Discovering Diversity Downtown: Questioning Phoenix

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Abstract

Applied community learning experiences for university students are promising endeavors in downtown urban environments. Past research is applied to help better comprehend a community engagement initiative conducted in downtown Phoenix, Arizona. The initiative aimed to illuminate the socio-cultural diversity of the downtown area utilizing storytelling methods. The initiative leveraged three broad questions: Where is downtown, what is downtown, and who is downtown? Lessons learned from the initiative, its processes, and outcomes are showcased and reviewed.

> *Downtown is resurrection. The re-birth of the cool, the now. The happening, happening again. For the first time . . . from memory . . . from the sense of living the eternal moment.* (Jack Evans, poet [Dombrowski and Talmage 2014, 3])

Like the mythical phoenix, downtown urban areas have both risen and descended over the years, but still downtowns remain the vital epicenters of today's communities (Speck 2012). It is no wonder then that many of our colleges and universities are housed in some way or another in downtown areas because of their value (Emenhiser 2012). While these downtowns may be relatively small in comparison to the entire urban area, they considerably contribute to the health of the entire urban or metropolitan area (Sisko et al. 2014). Thus, intuitively, we know that urban downtowns have value, but we need better measures of that value (Mahoney et al. 2014). Those measurements can be complex, because these public spaces do not only have economic or physical value, but socio-cultural value as well (Madden 2014; Ward 2007).

Applied community learning experiences may be quintessential tools for discovering value in urban downtown communities. In light of these notions, this paper explores socio-cultural value in the heart of an urban downtown area through an applied community learning experience, which involved university students, faculty, and community members. The experience was spurred from a grant-funded initiative that sought to illuminate the stories of socio-cultural diversity in downtown Phoenix, Arizona.

A Brief Introduction to Downtown Phoenix

The entire city of Phoenix consists of an estimated 1.6 million residents and is the fifth most populated city in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2013; World Population Review 2014); however, less than 2 percent of its residents live in its downtown area. The entire Phoenix metropolitan area is comprised of a population of 4.3 million

persons, making it the thirteenth largest metropolitan area in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau 2013; World Population Review 2014); thus, just slightly more than 0.5 percent of the metro-area's population is found in the capital city's nucleus. In many ways, downtown Phoenix might epitomize the consequences of urban sprawl (Speck 2012), but as one downtown university professor comments, "It's starting to change, I see very real change" (Waltz 2014).

Ten years ago, downtown Phoenix rarely would see activity outside of traditional work hours unless there was an event at one of the two professional sports venues, or at one of its museums or theatres (Hilton 2013; Poore 2011). The area had somewhat of an indefinite artist community, and it was without a light rail system, university campus, and thriving city nightlife (Hilton 2013). In 2006, Arizona State University opened a satellite campus in downtown Phoenix, which in the beginning drew more than a thousand students into the area (Hilton 2013); now the campus and its programs have 11,500 students enrolled (Arizona State University 2014a). The development of what would become a higher education district was coupled with the revitalization of arts districts and the emergence of boutique lodging and nightlife venues (i.e., bars, restaurants, and a bowling alley). A light rail system was built in the area, which connected downtown Phoenix to uptown and midtown Phoenix, Mesa, and Tempe, where ASU's original campus resides (Hall 2008). What was once a blighted and high-crime region of the city now appears to be a vivacious place to visit, live, and work (E. Scott 2012; Waltz 2014).

At least in the city center, much of the once noticeable blight has begun to evaporate since the introduction of Arizona State University (Hilton 2013) and because of the hard work of local artists and community leaders (Stein, Eigo, and Kahler 2014). Grants of up to $100,000 have been employed in the area to "put vacant, blighted properties to use and support the local arts economy" (Gersema 2012). Now, the downtown area hosts art walks, pub-crawls, farmers markets, and food trucks (Hilton 2013).

The issue of blight has been targeted by many in higher education, and through creative place-making, universities have helped transform areas with blight (Grossman and Roy 2014). Many institutions have sought to become more socially embedded in their communities as a response to their ivory tower images (Arizona State University 2014b; Hall 2008). Hall (2008) writes, "The idea is that a campus should become a vital part of the city and its downtown, sharing its challenges and helping it build a sustainable future through useful research and teaching."

The presence of a campus, however, does not guarantee vitality; engagement with and dialogue between university students, faculty, and community members through applied community learning experiences are essential for healthy partnerships. Thus, what follows is a discussion of the importance of applied community learning experiences and a discussion of one of the first applied projects of its kind in downtown Phoenix. However, the applied community learning experience is presented knowing that the actual number of these kinds of experiences in the area is unknown; an accurate portrait of downtown development through university-community partnerships remains needed.

Applied Community Learning Experiences

"Where you went to college matters less to your work life and well-being after graduation than how you went college." (Brandon Busteed [Gallup Business Journal, 2014])

Applied community learning experiences for college and university students are essential to their future success in their work and personal lives (Busteed 2014). A recent study by Gallup found that experiential and deep learning, including semester or longer projects, are key to students' success in their personal and work lives after graduation (Busteed 2014). Consistently, Weingarten (2014) suggests that modern-instruction requires *richness* and *depth* in student learning experiences. Thus, it is important that "students combine academic study with some form of direct, practical involvement, usually with a community close to the university" (Bednarz et al. 2008, 87), which may include an urban downtown area.

Many colleges and universities foster applied- or service-learning experiences for their students, where students fulfill their coursework through activities in communities that help fulfill community needs. These activities serve to help students acquire important skills and knowledge that will help them in their work and community lives outside of their college and university and/or after they graduate. "Service-learning and other outreach activities give students firsthand opportunities to apply what they are learning in their disciplinary studies outside the academic setting, thus promoting leadership, character development, cultural and community understanding, and self-discovery" (Garber et al. 2010, 78).

Applied learning helps better the civic skills, the connectedness to the university, and the retention of our students (Roy 2014). If the goal is to enable college and university students to apply their skills and knowledge in their own communities, then the strategies used to teach them should relate to their own life experiences (Grossman and Roy 2014). Syracuse, New York Mayor Stephanie Miner highlights this vital sensitivity: "We deposit all of our societal problems into our school buildings along with our children, and say to educators, teach them" (Mahoney et al. 2014); thus, *how* we teach matters (Busteed 2014).

Faculty members, therefore, play a key role in facilitating successful applied learning experiences in communities for students. First, faculty perceptions of civic engagement and service-learning appear to influence participation in those activities (Hiraesave and Kauffman 2014). These experiences also may be more inclined to help build strong personal connections between faculty members and students. Second, Busteed (2014) noted that emotional support shown for students—in particular, professors that instill an excitement about learning in their students and professors that care about their students—are significant to students' success in their personal and work lives after graduation. In relation to both students and faculty, institutional commitment to applied learning is a necessity (Hiraesave and Kauffman 2014).

