share comments on their evaluation surveys. Those responses are included in this section due to the low rate of return. In total, forty responses were collected through the reflection wall and comment cards.

All responses were sorted by positive and negative feedback. Thirty-eight responses were identified as positive and two were negative. Due to the large collection of positive feedback, data was further sorted by into four main categories; storytelling, action, awareness, and community. Out of a total of forty responses, thirty-seven of them correlated with one or more categories. Four responses were generalizations that were omitted from the data set. Thus, the following figures are based out of thirty-six responses. Eighteen responses correlated with storytelling, nine alluded to action, eight referred to the community, and seventeen discussed awareness.

Figure 5: Reflection Wall Responses by Category
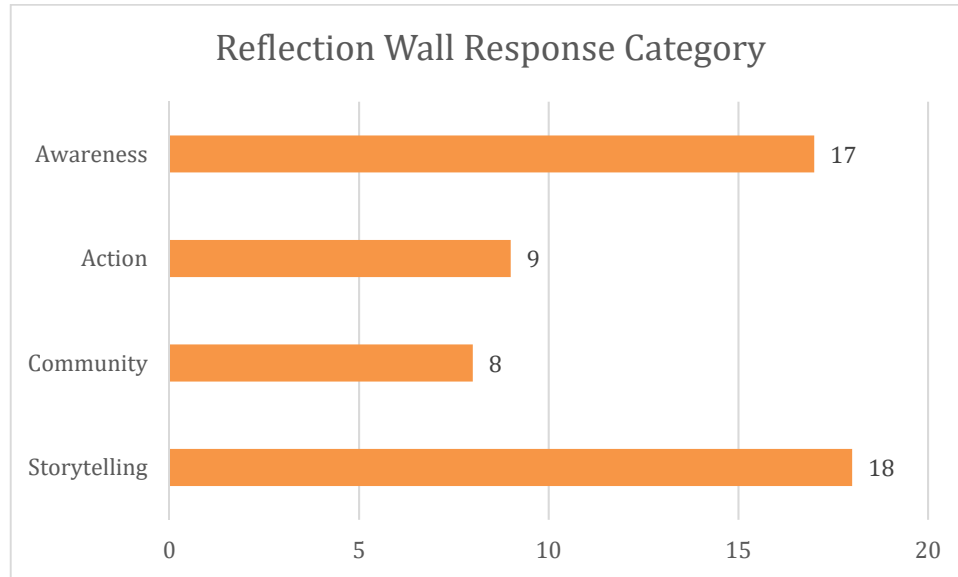
Storytelling was the most prominent category of participants responses. Eighteen of the forty responses addressed the effects of storytelling as an educational tool. Sixteen of the eighteen responses were positive. The responses in this category elicited three major themes; the event was engaging, the event fostered a consciousness of shared identity, and the speakers were difficult to understand.

Figure 6: Breakdown of "Storytelling" Reflection Wall Reponses by Theme
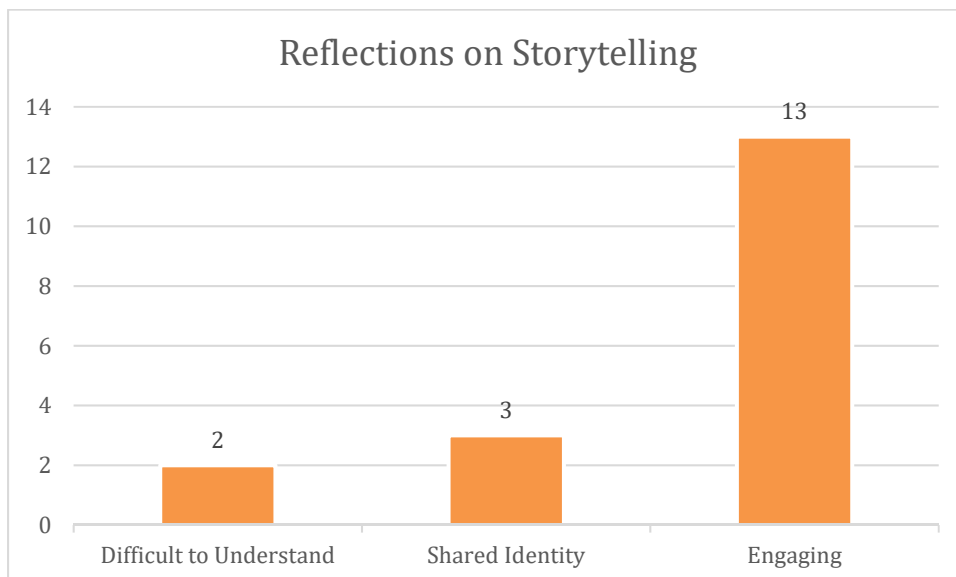
One of the main themes educed by participants was how engaging the event was. This was the response for thirteen of the eighteen people who gave responses in the "storytelling" category. One participant wrote, "This was really thoughtful way to engage members from different communities. I think the audience as a whole learned a lot by taking the time to hear stories often overlooked." This was reiterated by another participant who commented that the event was, "a very interesting way to understand the plight and courage of the new immigrants among us." The reoccurrence of such responses demonstrates that storytelling was a captivating way to learn about the experience of refugees. Other participants noted that the event, "felt personal" and "gave a change to speak to neighbors they didn't know" which recognizes the positive impact of more personal forms of public discourse.

