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On Becoming a People's College: Placemaking as Hidden Curriculum

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Abstract

This research was originally presented as a chapter in the doctoral dissertation *On Becoming a People's College: An Appreciative Inquiry*. Appreciative Inquiry (Ai) is a participatory approach to organizational change focused on an affirmative topic choice. The topic choice of the dissertation was equity, democracy, and justice at the selected site. This article shares the motivations and relevant characteristics of the chosen fieldwork site, De Anza College. Three categories of considerations for the role of place and placemaking within the institution's hidden curriculum are described: institutional identities, organizational features, and resource scarcity. These characteristics are followed by a discussion of levers of change for enhancing the role of placemaking within the hidden curriculum: prefigurative politics, creativity, and the Anchor Institution approach.

Keywords: community college, placemaking, hidden curriculum, institutional identity, organizational features, prefigurative politics, anchor institution

Introduction

The site for this study, De Anza College, was selected based on a rich history of institutional intentionality for civic learning and democratic engagement. It is one of the first community colleges with an academic certificate in leadership for social justice. It has one of the highest transfer rates in the California community college system. In the last fifteen years, the institution transformed to focus more efforts on typically underserved and historically marginalized students. These factors make for an intriguing case for examining the role of civic learning and democratic engagement at the community college. Place was not originally an area of focus for the purposes of the study.

The site is located in the heart of Silicon Valley and draws nearly 45% of its student body from San Jose (Institutional Research & Planning, 2017). The annual student headcount is approximately 22,000. Ethnic demographics are as follows: 39% Asian, 27% Hispanic, 20% White, 7% Filipino, 4% Black, 2% unrecorded, less than 1% Pacific Islander, and less than 0.5% Native American. Put differently, the "student body is extraordinarily diverse, with no racial or ethnic majority" (Murphy, 2014, p. 20), setting a "national standard not only for educational excellence but also for a comprehensive commitment to social justice" (Elfman, 2018, p. 24).

Literature Review

De Anza is situated in the heart of one of the world's most powerful economic epicenters, Silicon Valley. Tom Izu, Faculty Director for the History Center describes Silicon Valley as an intellectually ahistorical place. Individuals are alienated from their communities through layers of the fantastical idea of place. He said people live in general disconnection from their communities and any historical context. There is little understanding of how real people live due to constant pressure within consumer culture and the exclusion of stories that describe historical segregation and the oppressive environment shaped during the Cold War.

Apple (2004) describes the hidden curriculum as the "tacit teaching to students of norms, values, and dispositions that goes on simply by their living in and coping with the institutional expectations and routines…" (p. 13). Hidden curriculum challenges educators to think about their roles within the context of institutional, academic, and cultural norms. The Project for Public Spaces (2007) describes placemaking as a collective reimagination and reinvention of public spaces with "particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution" (para 1). What follows is a brief exploration of literature supporting the case for place and placemaking's role in the understood institutional curriculum.

Placemaking through public art has been described as a recruitment and retention strategy for community colleges (Knight, 2016). Public art is one of many ways to create more welcoming, attractive, and fun spaces (PPS, 2007), especially considering how public art comes into existence. For example, at De Anza, many murals were commissioned through student lead processes, designed and installed by students. These participatory decision-making processes speak to the belief that "commitment to the democratic capacity of our students requires institutional intentionality and public conversation" (Murphy, 2014, p. 23). The cocreation of public spaces through public dialogue becomes one of many ways of cultivating the democratic capacity of students. Power dynamics are an important consideration for placemaking on college campuses (Davies et al., 2016).

Following Levin and Monterro-Hernandez (2009), this study examines De Anza College (DA) with an organizational-cultural perspective. They combine organizational identity theory and culture theory to research the dynamic relationships within institutions and institutional actors. Through this combination, the study attends to the subjectivity and agency of the individuals. The study also explores the sociocultural contexts that mediate "individuals' development and expressions of their subjectivity, intentionality, and power" (p. 15). Finally, it emphasizes "complexity as a central feature of social life that can be explained by examining the recreation of larger institutional structures in the process of everyday interaction in a given setting" (p. 15). Overall, this lens supports describing "community colleges not as homogeneous organizations but as unique organizations that develop particular social dynamics on their own" (Levin & Montero-Hernandez, 2009, p. 15). These dynamics constitute a culture that has a direct impact on the learning environment for students.