These learning experiences can transform into formal partnerships with a community, a community organization, or community members (Pstross et al. 2013). University–community partnerships help students connect theory and practice (Wilson 2004). They also help universities stay grounded in their communities, thus, answering Ernest Lynton's (1983) call to "rethink our conception of the university as a detached and isolated institution" (53). Powell (2014) implores that both neighborhoods with universities and universities in neighborhoods need to consider diversity in their work together:

> *Neighborhoods are home to diverse groups of residents who share a common place, but not the same degree of attachment to that place or the same sense of community. Despite the increased interest in university–community relations, there is relatively little empirical research on intergroup relations in campus-adjacent neighborhoods* (108).

Thus, the intentional integration of the university into the community and vice versa is key to joint visioning and development, especially in urban downtown areas (Waltz 2014).

Community members, however, still do not necessarily experience the same benefits as members of the university (Blouin and Perry 2009; Lear and Sánchez 2013). Blouin and Perry (2009) write, "The benefits to students are well documented, but the value to the community is less clear" (133). Benefits to the community need to be thoroughly assessed and well documented; they should not be implied or assumed (Lear and Sánchez, 2013). Therefore, sustainable university-community partnerships are founded in reciprocity and trust. Stakeholders from both arenas need to collaborate as partners, and both partners need to seek ways to leverage each other's strengths in community engagement work. Furthermore, an ongoing commitment to the partnership must be established (Davidson et al. 2010; Holland and Gelmon 2003; Lear and Sánchez 2013). Thus, a key question must be kept in mind as community developer Richard Knopf notes: "How can we become incredibly integrated to actually reflect the vision of the community, instead of the vision of [the university]?" (Waltz 2014).

Portraits of Our Universities and Communities

Integration requires self-awareness, which may be more like portraiture than cartography. Barbara Holland (2014) emphasizes that we—university personnel who work to enhance community engagement—need a reasonably accurate portrait of the activity at our institutions. Efforts have been made through the use of technological resources (e.g., Community Engagement Collaboratory) to create and capture these images making up our universities (Holland 2014), yet the same efforts need to be made in the larger communities that our universities serve.

Often our universities and communities seem as diverse as what we might see in a Jackson Pollack painting. Where to start or what to focus on seem to stress our minds as we seek to construct more accurate portraits of our institutions and communities. Holland (2014) notes that measurement may be one of the biggest deterrents of engagement, including the need to track different perspectives in our community

engagement work. Thus, broad strokes are needed on the canvas to reveal the true diversity of our communities, our universities, and all the interwoven pieces between them. Applied community learning experiences can be one of the paintbrushes we use for discovery and, perhaps even, development.

The "We Are Downtown" Initiative

Sit down with a good book, open your mind to experience something new, and use the experience to go out and change your own community. (Alex Stevenson, university student, [2014])

In the interest of integration and engagement, an initiative was proposed to Arizona State University's Office of Academic Excellence through Diversity. This initiative was accepted and was carried out through an applied community learning experience in downtown Phoenix, Arizona, that utilized university students, faculty, and community members. The aim was to highlight the stories of socio-cultural diversity in the downtown area through efforts initiated by university students and staff.

The We Are Downtown initiative began as a small grant-funded project. The purpose of the grant offered by the Academic Excellence through Diversity office at Arizona State University was written as such:

To provide our university community including students, faculty, staff, and local communities, with opportunities to explore and discuss together current and cutting-edge scholarly topics and issues, including but not limited to behavioral, societal, cultural, historical, scientific, and political perspectives, that advance an understanding of access, excellence, and inclusion from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives. The goal of this program is to elevate the university dialogue across disciplines in order to educate our students and provide critical insights into the multidisciplinary opportunities and challenges in working with our diverse peoples and communities in the 21st century. (Diaz 2013, 1)

Proposal responses were required to contain multidisciplinary teams and multidisciplinary methods. They were particularly encouraged to offer at least one community event to exhibit the university's commitment to diversity and commitment to working with underserved professional and neighborhood communities. The parameters, though broad and somewhat ill defined, had great promise for the team.

The multidisciplinary We Are Downtown team engaged students and faculty from three university schools: 1) the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication, 2) the School of Community Resources and Development, and 3) the School of Letters and Sciences. They provided the following response:

The We Are Downtown project seeks to amplify storytelling in and of the diverse communities in downtown Phoenix. This effort will strengthen relationships between schools, faculty, and students at ASU's downtown Phoenix campus and

individuals and private and public sector organizations in downtown. The many expressions of this story will be showcased in a summit that weaves connections between ASU and the downtown communities, and offers the opportunity for the community to discover its soul. (Knopf et al. 2013, 2)

After formation, the multidisciplinary team grew to include other schools even after the grant was funded.

The team was motivated to discover the diverse downtown story through an applied community learning experience, which was to conduct both traditional and nontraditional community-based research. Undergraduate students in a senior-level tourism development and management course held at the university's downtown Phoenix campus were the primary surveyors for the more conventional research portions of the first phase of this initiative. However, the diverse downtown story was chronicled not only through traditional survey methods, but also through a student-directed documentary film and sourced poems, writings, and photographs from university students and downtown community members.

Stories were assumed to contain the rich details of diversity desired. Specifically regarding Phoenix, Yoohyun Jung (2014) writes:

People interact with things or other people, creating stories and leaving traces of those stories as memories in the minds of other people or the physical space of places they go. Those bits and pieces accumulate in the pockets of this city, giving the people an experience more special than all the rest.

Thus, the team's methods aimed to elucidate a portrait of downtown Phoenix through stories of diversity.