Another theme highlighted by participants was the way storytelling drew attention to the notion of shared identities. This is demonstrated by participant responses such as, "The stories were great. We all have different backgrounds, but our stories are similar" and again with, "Every human is beautiful with an amazing story to share. We are more alike than people are led to think." These responses imply that storytelling gives people the opportunity to explore similarities between different groups.

Only two participants commented that storytellers were difficult to hear. These were the only negative responses recorded for the entire event. Their infrequency suggests that most participants did not share their experience. This could have been related to participant specific realities such as hearing ability.

The second largest grouping of participant responses fell under the "awareness" category. Seventeen responses indicated that the event raised awareness of the experiences of refugees in the United States. The responses were all positive and presented noteworthy themes; raised

awareness about the experiences of refugees, promoted reflection on privilege, and encouraged

reflection of implicit biases.

Figure 7:Breakdown of "Awareness" Reflection Wall Reponses by Theme
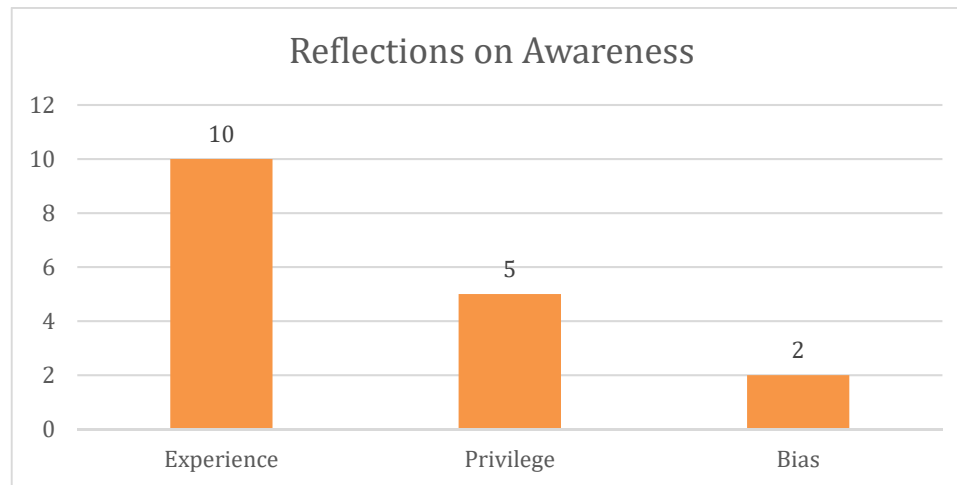
One of the main themes participants emphasized was their new awareness of the refugee

experience. Ten of the seventeen people who gave responses in the "awareness" category

highlighted this. One participant wrote that they, "learned so much about the everyday struggle

of refugees" and another, "better understands the mistrust refugees have of government".