Methodology

Appreciative Inquiry (Ai) is a method focused on organizational change. As such, most literature implies a broad level of institutional buy-in throughout the process. My approach to Ai took a grassroots approach rather than a top-down approach. Typically, Ai convenes stakeholders with the explicit purpose of participating in the process. Instead, I found many ways for my process to coincide with existing meetings and met with people whenever it worked in their schedules.

AI takes a positive orientation to inquiry. Rather than focusing on injustices and inequities like much of critical qualitative research, Ai instead emphasizes strengths rather than deficits. In Ai, we focus the energy of the inquiry on the positive outcome(s) we hope to accomplish rather than the multitude of challenges, inequities, and injustices we encounter. Put simply, "What we focus on becomes our reality" (Hammond, 1998, p. 26).

Appreciative Inquiry (Ai) "as a methodology that takes the idea of social construction of reality to its positive extreme" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005, p.7). Participants' perceptions are an

essential factor when considering a socially constructed reality. Ai uses "practical action research" (Kemmis et al., 2014, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 56) as an approach to change management. Ai focuses on the positive core of organizational life and the belief that "Human systems grow in the direction of what they persistently ask questions about, and this propensity is strongest and most sustainable when the means and ends of inquiry are positively correlated" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Cohen, Brawer, and Kisker (2014) situate the American community college within a larger belief that "since its founding the United States has been more dedicated to the belief that all individuals should have the opportunity to rise to their greatest potential" (p. 10) and that "all barriers to individual development should be broken down" (p. 10). The positive core positions community colleges as uniquely situated to foster democracy.

The theoretical framework employed for this study is Critical Constructivism. A critical constructivist research paradigm examines the socially constructed world and asks, "what are the forces that construct the consciousness, the ways of seeing of the actors who live it?" (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 34). This paradigm takes an unapologetic stance toward liberation and seeks relational truths. My choice for this theoretical perspective and subsequent methodological choices are grounded in the recognition that "the paradigms by which we see the world are inextricably linked to our value systems as legitimate scholars" (Butin, 2006, p. 488). There is certainly not a single type of community college student or a unitary way in which community college students see the world.

Data collection followed the 5-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry, including define, discover, dream, and design, with this and additional manuscripts constituting the delivery phase. Data collection was an immersive experience; I spent more than an entire academic quarter full-time on campus. The approach to data collection utilized the participant-observer of an ethnographic inquiry (Emerson et al., 2011). The Academic Senate and the Equity Action council were viewed as high-priority groups in which I participated in every meeting during my fieldwork. I also participated in departmental meetings, professional development programming, campus conferences, events, and individual interviews with key stakeholders. The resulting data represents over 100 interactions, including individual informal interviews, classroom presentations, observations, meeting participation, and informal discussions. Additionally, we surveyed over 100 students as part of a Participatory Action Research project with the Vasconcellos Institute for Democracy in Action (VIDA) Coordinator and VIDA student interns.

Overall, the analysis leveraged the field journal to employ a constant-comparative approach to the analysis found in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014). Analytic memos were developed following each phase. These memos summarized all interactions for the phase and created searchable documents. At the end of the design phase, I wrote a method narrative by reviewing

all memos. The narrative provided an opportunity to revisit the data and the entire experience, in addition to the memos focused on each phase.

Findings

This section represents an exploration of findings from the study relevant to place-based learning. Findings will be discussed across two main themes: institutional identities and organizational features. The institutional identities addressed are specific to the study sight and may provide insight into some elements of institutional identities. The organizational features discuss particular characteristics of the site and are more generally applicable to community colleges.

Institutional Identities

There were three distinct institutional identities identified through this study. At times, the identities can exist together, while in other situations, one identity leads more prominently. The discussion here aims to offer some provocation for the ways institutional identity contributes to a sense of place and its implications for placemaking.

The Stanford of Community Colleges

De Anza's front page boasts the phrase 'Tops in Transfer.' This statement highlights a long history of DA being at or near the highest transfer rates in the California Community College system. In addition, data available on the Transfer Velocity website from the CCC Chancellor's Office confirms that De Anza is a leader in both the number of students who transfer and the rates at which students transfer. The following represents a summary of cohorts from 1995-1996 through 2010-2011 based on eight years to transfer.