The Essential Questions

Downtown is the celebration of the city's non-concealment of our very selves.
(Michael Bartelt, university student and poet, [Dombrowski and Talmage 2014, 6])

An open process was agreed upon to paint the portrait of downtown Phoenix from its diverse perspectives and through its stories of diversity. Lees (2003) expresses the basic philosophy of this kind of process:

Urban revitalization initiatives must embrace diversity—cultural and economic, as well as functional and spatial. This diversity of different 'diversities' is often under-theorized, as are the benefits of, and relationships among, social and cultural diversity, economic diversification, mixed-use and multi-purpose zoning, political pluralism, and democratic public space. It is my contention that this ambivalence is not simply a smokescreen for vested commercial interests, but also provides opportunities for expressing alternative visions of what diversity and the city itself should be. (613)

The team established the three essential questions to guide the applied community learning experience: 1) where is downtown Phoenix; 2) what is downtown Phoenix; and 3) who is downtown Phoenix? The team then reached out to community members, university students, and others to discover the variety of possible answers these questions. More specifically, the undergraduate students, who conducted the more formal research efforts, were asked to reflect upon their own answers to these questions.
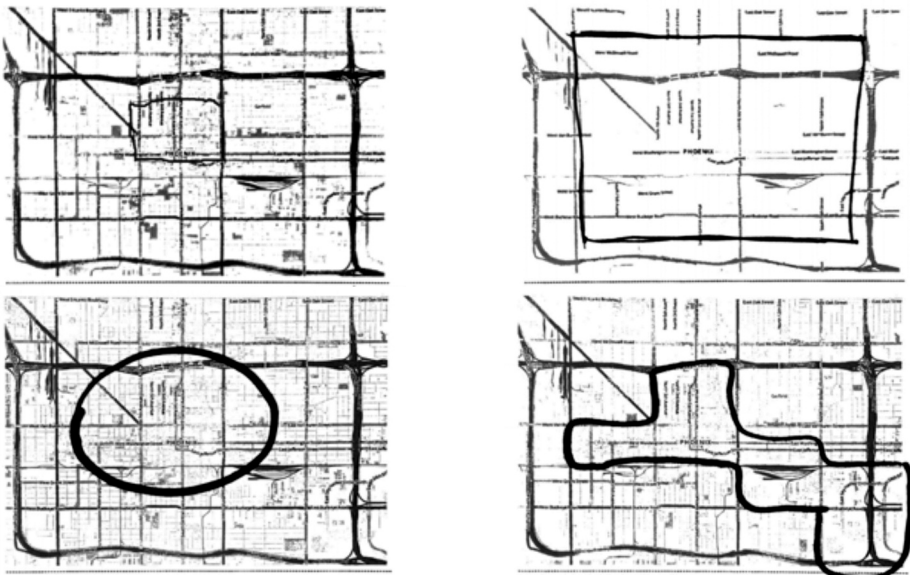
Where Is Downtown?

Before surveying the community, the undergraduate students were asked in-class to respond by drawing on a paper map, "Where is downtown Phoenix?" The map pictured a geographic area that spanned three miles north and south and four miles east and west. The students drew their perceived boundaries of the downtown area on the paper map.

The undergraduate students then went to their local friends, fellow students, family members, downtown residents, workers, and passersby on the street with maps of the general downtown area. They asked the participants to draw an outline of downtown Phoenix's boundaries. The maps collected were synthesized and organized by two undergraduate students not enrolled in the senior-level tourism development and management course to elucidate possible themes.

As to be expected, definitions varied between individuals. Out of the more than three hundred maps collected, four common responses emerged from the collection of answers. These responses are found in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Four Common Representations of Answers to "Where Is Downtown?" Survey

The discovery of *where* was furthered through an open house event hosted by the university at its downtown Phoenix campus. At the event, the We Are Downtown team asked more than sixty visitors to indicate on a map projected on a wall to answer the following questions by using sticky notes:

• Where is the heart of downtown Phoenix? (represented by hearts)

• Where do you go in downtown Phoenix? (represented by people)

• Where do you avoid in downtown Phoenix? (represented by exclamations)

• Where is your favorite part of or place in downtown Phoenix? (represented by flags)

• Where do you live in downtown Phoenix? (represented by houses)

The team using Google's map engine then captured the answers online, which are depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The Notable Places of Downtown Phoenix

Also to be expected, the heart of downtown Phoenix seemed to yield consistent answers within a dense area of the map. The heart was found within the Downtown Phoenix

Business Improvement District's boundaries, which helps corroborate this portion of the project's findings (Downtown Phoenix Partnership Inc. 2014; Hilton 2013). The center or heart included many of the individuals' favorite places and places where they usually go. Through informal conversations with event visitors, places individuals went and favored were noted to include sports arenas, restaurants, bars, historic neighborhoods, the university, and museums. The places that were avoided were noted as government agency buildings, abandoned areas with a lot of blight, and the local city jail. Finally, the few persons who indicated that they lived in downtown did not live near the perceived heart or center, but still emphasized that they lived downtown.

The undergraduate students then were divided into eleven teams and were asked to speak with additional residents, workers, and passersby in downtown Phoenix. Ten of the teams of three to six students focused on the different official, unofficial, and overlapping districts of downtown Phoenix. These districts are depicted in Figure 3. The districts were based on City of Phoenix development plans (City of Phoenix 2014b) and historic neighborhood districts (City of Phoenix 2014a; Historic Phoenix Real Estate 2014). Finally, one team specifically focused on elucidating the university's downtown Phoenix campus' assets.

Figure 3. Downtown Phoenix's Overlapping Districts
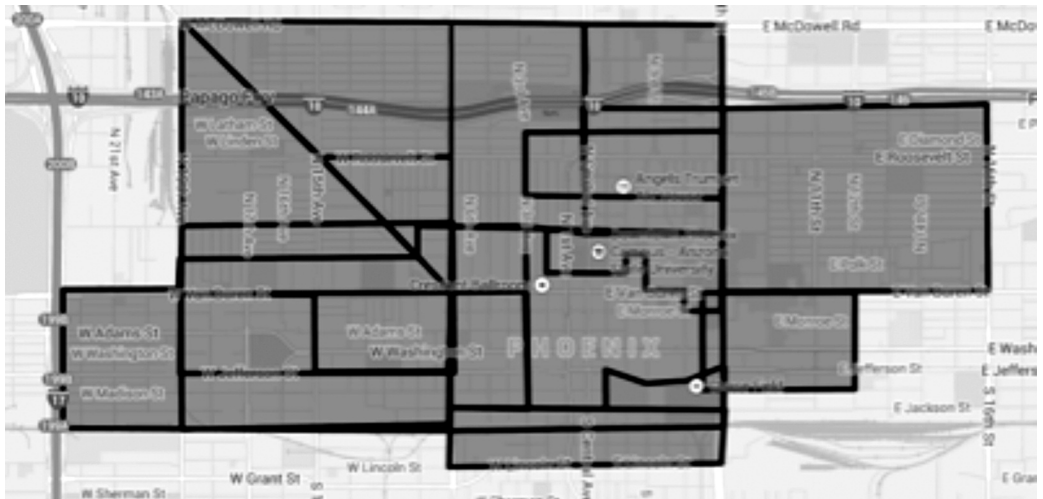
What Is Downtown?

Two sub-questions were deemed necessary to better understand what is downtown: 1) What is a downtown?, and 2) What is our downtown? Before surveying the community, the undergraduate students were asked in-class to reflect on and respond to the following question, "What is a downtown?" Following this reflection, these students ascertained the appropriate human subjects training certifications before surveying and having informal conversations with downtown community members

and fellow university students around the question, "What is our downtown?" Meanwhile, other students and faculty involved in the initiative gathered poems and photos from community artists and fellow students around these two questions as well.