Participants further specified that they learned new information about the refugee resettlement

process. Examples of their responses include, "I didn't know refugees could not choose what

country they were resettled in" and "The moderator, Anela, was fantastic- she gave great insight

to the refugee resettlement process." The rate of such responses demonstrates that the event was

effective in raising awareness about the experiences of refugees in the United States.

Participants also emphasized new acknowledgment toward their privileges. This was

raised by five of the seventeen responses in the "awareness" category. One participant wrote that

the event, "makes me think about my own privilege as a citizen of a country" and another

commented on, "the power of a passport." This implies that people realize the privilege of assuming citizenship at birth. Further, it demonstrates that the event encouraged self-reflection.

The exploration of self within the issue of refugee experiences was echoed by the responses that addressed implicit bias. Two participants' responses specified that the event encouraged them to consider their own understandings of refugees. One participant wrote, "I recognize where my misconceptions came from" and another commented, "I feel guilty for ever considering the things I heard on the news." Such responses indicate that attendees were able to reflect on their own roles in treatment of refugees in the United Sates. It signifies the event's ability to challenge the media and circles of influence.

Eight responses were categorized under "community" because their comments reflected on the ways in which society defines community. All action responses were positive and were further separated into two themes, community identity, and growth of community.

*Figure 8:Breakdown of "Community" Reflection Wall Reponses by Theme*
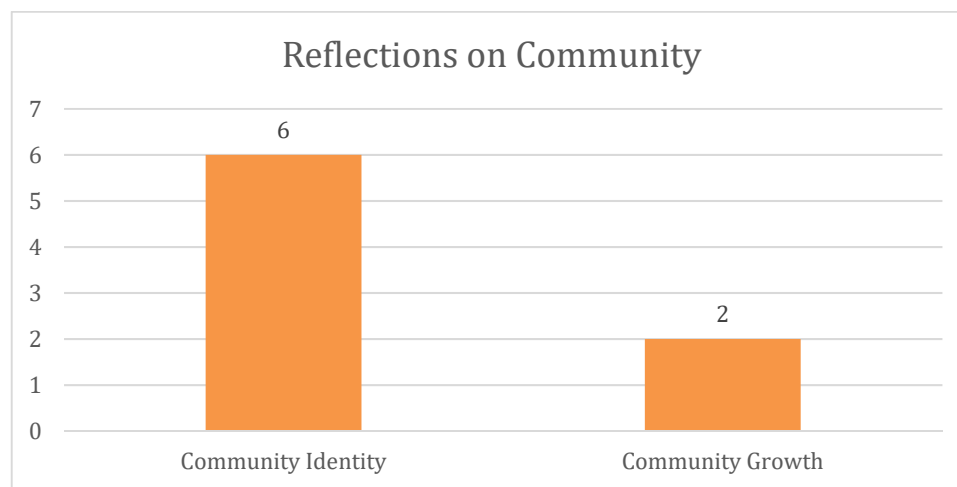
The main theme identified by participants in the "community" category was that of exploring the community's identity. Six of the eight responses highlighted the diversity and its place within the community. This is exemplified in one participant's response, "This was a

wonderful cross section of representatives of our refugee communities" The response uses possessive language, "our refugee communities" which signifies inclusion in the larger communal identity. Another participant states that the event is, "necessary for a true American community." This response suggests that a "true American community" is one which involves and includes diversity. This focus by participants reveals that the event influenced consideration or reconsideration of the meaning of community.

This was also demonstrated by the two participants whose responses implied that the event was necessary for community growth. One of the participants wrote that, "our community needs this to bloom." The response refers to the larger storytelling event as well as the specifics of diverse community dialogue and educational opportunities. This response supports the notion that communities should have more opportunities to learn about each other in order to positively develop.

Nine responses were categorized as "action" because they indicated future involvement with refugee experiences in the United States. All action responses were positive and were further separated into themes; potential to change behaviors, seeking further education, and interest in hosting the event again.