Over the 16 years of available data, De Anza averaged between the third and fourth highest number of students transferred and between first and second for the percentage of transferred students based on the cohort (transfer rate) in California. Compared to the system, De Anza 's lowest rank for the number of transfers was the seventh highest in the system, and the transfer rate was higher than any of the six schools that transferred more students. De Anza 's average transfer rate was over 15% higher than the total state average. This, in combination with its proximity to Stanford University, has made 'Stanford of Community Colleges' a common nickname for De Anza. The desirable components of this identity include academic excellence and diversity, while the negative components portray academic elitism and isolationism.

Both Rob Mieso, Vice President for Student Services and Juan Gamboa, Intercultural Studies Instructor, identified this institutional identity as potentially problematic and elitist. Mieso focuses on demonstrating a commitment to historically underserved communities, showing potential students they could feel safe, supporting programs where students feel a sense of belonging, and maintaining lasting relationships with high schools and counselors (Personal Communication, 16 May 2019). Gamboa seeks to refocus education around collective action rather than perpetuating social stratification. He dreams of De Anza at the forefront of challenging inequality and global climate change. (Personal Communication, 09 MAY 2019).

De Anza College

The theme of De Anza College to a demanding and fast-paced work culture. Top-down management creates environments where student-facing employees and faculty feel a constant demand to satisfy administrative expectations while fostering meaningful relationships with students. From facilitating weekend learning excursions and having no break before the start of Monday classes to the challenges of working with students without fundamental reading, writing, and math skills, many faculty described feeling consistently overwhelmed by the demands they face.

Many of the pressures felt at De Anza College systemic. For example, the California Community College system uses a calculation called FTES or full-time equivalent students to determine college operating budgets (Mullen & Justice, 2018). Faculty productivity in this process is measured by weekly student contact hours (WSCH). This is calculated by full-term, regularly scheduled classes multiplied by the number of students enrolled in the course at census. A similar Daily Student Contact Hour is calculated for non-full-term courses. The pressures of enrollment are discussed further in the resource scarcity section.

Conversely, Chancellor Oakley and Deputy Chancellor Gonzales (Personal Communication, 12 June 2019) describe the influence of rapid state and national changes on the extensive community college system. Oakley stated clearly, “Higher Education is some of the hardest institutions to deal with change, from demographic shifts (70% of community college faculty are white), dynamic economies demanding more from higher education, and the reality that students have not been successful.” They both described the role of the Chancellor’s Office to take on issues of race, ethnicity, and equal opportunity directly.

“It’s a built-in contradiction, the system takes advantage of people’s desire to make the world a better place” (Anonymous, Personal Communication, 06 June 2019). The culture of De Anza College operates in a hegemonic fashion across the institution. It works to create a perpetual othering between faculty and administration and between institutions and the CCC System. Administrators are viewed as authoritarian and disconnected from the daily realities of the

institution. In contrast, faculty are considered self-serving and unwilling to adapt to the institution's multiple pressures. Students are collateral for contract negotiations and performance funding models in this equation. The essence of these tensions is ubiquitous to community colleges and the field of higher education.

Democracy's College

The theme of Democracy's College refers to institutional intentionality toward democratic engagement. One example is the Leadership and Social Change (LSC) Certificate of Achievement. LSC supports students to "gain in-depth understanding of the social structures that define their worlds, and develop the skills and practical knowledge required to transform those structures and make the world a more equitable place." (*Leadership Certificate*, n.d.). De Anza is one of the first community colleges in the country to have an academic certificate with an explicit emphasis on social justice. There is a growing national effort now supported by the Community Learning Partnership ("Our Affiliates," n.d.).

VIDA embodies De Anza 's mission to "Empower all students to attain their educational goals, develop an equity-based mindset and become civic leaders in their community" and the Institutional Core Competency of "Civic Capacity for Global, Cultural, Social, and Environmental Justice" (*Vision, Mission, and Values*, n.d.). At the LSC Graduation Celebration, each graduate shared remarks with the audience. Their messages spoke to empowerment in the face of adversity, a deep connection with words like home and family, and a responsibility for continuous growth through complexity and diversity.