What is a downtown?

The undergraduate students generated, in-class, their own definitions of *downtown* and *downtown spaces* before data collection in the community began. Their definitions had both positive and negative connotations. The following are excerpts (Dombrowski and Talmage 2014) of their definitions of what is a downtown:

> *A place of hustle and bustle . . . a place of business and a place where everyone can have fun.* (13)

> *Where everything happens.* (13)

> *An area within a major city that has places to go, things to do.* (13)

> *Rich with culture and has an abundance of shops and businesses.* (13)

> *A place that takes bits and pieces of surrounding environments in order to create its own unique experiences.* (13)

> *A place where the community goes to get together and enjoy sports and other events.* (13)

> *A city area that has a different vibe . . .not a suburb or a rural area.* (14)

> *Where events and activities take place for locals and tourists.* (14)

> *An urban community.* (14)

> *The heart of the city.* (14)

> *Oldest area of the city.* (15)

> *A corporate culture filled with monotonous jobs and daily activities.* (15)

> *Traffic and expensive parking.* (15)

> *Tall buildings, narrow streets, not very convenient for cars.* (15)

Common themes appeared to include a central location, a place for the community (in general), government, businesses, and tourism. The more negative themes centered on parking and traffic. These definitions likely were influenced by the students'

definitions of and personal experiences in downtown Phoenix, which was examined using the question, "What is our downtown?"

What is our downtown?

Then, the undergraduate students along with the help of faculty members also forayed into the downtown Phoenix area exploring the question, "What is our downtown?" Statements and poems were sourced from local downtown Phoenix residents and stakeholders. The following are excerpts (Dombrowski and Talmage 2014) of their reveries of what their downtown is:

> *Downtown is the possibility of art for everybody.—Elizabeth McNeil, poet* (17)

> *Downtown has a key word that stands out . . ."own."—Leah Marche, poet, writer, and community member* (17)

> *Walt Whitman would say it contains multitudes. I'd say it's won my heart.—RD, poet, co-founder/host of the Phoenix Poetry Series, university lecturer* (18)

> *My downtown is the blood that runs through my veins, it is a transfusion for a new Phoenix—Mike Pfister, co-founder of CollabX, musician, and university instructor* (19)

> *I chose to live downtown because I want to be centrally located and live in a culturally diverse neighborhood.—Downtown resident* (17)

> *I live downtown because it is where my family has lived all my life.—Downtown resident* (18)

> *Downtown is becoming more diverse. Before it was just businessmen and corporate industry, but now that [the university] has brought a student presence to the area, more people are attracted to living downtown. With the addition of the convention center, [the university] downtown, and places such as Cityscape, there is a more diverse community within the downtown Phoenix area.—Downtown business owner* (17)

> *Downtown allows me to express who I am through my work. It allows me to contribute to the urban and hip feel, the new vision of the downtown area.—Downtown business owner* (17)

> *I see the future for Phoenix being very bright. I have worked downtown for many years and have watched it develop for the better in so many ways.—Downtown worker* (19)

These excerpts reflect the types of conversations the undergraduate students and the entire We Are Downtown team held with local community members. The *what* of

downtown Phoenix appears to be fluid and dynamic, and diversity is only one part of the story. The outlook appears positive for future efforts for development, student engagement, and further discovery of diversity and inclusion in downtown Phoenix and amongst its many stakeholders.

Who Is Downtown?

Downtown is a place where all different peoples, cultures, and communities can come together. (Dombrowski and Talmage 2014, 40)

A city's soul lies in the diversity that embraces cultures of all origin. (Jung 2014)

For development, it is crucial that appropriate leverage points for positive change are found *(where)*. It is also necessary that community needs and assets be elucidated and the desired changes for development be agreed upon *(what)*. But, it is equally important to consider *who* will be leading development efforts, *who* will be affected by any changes, *who* has a say in proposed and implemented changes, and *who* resides within or makes up the membership of a particular community (Mahoney et al. 2014; Talmage 2014). Thus, community-wide data collection is core to our work (Mahoney et al. 2014).

To answer the question, "Who is downtown?," both traditional and nontraditional methods were used. A doctoral student examined U.S. Census data bounded in the vicinity of downtown Phoenix to explore the sub-question, "Who is downtown Phoenix?" Other university faculty and students on the We Are Downtown team then utilized nontraditional methods, such as artistic and community-involved efforts, to address a second sub-question, "Who are downtown Phoenix's stakeholders?"

Who is Downtown Phoenix?

Phoenix, you've given me all, and now I'm something. (Dombrowski 2012)

The doctoral student was able to capture the demographics of the downtown vicinity using the American FactFinder search and data collection utility provided by the U.S. Census Bureau. Census tracts (CTs) were deemed as the best geographic unit for analyses because they did not overextend outside the designated urban downtown area like zip codes did. The census data revealed a useful portrait of the downtown area. Census data summaries are provided below and in Tables 1 through 7 as examples of the kinds of information that can be accessed and analyzed by students in their applied community learning experiences.

Eleven census tracts—CT(s) 1129, 1130, 1131, 1132.01, 1132.02, 1132.03, 1140, 1141, 1142, 1143.01, 1143.02—were included in the demographic investigation for this initiative (U.S. Census Bureau 2008–2012). These census tracts encompassed the same geographic area pictured in the *where* portion of this initiative; thus, these assessed tracts spanned three miles north and south and four miles east and west. Selected

social, economic, housing, and individual background characteristics were downloaded and explored from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The social make up of downtown Phoenix consists of around 9,109 households and more than 22,000 persons. Average household sizes amongst the eleven census tracts ranged from 1.23 to 3.71 persons, and the average family size ranged from 2.40 to 4.65 persons. Single persons (more without children than with) make up the majority of households (just over 70 percent). There also appear to be more adult men than women in the area. The educational attainment of individuals appears almost to be divided into three equal categories: 1) residents without a high school education, 2) residents with a high school education, and 3) residents with a college degree or higher. Table 1 illustrates social characteristics from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 1. The Social Characteristics of Downtown Phoenix