Figure 9:Breakdown of "Action" Reflection Wall Reponses by Theme
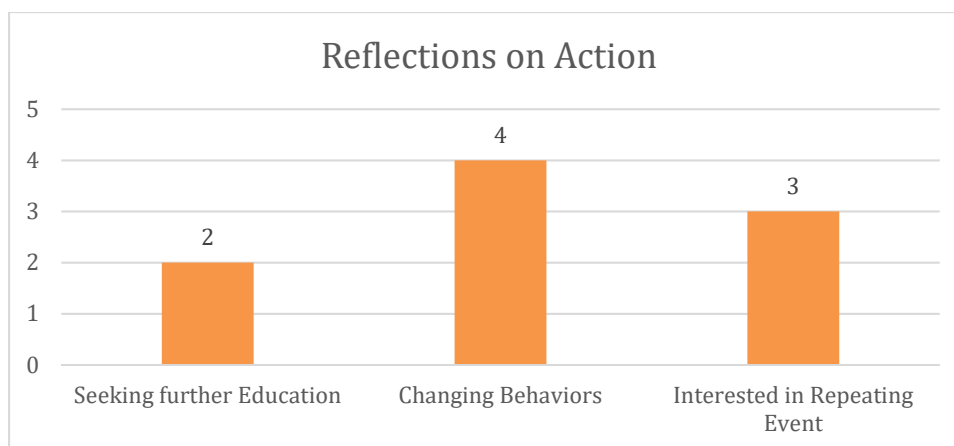
One of the main themes that participants highlighted was their commitment to changing everyday behaviors after the event. Four out of nine people who gave action categorized responses mentioned this. Examples of their responses include, "I will be kinder" and "I will work to be more genuine, thoughtful, and welcoming" In this case, participants focused on how they could change their own methods of engagement. This language signifies that the event gave attendees tools they could use after the event.

Moreover, attendees acknowledged that they are interested in learning more about the refugee experience. Two participants specified that they were going to seek out further education. One participant wrote, "I am interested to learn how to help refugees more in depth" which suggested that the event was interesting enough to catch people's attention. This perception is further supported by the three participants that advocated for the event to be hosted again. Interest in repeating the event indicates that the event was interesting, informative, and successful enough to be repeated.

Discussion

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees recognizes that false understandings of refugee identity and experience are often disseminated and perpetuated throughout communities. Cycles of misconception that are not intervened are likely to develop into xenophobic beliefs and behaviors that threated the well-being of refugees and communities alike (UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015). This project attempted to demonstrate that storytelling is an effective intervention method for cycles of xenophobia. The findings suggest that storytelling is an engaging approach to educating the general public about the experiences of refugees in the U.S. Participants strongly agree that the event raised awareness and increased their

understanding of refugees in the U.S. Furthermore, the findings imply that increased awareness and understanding of refugee experiences provokes people to take action against the mal-treatment of refugees in the U.S.

In the exploration of the effectiveness of storytelling as pedagogy, the findings suggest that storytelling is engaging and thoughtful. Approximately 89% of reflection wall responses categorized under "storytelling" were identified as positive responses. Participants used words such as, "fascinating", "interesting", and "thoughtful" to describe storytelling; specifically, participants believed that storytelling was interesting because it was an opportunity to hear the narratives of people that are often overlooked. This aligns with research that claims storytelling is attractive because of its insight into identities, cultures, and values (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). The positive reception of storytelling suggests that it is an engaging approach to cross-cultural dialogue.

Many participants commented that the storytelling component felt personal and encouraged them to consider the similarities and differences they shared with refugee storytellers. As one participant commented, "We are more alike than people are led to think". The humanization of the storyteller and acknowledgment of a shared identity directly combats the negative effects of social identity theory that result in xenophobic beliefs and behaviors (Sanchez-Mazas & Licata, 2015). These findings further support Kornelson's assertions that storytelling encourages people to transform "us-them" relationships through vulnerability, empathy, and honesty (Kornelson, 2013). This isn't to imply that refugees and non-refugees are the same. Rather, it is to foster relative understanding that our histories, experiences, and journeys are dynamic and often complicated. Storytelling is a mechanism that allows people to accept this and find commonality amongst diversity.

Moreover, reflection encouraged participants to transcend "us-them" relationships through recognition and reevaluations of community. Approximately 20% of responses on the reflection wall alluded to the creation and growth of a communal identity. Participants recognized the diversity of attendees and commented on, "the beautiful representation of our community". Those responses allude to the inclusion of refugees and immigrants into one's perception of community. This shift is supported by literature that suggests new recognition is indicative of relationship building and leads to inclusion (Kornelson, 2013; Senehi, 2002).