One of the community college's few traditions is being nontraditional. They maintain a certain fluidity in programming and embody a continual search for improvement and willingness to change and "maintain open channels for individuals, enhancing social mobility that has characterized America, and they accept the idea that society can be better, just as individuals can better their lot within it" (Cohen et al., 2013, p. 43). This speaks to an opportunity for community college students to make unique contributions to society while enhancing their quality of life.

Organizational Features

VIDA is limited by staffing, budget, and overall campus awareness. Director and Professor Cynthia Kaufman posed the question early and often within this project: how can we continue democratizing the institution? We discussed the challenges of institutionalizing democratic engagement in balance with the need to work at the margins not yet embraced by the institution. Martinez Palacios (2016) offers the concepts of vertical and horizontal inclusion as a way to challenge the "reproduction of domination through apparatuses for the extension of democracy"

(p.350). In many ways, higher education exemplifies the idea of domination through democratic ideals. Kaufman refers to this as the Leninist approach to democratization rather than the Freirien approach utilized in VIDA. Martinez Palacios centers Crenshaw's intersectionality to examine democratization and complex oppression. Further, this work offers eleven questions for inclusive democratization: "Is everybody there? Are conditions present that allow the voice, presence, and worldview of marginalized people to be guaranteed?" (Martínez Palacios, 2016, p. 360). These questions frame the following section discussing three critical concepts of De Anza's organization and progress in institutionalizing equity and democratic engagement.

Networks

Network theory examines connection points in complex systems. Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2015) describe four types of networks: centralized, distributed, decentralized, and fragmented. Networks advancing equity and democratic engagement at De Anza most closely resemble the fractal-like decentralized networks, though, at times, they have characteristics or may benefit from attributes of the other networks. Decentralized networks benefit from "efficient communication with a robust structure, enabling considerable flexibility and high adaptability" (Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2015, p. 197). Examples include the interaction of VIDA, HEFAS, and the Public Policy School, which serve separate but complementary and, at times, overlapping purposes at the institution.

The Equity Action Council (EAC) at De Anza offers an additional example of a decentralized network. Even the leadership of EAC comprises a tri-chair to ensure a single voice does not dominate the agenda or discussions. While there is official membership to be a recognized shared governance entity, most meetings are open and welcome guests from the institution and community.

Additional examples within the decentralized network model include the Puente Project working to increase completion, successful transfer, and leadership development for historically underserved students (*Puente Project*, n.d.); the Men of Color Community (MC2 providing "support and empowerment to men of color through active community engagement and facilitated mentoring relationships with student mentors, faculty and staff of color" (*Men of Color Community*, n.d.); the Latina/o Empowerment at De Anza (LEAD) developing leadership skills through course-based service and learning about Latinx history and culture; and the Initiatives to Maximize Positive academic Achievement and Cultural Thriving focusing on Asian American and Pacific Islander students (IMPACT AAPI). This list is not comprehensive but indicates the most prevalent programs identified during the site visit.

Additional efforts, and at times efforts within those described above, can appear as fragmented networks. These are not networks as they lack meta-connectivity but offer the opportunity for

"small explosions of diversity within smaller clusters that might, at some point, come together into a grander network" (Davis et al., 2015, p. 197). While fragmented networks do not contribute to the larger networks, they offer much potential for horizontal and vertical integration from an equity perspective. In addition, fragmented networks create opportunities for the emergence of powerful new ways of understanding when "once-disparate views are juxtaposed" (p. 197). This concept can honor the margins discussed in the introduction of this section. For example, both HEFAS and LEAD began as student-driven projects; institutional resources support both now.

Distributed networks are robust netlike structures. They lack large-scale connectivity and benefit from tight local connectivity. Distributed networks explain many challenges within higher education: "distribution and communication is very inefficient- and, by consequence, phenomena with this structure are highly resistant to change" (Davis et al., 2015, p. 196). A confluence of pressures floods community colleges. "Neoliberal ideas about the public good have framed recent discussions about community colleges, student success, and the public good on our campus in powerful ways" (Sullivan, 2017, p. 296). This raises important questions about when community colleges should adapt under pressure and where they can resist these pressures with the best interest of their students in mind.