Social Characteristic	Total Number	Percent of Total	Margin of Error*	Error Percent*
Total Households	9,109	-	1,142	12.54%
Families	4,339	47.63%	1,020	23.51%
Families with Children	2,301	25.26%	874	37.98%
Married Couples	2,151	23.61%	834	38.77%
Married Couples with Children	896	9.84%	594	66.29%
Single Fathers	583	6.40%	429	73.58%
Single Fathers with Children	286	3.14%	321	112.24%
Single Mothers	1,605	17.62%	762	47.48%
Single Mothers with Children	1,119	12.28%	697	62.29%
Nonfamilies	4,770	52.37%	1,091	22.87%
Singles (living alone)	3,949	43.35%	1,002	25.37%
Singles (65 and older)	834	9.16%	374	44.84%
Households with Children	2,607	28.62%	897	34.41%
Households (65 and older)	1,590	17.46%	552	34.72%
Total Population in Households	22,167	–	4,077	18.39%
Householder	9,109	41.09%	1,142	12.54%
Spouse	2,144	9.67%	829	38.67%
Children	6,672	30.10%	2,133	31.97%
Other Relatives	1,975	8.91%	1,333	67.49%
Nonrelatives	2,267	10.23%	1,204	53.11%

Unmarried Partner	900	4.06%	614	68.22%
Total Persons (15 and older)	20,426	92.15%	4,416	21.62%
Men	11,857	53.49%	2,603	21.95%
Women	8,569	38.66%	1,813	21.16%
Never Married	11,124	50.18%	3,844	34.56%
Married (not separated)	5,101	23.01%	1,862	36.50%
Separated	672	3.03%	698	103.87%
Widowed	803	3.62%	716	89.17%
Divorced	2,726	12.30%	1,428	52.38%
Grandparents with Children	88	0.40%	81	92.05%
Responsible for Grandchildren	54	0.24%	73	135.19%
Total Persons (25 and older)	16,251	73.31%	2,877	17.70%
Less than 9th Grade Education	3,277	14.78%	1,429	43.61%
9th to 12th Grade Education (no diploma)	2,044	9.22%	986	48.24%
High School Diploma or Equivalent	4,635	20.91%	1,509	32.56%
Some College (no degree)	2,698	12.17%	1,021	37.84%
Associate's Degree	746	3.37%	600	80.43%
Bachelor's Degree	1,879	8.48%	942	50.13%
Graduate or Professional Degree	972	4.38%	557	57.30%

*Margin of Errors and Error Percentages are based on a summation of the 11 census tracts' error values.

The economic characteristics of downtown residents show that from the just more than 20,000 population of persons 16 and older that there are slightly less than 10,000 persons in the civilian labor force. The unemployment rate for residents in the labor force is 13.28 percent. Most workers drive their automobiles alone to work (62.10 percent); however, around a third of workers walk, take public transportation, carpool to work, or utilize other means (i.e., bicycle). Also, around 30 percent of residents in downtown Phoenix are without a vehicle to drive. The average commute time for workers ranges from 16.8 minutes to 28.2 minutes amongst the eleven census tracts.

Management, business, science, and arts occupations appear most prevalent, and the largest industry for employment is the educational services, and health care and social assistance industry. Almost 80 percent of workers are privately employed, but almost 14

percent of earners are employed by a government agency. Around 6 percent of workers are self-employed, and around 2 percent of workers work from home in the area.

The median household income ranged from $15,767 to $39,046 amongst the eleven census tracts, while the mean household income ranged from $20,854 to $58,509. The percentage of all families whose income in the past twelve months was below the poverty level ranged from 13.0 percent to 63.3 percent (for all families) and 20.9 percent to 67.3 percent (for all people). Around 23 percent of residents received food stamps or SNAP benefits. Additionally, 30 percent of residents indicated they did not have health insurance, and it appears that 19 percent of children in the area were also without health insurance. Tables 2 and 3 illustrate these selected economic characteristics from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 2. The Worker Characteristics of Downtown Phoenix

Economic Characteristic	Total Number	Percent of Total	Margin of Error*	Error Percent*
Population (16 and older)	20,088	–	3,319	16.52%
In Civilian Labor Force	9,915	49.36%	2,192	22.11%
Employed	8,598	86.72%	2,058	23.94%
Unemployed	1,317	13.28%	930	70.62%
In Armed Forces Labor Force	10	0.05%	152	1520.00%
Not in Labor Force	10,163	50.59%	2,800	27.55%
Total Commuters (16 and older)	8,419	–	2,072	24.61%
Drive Automobile (alone)	5,228	62.10%	1,586	30.34%
Drive Automobile (carpool)	804	9.55%	591	73.51%
Public Transportation (not taxicab)	649	7.71%	647	99.69%
Walkers	631	7.49%	444	70.36%
Other Means	649	7.71%	584	89.98%
Work at Home	458	2.28%	413	90.17%
Civilians Employed (16 and older)	8,598	–	2,058	23.94%
Management, Business, Science, and Arts Occupations	2,838	33.01%	1,023	36.05%
Service Occupations	1,975	22.97%	1,052	53.27%
Sales and Office Occupations	1,985	23.09%	1,059	53.35%
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance Occupations	895	10.41%	690	77.09%

Production, Transportation, and Material Moving Occupations	905	10.53%	599	66.19%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining Industry	115	1.34%	239	207.83%
Construction Industry	530	6.16%	472	89.06%
Manufacturing Industry	596	6.93%	480	80.54%
Wholesome Trade Industry	140	1.63%	206	147.14%
Retail Trade Industry	866	10.07%	667	77.02%
Information Industry	328	3.81%	375	114.33%
Transportation and Warehousing, and Utilities Industry	308	3.58%	348	112.99%
Finance and Insurance, and Real Estate and Rental and Leasing Industry	623	7.25%	504	80.90%
Professional, Scientific and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management Industry	1,233	14.34%	689	55.88%
Educational Services, and Health Care and Social Assistance Industry	1,632	18.98%	719	44.06%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services Industry	1,209	14.06%	810	67.00%
Other Services Except Public Administration Industry	551	6.41%	462	83.85%
Public Administration Industry	467	5.43%	423	90.58%
Private Wage and Salary Workers	6,836	79.51%	1,906	27.88%
Government Workers	1,183	13.76%	655	55.37%
Self-Employed Workers (unincorporated)	547	6.36%	468	85.56%
Unpaid Family Workers	32	0.37%	168	525.00%

*Margin of Errors and Error Percentages are based on a summation of the 11 census tracts' error values.