Inclusion expanded beyond immigration status to embrace the diverse ages and races of participants. A surprising number of attendees were under the age of twenty-five and a majority of them did not identify as white. Many participants commented on the large presence of youth and regarded them favorably. The young attendees were inquisitive and posed thoughtful questions to storytellers during the question and answer sessions. This outcome strengthens the study of storytelling because it indicates that participants recognize the agency of both the storyteller and those engaging with them in the moment. Additionally, these findings suggest that youth are interested in storytelling events which may influence the approaches to future cross-cultural dialogue.

In measuring the efficiency of storytelling in increasing awareness and understanding of refugee experiences in the U.S., the findings indicate that storytelling was a successful approach. There were two statements on the evaluation survey that measured if the event raised awareness of refugee experiences, and if it increased understanding of the issue. On average, participants strongly agreed with both statements. It is important to note that seven participants recognized their own privileges and biases as they engaged with storytellers. This outcome supports the research of Senehi and Kornelson who assert that storytelling is a socialization mechanism which

utilizes exposure in order to encourage understanding of differences and challenge biases
(Senehi, 2012; Kornelson, 2013).

It is important to recognize the profundity in which negative media, assumed behaviors,
and misinformation has on one's conceptions of other people and their experiences. One
participant commented, "I feel guilty for ever considering the things I heard on the news." Based
on reflection and survey responses, it is likely that this participant is not alone in their guilt. Both
social identity theory and realistic conflict theory recognizes the severity and rapid perpetuation
of negative cycles of information as attempts of self-preservation (Sanchez-Mazas & Licata,
2015). Many people believe in stereotypes and other false understandings because they offer a
rational for things that are not understood. Participants considering, believing, and embracing
alternative narratives suggest that storytelling is effective in education *and* also catalyzes self-
reflection.

In measuring the influence awareness and understanding of refugee experiences in the
U.S. has on the likelihood of participants taking future action in refugee issues, the findings
indicate that the event motivated participants to take action. On average, participants strongly
agreed they would seek out more education and take action. These findings attest to the power of
storytelling and its ability to educate people. It raises questions about correlation between
intrapersonal relationships and responsibility. Are people more likely to engage with issues that
are important to those in their communities? If so, could storytelling be an effective way to build
relationships and promote awareness for various issues?

Limitations

The findings of this event addressed the original project questions and supported the
research that it was founded on. Despite this, there were limitations in the execution of the event

that potentially impacted the quality of the findings. The first limitation presented itself in the lack of an evaluation survey question about ethnicity. Participants were asked to identify their race within the six race options; Black/African American, Caucasian/White, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Mixed Race. Without an ethnicity question, participants were unable to identify if they were Hispanic or Latinx. Three participants wrote in, "Latinx" under race and another selected "Mixed Race" but wrote "Hispanic?" next to it. One attendee approached me after the event and expressed both hurt and displeasure that she was unable to claim her ethnicity. This presented issues for a few reasons, the first being the poignant exclusion of groups of people in an event that is supposed to promote inclusion. The other reason is that this limitation might have skewed the data collected at the event. Participants might have omitted answers or chosen, "Mixed Race" because they didn't know how to identify. Moving forward, there should be careful consideration of race and ethnicity questions on surveys.

The second limitation of this event was the size of the venue. Jupiter Hall has a standing capacity of 150 people. Without much consideration to the potential size of the crowd, the planning process entertained the idea of roughly 75-100 people attending. Seating arrangements were also secondary as the event encouraged the crowd to move with the storytellers. In action, the venue did not allow people to move as much as planned. People sat wherever there were benches, some sat on the floor, others stood. It was apparent that two hours was a long time for people to be standing. At one point during the event, people were interested in entering the venue, but attendees were thickly settled in front of the door. This deterred people from entering and was slightly uncomfortable for some. In the future, an event like this should consider asking for RSVPs or booking a larger venue.