Shared Governance

Shared governance in the CCC is comprised of multiple decision-making entities at the institutional level, multiple decision-making entities at the district level, multiple faculty unions and associations at the state level, Boards of Trustees for the 73 districts with oversight for the district, and interaction with state-level decision-making entities, various other statewide entities such as the RP Group, a non-profit, non-partisan team working to increase community college success, a Board of Governors appointed by the Governor, and a Consultation Council comprised of representatives from the statewide entities.

Complexity theory offers the potential for understanding this complex system of decision-making processes. Following the concept of emergence, no one of these entities can be examined in isolation. Instead, the sum of all these parts is "spontaneous, have levels of unpredictability, are irreducible, are context dependent, and are vibrantly sufficient" (Davis et al., 2015, p. 181). The intricacies of the CCC's complex shared governance system go well beyond the scope of this case study; however, complexity theory employs a concept of scale independence, which implies that each layer of a complex system is comparable to the total complexity of the system (Davis et al., 2015). The following discussion focuses on De Anza 's shared governance while acknowledging and, at times, referencing larger shared governance processes.

Following the quote at the start of this section, student involvement in shared governance is a consistent challenge. The De Anza Associated Student Body (DASB) is the central body focused on student participation in shared governance. DASB comprises a president, an executive vice president, and 28 senators. A separately elected position of Student Trustee serves on the District Board of Trustees as a representative of the student body. Both DASB and faculty are quick to point out limitations in DASB 's representation of the student body. "DASB is not representative of the whole student body. Someone can win a seat with only 200 votes out of 16,000 students." (Personal Communication, 17 June 2019). The incoming DASB President echoed this challenge, citing the lack of pay as a barrier for students who need to work or do not have the resources to volunteer a significant amount of their time. "If DASB was more representative, students would feel more connected. I hope to find that balance with communities that already exist" (Personal Communication, 19 June 2019). An incoming DASB member described this as an ongoing challenge at De Anza. He described personality tensions yearly, and some elected members prioritized the personal opportunity associated with the position over public accountability of representing the student body. He poses a central question for the institution: "Is weak student government a personnel problem or a structural one?" (Personal Communication, 17 April 2019). In other words, it may not be enough for institutional actors to acknowledge the limitations of DASB. Instead, the focus should be on how to enhance representation.

One such effort is the development of the *Best Practices for Student Voices in Shared Governance* document, which was updated during the spring academic quarter. VIDA Student Leader, Rex Zhang exercised leadership in updating the document by presenting to several committees and groups for feedback before ultimately getting the updated document adopted by both Faculty Senate and DASB. The document outlines the desire for "members of the De Anza College community to engage in mutually meaningful participation in the process of shared governance" (Best Practices, n.d., para 2). In addition, the document outlines mutual accountability for shared governance groups to solidify student input and participation and for DASB to strive for accountability and communication in student participation.

Proposed changes to district hiring policy highlight the interaction between multiple institutional shared governance entities and district-level shared governance entities. Karen Chow, Faculty Senate President became aware of proposed changes under a sense of urgency that changes would be taking place soon. Faculty Senate discussed the issue and the Equity Action Council had a special meeting to address concerns with the proposed changes. These discussions highlighted communication gaps among shared governance entities and confusion about De Anza 's representation at the District Equity Action Council. De Anza 's EAC ultimately drafted a letter citing these concerns and the need for a substantive decision to follow shared governance. Similar conversations in Academic Senate explored the lack of district hiring policy for presidents.

A noteworthy example highlighting tensions within the CCC shared governance system is the No Confidence vote from the Faculty Association for California Community Colleges. De Anza Academic Senate adopted a similar resolution. Other institutions and groups across the state are following suit. FACCC's original resolution cited the following:

> The office's lack of transparency, disregard for shared governance, lack of prior consultation with faculty and other stakeholders on major initiatives, deficient oversight and fiscal accountability with the online college, and administration of a punitive funding formula that has created a system of winners and losers (Faculty Association of California Community Colleges, 2019, para 2).

The Chancellor and Deputy Chancellor acknowledged this tension. Their perspective described an urgent need to address inequities across the state. I asked them when decisions should be made through public consensus processes and when situations require 'closed-door' decisions. They strive for a balance between the desire to engage and receive input with a need to move the work forward. Chancellor Oakley responded:

> In higher ed[ucation], broadly, we are good at debate, but not so good at coming to an actionable decision. Leaders and administrators are supposed to move things from debate to action. It's always a balancing act. There's no science. It's about leaning on experience and intuition. Democratic processes are always meant to lead to a decision. They should be clear and intentional and focused on action. Action then improves the discussion and debate." (E. Oakley, Personal Communication, 12 June 2019).