Table 3. The Income and Health Insurance Characteristics of Downtown Phoenix

Economic Characteristic	Total Number	Percent of Total	Margin of Error*	Error Percent*
Total Households	9,109	–	1,142	12.54%
Less than $10,000	1,995	21.90%	909	45.56%
$10,000 to $14,999	1,192	13.09%	644	54.03%
$15,000 to $24,999	1,713	18.81%	824	48.10%
$25,000 to $34,999	987	10.84%	596	60.39%
$35,000 to $49,999	1,017	11.16%	594	58.41%
$50,000 to $74,999	830	9.11%	567	68.31%
$75,000 to $99,999	556	6.10%	404	72.66%
$100,000 to $149,999	584	6.41%	423	72.43%
$150,000 to $199,999	154	1.69%	246	159.74%
$200,000 or more	81	0.89%	178	219.75%
Receiving Employment Earnings	6,340	69.60%	1,187	18.72%
Drawing Social Security	1,970	21.63%	716	36.35%
Drawing Retirement Income	556	6.10%	387	69.60%
Drawing on Supplemental Security	662	7.27%	432	65.26%
Receiving Cash Public Assistance	414	4.54%	339	81.88%
Receiving Food Stamps and/or SNAP Benefits	2,130	23.38%	413	19.39%
Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population	23,924	–	4,543	18.99%
With Health Insurance Coverage	16,755	70.03%	3,552	21.20%
With Private Health Insurance	7,625	31.87%	2,142	28.09%
With Public Health Insurance	10,260	42.89%	3,084	30.06%
No Health Insurance	7,169	29.97%	3,065	42.75%
Population of Children (under 18)	5,991	25.04%	599	10.00%
Children with No Health Insurance	1,153	19.25%	1,259	109.19%

*Margin of Errors and Error Percentages are based on a summation of the 11 census tracts' error values.

There appears to be around 11,501 housing units available in downtown Phoenix, and 79 percent of these units are occupied. Only 26 percent of those are owner-occupied, while 74 percent are renter-occupied. The homeowner vacancy rate ranges from 0.0 percent to 26.6 percent and the rental vacancy rate ranges from 0.0 percent to 29.9 percent amongst the eleven census tracts. The median monthly owner costs $979 to $2,140 for those with a mortgage and $324 to $710 for those without a mortgage. The median gross rent costs ranges from $573 to $769 amongst the eleven census tracts. The average household size of owner occupied units ranges from 1.32 to 4.55, and the average household size of renter-occupied units ranges from 1.21 to 3.21. Finally, the majority of residents appear to have moved into their current unit starting in the year 2000 or later.

Regarding the actual units, the median housing values range from $76,600 to $300,000 amongst the eleven census tracts. The largest proportion of dwellings are multi-housing, consisting of more than twenty units. By proportion, most dwellings appear to have been built after the year 2000 or before the year 1940. The median room size ranges from 2.8 to 4.6 rooms, and most homes contain at least one or two bedrooms. Finally, some housing units lack heat, lack complete plumbing systems, lack complete kitchen facilities, and are without telephone service. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate these selected housing characteristics from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Table 4. The Housing Characteristics of Downtown Phoenix

Housing Characteristic	Total Number	Percent of Total	Margin of Error*	Error Percent*
Total Housing Units	11,501	–	817	7.10%
Occupied Housing Units	9,109	79.20%	1,142	12.54%
Vacant Housing Units	2,392	20.80%	936	39.13%
Owner-Occupied	2,380	20.69%	778	32.69%
With a Mortgage	1,701	14.79%	704	41.39%
Without a Mortgage	679	5.90%	445	65.54%
Renter-Occupied	6,729	58.51%	1,189	17.67%
1-Unit Detached Dwelling	4,030	35.04%	866	21.49%
1-Unit Attached Dwelling	513	4.46%	435	84.80%
2-Units	1,043	9.07%	639	61.27%
3 or 4-Units	1,341	11.66%	749	55.85%
5 to 9 Units	778	6.76%	571	73.39%
10 to 19 Units	929	8.08%	550	59.20%
20 or more Units	2,762	24.02%	611	22.12%

Mobile Home	105	0.91%	223	212.38%
Built 2010 or later	150	1.30%	245	163.33%
Built 2000 to 2009	2,474	21.51%	852	34.44%
Built 1990 to 1999	1,115	9.69%	601	53.90%
Built 1980 to 1989	780	6.78%	492	63.08%
Built 1970 to 1979	663	5.76%	500	75.41%
Built 1960 to 1969	1,162	10.10%	690	59.38%
Built 1950 to 1959	1,257	10.93%	734	58.39%
Built 1940 to 1949	1,082	9.41%	614	56.75%
Built 1939 or earlier	2,818	24.50%	413	14.66%
1 Room	1,488	12.94%	777	52.22%
2 Rooms	873	7.59%	486	55.67%
3 Rooms	2,826	24.57%	950	33.62%
4 Rooms	2,944	25.60%	1,011	34.34%
5 Rooms	1,815	15.78%	800	44.08%
6 Rooms	677	5.89%	487	71.94%
7 Rooms	369	3.21%	328	88.89%
8 Rooms	311	2.70%	291	93.57%
9 Rooms or more	198	1.72%	255	128.79%
No Bedroom	1,572	13.67%	781	49.68%
1 Bedroom	3,598	31.28%	1,006	27.96%
2 Bedrooms	3,626	31.53%	1,045	28.82%
3 Bedrooms	2,061	17.92%	797	38.67%
4 Bedrooms	493	4.29%	398	80.73%
5 or more Bedrooms	151	1.31%	234	154.97%
No Heat	159	1.38%	223	140.25%
Lack of Complete Plumbing	60	0.52%	194	323.33%
Lack of Complete Kitchen	194	1.69%	249	128.35%
No Telephone Service	920	8.00%	595	64.67%

*Margin of Errors and Error Percentages are based on a summation of the 11 census tracts' error values.

Table 5. Occupant Characteristics of Downtown Phoenix

Occupant Characteristic	Total Number	Percent of Total	Margin of Error*	Error Percent*
Occupied Housing Units	9,109	–	1,142	12.54%
No Vehicles Available	2,718	29.84%	949	34.92%
1 Vehicle Available	3,954	43.41%	1,109	28.05%
2 Vehicles Available	1,916	21.03%	767	40.03%
3 or more Vehicles Available	521	5.72%	384	73.70%
Moved in 2010 or later	2,049	22.49%	833	40.65%
Moved in 2000 to 2009	5,387	59.14%	1,223	22.70%
Moved in 1990 to 1999	678	7.44%	437	64.45%
Moved in 1980 to 1989	549	6.03%	415	75.59%
Moved in 1970 to 1979	266	2.92%	269	101.13%
Moved in 1969 or earlier	180	1.98%	231	128.33%

*Margin of Errors and Error Percentages are based on a summation of the 11 census tracts' error values.

Downtown Phoenix residents range in age from 24.4 to 40.6 years of age amongst the eleven census tracts. Based on frequency, most residents appear to be between twenty to fifty-four years of age. Around 10 percent of the population is 62 or older, and less than a quarter of the population is younger than eighteen. Again, there are more men than women by proportion in the area. Finally, the largest racial background observed is White, followed by Hispanic/Latino, Black or African American, and other races. Tables 6 and 7 outline the age and sex and racial/ethnic characteristics, respectively.