Implications

The qualitative and quantitative findings indicate that storytelling is an effective way to foster empathy and encourage relationship building between strangers. Moreover, storytelling supports the transformative process whereby people challenge their own understandings of refugee identity and experience as their awareness grows. Most importantly, increased understanding and awareness of the refugee experience prompted people to take action in refugee related issues. These developments were supported by literature put forth by Kornelson, Connelly, and Clandinin; all of which have implications for positive social change for future engagement opportunities and within the larger field of research.

The success of this event implies the larger need for educational engagement opportunities. The large turn out and positive feedback suggests the need for free community events to educate and kick start discussion about relevant social issues. Many participants recognized Manchester's long history with immigrant and refugee groups but noted that those stories and experiences aren't spoken of very often. Participants indicated that *The Story of Us* gave agency to refugee groups by making space for them to own their stories. In the process, the event revisited Manchester's own history and how refugee identities and experiences fit within it. Moreover, participants indicated that these opportunities are necessary for inclusive community growth and development; thus implying the should be organized more frequently.

The results also acknowledge the accessibility and universality of storytelling. It is an exciting and manageable medium for people and organizations looking to create opportunities to educate and engage community members. It is a low-cost or no-cost means of communication that can be organized with relative ease; making it ideal for community events. Additionally, the results imply that the storytelling framework is effective; which alludes to its ability to be used

for other social justice issues. It could have great impact in educating people about other underrepresented people and experiences such as the queer or native communities.

The large percentage of diverse youth that attended the event allude to its degree of attraction and suggest that storytelling is an ideal method of engaging younger generations. For cities like Manchester, youth represent a large percentage of the population. The awareness and understanding fostered by challenging biases and stereotypes could impact their daily decisions and actions. This is significant when factoring the relative level of connectedness that youth have to each other and the larger world via social media and other platformers. Perhaps, they will continue to educate a wider audience with the information they are learning.

Moreover, the results of this event have significant implications to the larger field of research. The results imply that storytelling, specifically, encourages people to take action on an issue. This raises questions about the power of action based social justice education. How do we present communities with educational engagement opportunities that set them up to take action that is intentional and impactful? In what ways can we create space to process information that will allow people to engage with awareness of their own role in oppressive systems? The strength of this correlation cannot be determined by the results of a singular event. The community engagement field should continue to explore the correlation, as action is the movement necessary for social change which is imperative in the development of more inclusive and just communities.

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Appendix A: Event Survey

<div align="center">

Welcome to the Story of Us!

</div>

Instructions:

- This program features a mixed media exhibit, storytelling sessions, and opportunities for community dialogue.
- A chime will signal the beginning of a story. After the storyteller is finished the floor will open to questions from the audience.
- Halfway through the event, there will be an intermission featuring a performance by Namory Keita.
- Please help yourself to refreshments as you explore the wall displays. We encourage you to reflect and ask questions!

Don't know where to start? Ask a question!

1. What specific circumstances caused you to come to the US? What were some of the challenges you faced when you came to the US?

2. Were you able to take any of your possessions with you? What   did you choose and why?

3. What stereotypes or expectations did you have before coming to the US? Did you experience any culture shock? Can you share a story of culture shock?

4. Are their cultural traditions or customs that you or your family have made an effort to preserve? Are there traditions that you have given up or changed?

5. What do you wish people knew about you?

COMMENTS:

<div align="center">

Please complete the evaluation on other side before you leave.

</div>

Please complete this evaluation before you leave.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The event raised awareness about the experiences of refugees in the US.	○	○	○	○
Storytelling was an engaging way to talk about the refugee experience.	○	○	○	○
The event taught me something I did not know about refugees in the US	○	○	○	○
After the event I will try to learn more about the refugee experience in the US	○	○	○	○
After the event I will take action about the treatment of refugees in the US	○	○	○	○

What is your age?
○ Under 25
○ 25-34
○ 35-44
○ 45-54
○ 55-64
○ 65 and older

What is your race?
○ Black / African American
○ Caucasian / White
○ American Indian / Alaska Native
○ Asian
○ Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander
○ Mixed Race

Are you an immigrant or refugee?   ○ Yes   ○ No

Thank you for your feedback and for attending the Story of Us! Please put your completed evaluation in the box.