Deputy Chancellor Gonzales reiterated that values and theory were always present in Chancellor Oakley's decision-making process and that he is relentlessly advancing the CCC Vision for Success.

Place in Tension

A highlight of how a place can be held in tension between different perspectives involved the District Board of Trustees raising a question regarding an aging building on campus, the Flint Center for Performing Arts. The building hosts several musical groups, performance artists, and speakers throughout the year. Apple Computer launched the first Macintosh computer in the Flint Center.

Members of the community, including some of the groups who performed in the Flint Center as their home venue, gave public comment at the DBOT meeting in support of keeping the Flint Center. Some of the statements referred to the Flint Center as being "De Anza 's best public relations tool" and "families who live here do not send their kids to community college"

(Anonymous, Personal Communication, 10 June 2019). The majority of community members who attended were white and of retirement age. One community member who attended described an online petition that raised over 1500 signatures to support keeping the Flint Center in just a few days.

Members of the De Anza Renters Rights coalition, the De Anza Associated Student Body, and students at large spoke of the challenges they and peers faced regarding housing in the area. Many brought signs and cited statistics from recent studies on housing insecurity on community college campuses. While neither the Academic Senate nor the Classified Senate took an official stance, Faculty Senate President did give a voice of caution about budget constraints and the urge to dream big. She stated it should not be a debate about supporting either housing or performing arts.

The debate was contentious, and at times, members of the community and students engaged in confrontation through the public comment process. Community members voiced that it was acceptable to share a room during college. Students described daily uncertainty about whether they could make ends meet even while working multiple jobs and being students. The board voted 6-1 in favor to:

> Permanently close the Flint Center for Performing Arts and initiate a plan to build a new facility with staff pursuing specific goals that the facility proposed as a result of the planning process directly serve the instructional and student services needs of De Anza College, to the extent possible meet the needs of the community for a cultural venue and civic meeting space, and if possible, generate revenue of its own. (*De Anza District Board of Trustees*, 2019)

This exemplifies students engaging in an organizing process and seeing an immediate result. While the students who showed up may be gone from De Anza before the construction project begins, they contributed to the legacy of community organizing at De Anza that will continue to shape its future.

Challenges

Conversations about the current budget crisis at De Anza were inescapable. Declining enrollments, combined with state funding changes, create continually declining budgets. Brian Murphy, President Emeritus believes changes in state budgets are part of a larger hostile and reactionary agenda. “It is functional to systematically underfund community colleges because it limits the radical potential and narrows everything to a workforce completion agenda” (Personal Communication, 16 April 2019). Gamboa, citing John Trudell (*John Trudell*, n.d.), also situates

messaging of resource scarcity and beliefs that there is simply not enough for everyone within a larger war on the public, on people, and spirit.

The practical impact of the budget crisis on De Anza often manifests as a mediation of expression and contributes to the institutional identity of De Anza College. Ideas that may require additional funding or place additional demands on someone due to staffing shortages are stifled. Course enrollments are a constant pressure. "People think something is wrong, there are judgments if your class doesn't carry" (Anonymous, Personal Communication, 20 June 2019). This perpetuates a hegemonic culture among the faculty and the idea that faculty are solely responsible for course enrollment. Faculty take on new roles of marketing their courses and shaping courses to ensure that students will share good feedback with their peers to ensure their courses carry.

The budget crisis highly impacts adjunct faculty. Citing Marx, Dawn Lee Tu, Faculty Director of Professional Development states, "adjuncts are the embodiment of the commodification of labor and alienation of the individual to the work" (Personal Communication, 18 June 2019). When a full-time faculty member's course does not carry due to low enrollment, it is common for them to take a course assigned to an adjunct faculty to ensure that they teach a full load and contribute to the WSCH census. In many instances, the adjunct faculty member does not have a course to teach and thus does not have the opportunity to earn pay from the institution.