Table 6. Age and Sex Characteristics of Downtown Phoenix Residents

Resident Characteristic	Total Number	Percent of Total	Margin of Error*	Error Percent*
Total Population	25,572	–	4,660	18.22%
Male	14,206	55.55%	3,061	21.55%
Female	11,366	44.45%	2,715	23.89%
Under 5 years	1,586	6.20%	909	57.31%
5 to 9 years	2,162	5.72%	1,339	73.70%
10 to 14 years	1,398	5.47%	845	60.44%
15 to 19 years	1,591	6.22%	978	61.47%

20 to 24 years	2,584	10.10%	1,311	50.74%
25 to 34 years	4,939	19.31%	1,762	35.68%
35 to 44 years	3,836	15.00%	1,310	34.15%
45 to 54 years	3,313	12.96%	1,238	37.37%
55 to 59 years	1,075	4.20%	681	63.35%
60 to 64 years	1,099	4.30%	721	65.61%
65 to 74 years	1,347	5.27%	669	49.67%
75 to 84 years	427	1.67%	269	63.00%
85 years and older	215	0.84%	300	139.53%
18 years and older	19,580	76.57%	3,247	16.58%
21 years and older	18,227	71.28%	3,051	16.74%
62 years and older	2,594	10.14%	969	37.36%
65 years and older	1,989	7.78%	793	39.87%

*Margin of Errors and Error Percentages are based on a summation of the 11 census tracts' error values.

Table 7. Racial Backgrounds of Downtown Phoenix Residents

Resident Characteristic	Total Number	Percent of Total	Margin of Error*	Error Percent*
Total Population	25,572	–	4,660	18.22%
One Race	25,295	98.92%	4,641	18.35%
Two or More Races	277	1.08%	332	119.86%
White	20,366	79.64%	4,398	21.59%
Black and African American	3,165	5.72%	1,687	73.70%
American Indian and Alaska Native	739	2.89%	789	106.77%
Asian	354	1.38%	415	117.23%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander 736.36%	22	0.09%	162	
Some Other Race	1,214	4.75%	964	79.41%
Hispanic or Latino	14,701	57.49%	3,955	26.90%

*Margin of Errors and Error Percentages are based on a summation of the 11 census tracts' error values.

Who are Downtown Phoenix's Stakeholders?

We—the poets and artists and scholars—live in the heart of you, and your complex network of chambers and arteries and valves are our fodder.—RD (Dombrowski 2012)

It's not what the city has to offer, but what you have to offer to the city.— Michael Bartelt (Waltz 2014)

We need to recognize the psyches and personalities of our urban communities (Mahoney et al. 2014; Ward 2007). Both students and faculty recognized this notion as they reflected on this applied community learning experience. The team reflected in their chapbook, "Demographics alone do not provide us with the tools we need to understand diversity, but the real question is, 'Who gets to decide what is diversity for our downtown?'" (Dombrowski and Talmage 2014, 41). This question might also be phrased, "Who wants to decide what diversity is for our downtown?" Consistently, McCann (2002) writes, "A major concern . . . in recent decades has been to analyze how and in whose interests local space economies are produced and reproduced" (385).

Thus, the posture assumed by the We Are Downtown team and the students involved in the applied community learning experience was that everyone deserves a say in the future of downtown Phoenix (Waltz 2014). One graduate student commented, "Everyone has something at stake with downtown's success" (Waltz 2014). Because of the aforementioned assumption and the large scale involved, the initiative and the team were left with a conundrum. The team reflected their posture in their chapbook:

> *In our quest to better understand the diversity of downtown, what we discovered was that **the more possible it seemed, the more impossible it became**. And so what we discovered was merely the paradox of discovery—the impossibility of identifying diversity amongst diversity . . . Ultimately, in order to discover the answer to **who is downtown**, you must first ask, **who are you**?* (Dombrowski and Talmage 2014, 41)

The initiative needed to be retooled and reinvigorated not only through self- and team-reflection but also through further conversations with downtown stakeholders in and about the downtown community. Both reflection and change appeared crucial to the success of future applied community learning experiences.

The Chapbook and the Community Showcase

Events make cities exciting. Everyday spaces can be successfully inviting.— Jeff Speck (2014)

Two mediums served as tangible products created from the applied community learning experience: 1) a documentary film; and 2) a chapbook. The answers to the broad essential questions posed by the team and the students were compiled into a

fifty-page chapbook. An electronic version was made available online on the university's website (Dombrowski and Talmage 2014). Two hundred printed copies were distributed at a community showcase in May 2014.

The community showcase was held at a local film bar, which had an auditorium where patrons would be able to view movies. The location was chosen, because the bar fell within the found heart of the community and because the We Are Documentary (Waltz 2014) was going to be unveiled at the event. Doors opened for the event at 5:00 p.m. on a Monday in May 2014.

The event was publicized through press releases, emails, word-of-mouth from local community leaders, university channels, websites, and social media. Over one hundred and fifty university and community members were in attendance at the event. Each attendee received a chapbook, and a few of them received extras to pass on to others. Two showings were offered for the documentary. The showings were followed by a Q&A with the university student documentarian and the rest of the We Are Downtown team that were in attendance. Of those in attendance, only ten persons were a part of the initiative's team.

Lessons Learned

Downtown is still the beating heart of Phoenix.—We Are Downtown initiative facilitator and graduate student (Waltz 2014)

Mediums

The applied community learning experience despite its scale and limitations appeared to be a successful endeavor for students, faculty, and community members. The team found film to be a great medium for community conversations. The gathering to screen the film allowed diversity not only to be talked about and/or heard, but diversity also was seen by looking each other in the eyes and listening to each other's conversations and comments during the Q&A session. This is consistent with previous uses of film in and outside of classrooms to discuss community and social issues (Lawler 2014). Film as a gathering mechanism in research initiatives also helps answers Lynton's (1983) call to "reexamine the ways in which we disseminate the results of our work" (23). In general, critical analyses of media portrayals of downtown areas and lifestyles by students are useful learning experiences (Liu and Blomley 2013).

The chapbook also was noted as a useful takeaway. There were no chapbooks left after the event ended. Community and university members and leaders alike asked if they could take extra copies to their friends, family members, co-workers, and others they knew had an interest in the success of downtown Phoenix. Notably, emails came in after the event wondering when the chapbook and documentary would both be available for viewing online. Within a couple of months, both were made available online.

Conversations

Thus, the conversations and communication continued after the event. Intrigue was established. The broad essential questions utilized in this applied community learning experience helped catalyze the community conversations during and after the event (Pstross, Talmage, and Knopf, forthcoming).

It was clear through conversations at the community event and reflections by the We Are Downtown team that the conversations held during the project did not sufficiently capture the entirety of diversity in downtown Phoenix. For example, urban planning information, such as physical diversity was missing. More work was still needed to discover diversity, such as mapping downtown assets (Kretzman and McKnight 1993), conducting psychogeography in the downtown area (Coverley 2012), and noting the urban area's walkability (Speck 2012, 2014). Overall, the project served well to discover the downtown style; however, new urbanism is not only about style but also about design (Speck 2014).

Motivations

From the outset of the project, the We Are Downtown team realized that they were essentially working without funding. The funds from the small-grant were designated for some personnel costs and the costs associated with the event. Thus, proper motivation was essential for all those involved.

Extrinsic motivators are useful but usually are not the best approach with long-term projects (Deci and Ryan 1985; Herzberg 1987; Sachau 2007). With no money, the students needed to be pushed to perform well in their roles aside from the motive to achieve a high grade in the class. Though anecdotal, the team noted that students who were able to participate (alone or in groups) autonomously and artistically contributed the most to this project. For example, the undergraduate students that decided to take pictures (for extra credit in the course) tended to be more excited about their project and more detailed and thorough in their work. Not surprisingly, autonomy and interesting work are key to successful individual engagement in the workplace (Herzberg 1987; Sachau 2007).

The graduate students and faculty involved were initially extrinsically intrigued by this applied community learning experience because it would help them develop professionally (i.e., potential publications) and make new connections within the downtown Phoenix community. Their motivations appeared to shift to more intrinsic motives as they began to become intrinsically interested in the idea of diversity and how to suitably conduct community research with undergraduate students and without a great deal of financial capital. The applied community learning experience moved these graduate students and faculty to remain involved as the university-community initiative looked towards its future.

Stimulating Interest in the Interim

After this first applied community learning experience finished, a few members of the We Are Downtown team stayed formally engaged in the community. For example, one doctoral student interviewed downtown community leaders and members about meaning-making in downtown. This helped stimulate interest in the initiative over the summer; meanwhile, overall, it was on a summer hiatus.

But in the following fall semester, the team realized that time was not on their side. A great deal of public relations effort seemed to be needed to keep community stakeholders interested. Communication went out to those previously involved to keep them titillated until the formal processes for the next phase of the initiative were designed and implemented in the spring semester.

Taking It a Step Further

We must embrace change, because with change means opportunity.—Chancellor Syverud (2014, 2)

Changes were made to initiative by the team, so that future applied community learning experiences might succeed. The team realized there would likely be transitions in university and community leadership. The team also noted that any future applied community learning experiences needed to be even more locally adapted. Local adaptation is necessary for authentic partnerships between communities and universities in community research efforts (Mahoney et al. 2014).

What was clearer after the first portion of this initiative is that a more pinpointed approach is needed for exploring diversity and for connecting university and community members and leaders. For example, recent conversations led by graduate students and faculty with community-based association leaders have shown that there is still a large disconnect between associations in the area. Students and faculty through applied community learning experiences can access important community entry points that might be used for future assessments and to catalyze future conversations amongst area stakeholders. Table 8 contains a list of eighteen possible entry points to discover diversity and inclusion in an urban downtown area.

Table 8. Entry Points for Exploring Diversity and Inclusion in Downtown Areas

1 City Personnel	10 Educational Institution Leaders, Workers, and Students
2 Safety/Emergency Services Personnel	11 Nonprofit Leaders, Workers, and Clients
3 Faith-Based Association Leaders	12 Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Workers and Users
4 Cultural/Arts Leaders and Creators	13 Mass Media Personnel (i.e. Journalists and Publishers)
5 Community-Based Association Leaders	14 Underground Media Personnel
6 Political Association Leaders	15 Grassroots Leaders and Members
7 Tourism Leaders and Workers	16 Ethnic-Based Group Leaders and Members
8 Big Business Leaders and Workers	17 Public Service Leaders and Workers
9 Small Business Leaders and Workers	18 Public Transportation Workers and Users

The theme for the next implementation of the initiative and its future applied community learning experiences has been changed to focus not only on diversity but now to explore the importance of *inclusion and/or inclusiveness* in the downtown Phoenix story. The aim is to connect those disconnected to help strengthen the bonds between those already working together and to build bridges between those not yet connected in the downtown area. Consistently, Richard Gaurasci (2014) notes that university-community partnership and engagement is an essential building block for an intercultural and interracial democratic society.

Conclusion

> *Downtown Phoenix is ubiquitous; it's where we meet, and it's where create, but then we take what we create elsewhere, and so that mean's downtown Phoenix is everywhere.*—RD (Waltz 2014)

> *There is much more to this mural than context and what meets the eye.*—Alex Stevenson (2014)

The applied community learning experience sought to discover what diversity is in the context of downtown Phoenix, Arizona. As with most endeavors, the experience left students and faculty members with more questions and opportunities than answers and action plans. Academic initiatives, even those embedded in the community, seem more predisposed to this style, whilst local governments tackle searches for comprehensive solutions (Mahoney et al. 2014).

University initiatives like the one previously described can act as powerful experiences that motivate our faculty members, current students, and even alumni to continue to stay connected to and civically involved with our universities and our communities

(Busteed 2014). Thus, it may be more important in our community engagement work to focus on *how* and *why* the work is carried out rather than *what* was reported (Busteed 2014; Primavera 1999). Finally, universities and communities together must recognize that "in the ecology of knowledge in modern society, efforts to enhance the utilization of knowledge are every bit as essential and as challenging as activities toward the creation of knowledge" (Lynton 1991, 3).

Communities thrive on diversity (Florida 2005; Speck 2012). Creative class expert, Richard Florida (2005), notes that both diverse places and diverse people attract talent (like students) to a city. He states, "Talented people are attracted to locations that have a high degree of demographic diversity and are distinguished by a high degree of openness and relatively low barriers to entry" (100). Allen Scott (2010) proclaims, "The city is a powerful fountainhead of creativity," (115) and diversity appears necessary to the city's success. University faculty and students need to be a part of conversations regarding diversity, and applied community learning experiences can help start and sustain the dialogue between both community and university members regarding the subject.

Urban downtown cores must recognize that "people will be moving back to the city," and ask, "Will they be moving back to your city or to someone else's?" (Speck 2012, 23). Diversity appears to be a fundamental part of any city's answer (Florida 2005). The hope is that the answers that spring forth from our downtown urban communities resemble how Patrick Stump sings about his city: "This city is my city. / And I love it, yeah I love it. / I was born and raised here. / I got it made here. / And if I have my way, I'm gonna stay" (Stump 2011). If sung in unison (metaphorically) by both universities and communities, together our downtown urban cores may be revitalized, and our talented faculty, students, and community members will stay and thrive.

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