Personal Politics and Polarization

Productive disagreement requires mechanisms for feedback loops. Higher education notoriously operates in silos, from the divisions of student affairs and academic affairs to the disciplines requiring foundational knowledge of the cannons to engage. A productive disagreement can shape the hidden curriculum toward a more purposeful and connected education. Instead of role-modeling authoritarian decision-making processes, community colleges can serve as experimental sites for democracy, challenging each process to engage voices across the institution. With collaborative decision-making processes comes the need and capacity for productive disagreement. The desire for more productive disagreement arose in individual discussions with faculty and during my facilitated discussions. I also witnessed an exemplary case of productive disagreement during a special meeting to discuss possible changes in hiring committee policy at the district level. A confrontational activist and a nonviolent communicator seemed at odds with an appropriate response to this urgent challenge. In the end, combining both perspectives leads to a best-case outcome, though not without some tension during the process. Mae Lee, Asian American and Asian Studies Instructor described a time when the curriculum committee engaged in messy fights over the meaning and purpose of coursework. Now she perceives it as mostly focused on approval processes and having become sanitized to the point where substantive discussion is avoided out of fear of disagreement.

Simply put, prefigurative politics involves "removing the temporal distinction between the struggle in the present and a goal in the future; instead, the struggle and the goal, the real and the ideal, become one in the present" (Maeckelbergh, 2011, p. 4). In other words, solutions to social issues should include the desired outcomes rather than using an accomplishment to justify how it was accomplished. Infusing prefigurative politics into the institution's culture may profoundly impact the hidden curriculum. One example at De Anza is the growing use of Nonviolent Communication (Rosenberg, 2003) to reconsider the possibility. NVC rejects false binaries and dichotomies and challenges expression toward a peaceful future.

Implications

Centering Creativity: Self-Expression as a High-Impact Practice

A recommendation from the *Cambridge Handbook* is to "embrace arts and humanities as fundamental to the practice of freedom" (Dolgon et al., 2017, p. 531). Creativity also embraces Ai's generativity lever. Generativity focuses on the creation and "the quest for new ideas, images, theories and models that liberate our collective aspirations, alter the social construction of reality and, in the process, make available decisions and actions that were not available or did not occur to us before" (Bushe, 2011, p. 7). A commitment to placemaking embraces creative expression as part of the built environment.

The idea of art as a high-impact practice came from multiple conversations with the faculty director of the Euphrat Museum of Art on campus, Diana Argabrite. Argabrite talked about her efforts to engage youth in the community and students on campus in a collective envisioning of what art means. She hosts open mic events specifically targeting students of color to break down barriers in the art world and historically underserved communities. She brings youth as young as kindergarten to summer camps and pushes back against the standardized notion of art education prevalent in our public education system. She described a dream where art is integrated across all subjects, where we strive for a more creative world through expressions of individual and collective humanity.

Anchor Institution: Institutional Commitment to Place

During a discussion about the college equity plan in EAC, the group discussed how to move beyond headcounts of students in programs and focus on campus culture and climate. Adriana Garcia, Administrative Assistant for the Office of Equity, Social, and Multicultural Education stated, "If students are not welcome at one place on campus, they are not welcome here." Place-

making is the continual reshaping of culture by all community members to ensure all feel welcome and belong.

According to Hodges and Dubb (2012), an anchor institution's mission includes "the conscious and strategic application of the long-term, place-based economic power of the institution, in combination with its human and intellectual resources, to better the welfare of the community in which it resides*"* (Hodges & Dubb, 2012, p. 166). While anchor institution approaches are less common at community colleges than four-year colleges, promising examples are building across the country. An institutional commitment to place, or embracing the anchor institution mission, will include institutional partnerships and sustained community engagement efforts. These community engagement efforts must go beyond recruiting strategy and strive for reciprocity.

Conclusion

This study sought to build on the belief that the community college system "embodies our most noble ideas about democracy and human potential, and it stands a living daily expression of our ideals as a nation" (Sullivan, 2017, p. 375). Community colleges are continually adapting to the needs of their students and communities. Centering place and placemaking as features within colleges' commitments to civic identity offers significant potential for reimaging the role place plays in education and the way students and graduates view the co-creative possibilities in the places they live and work. Appreciative Inquiry offers a promising methodology for organizational change work focused on equity, democracy, and justice at community colleges.

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