

GET WITH THE ACTION:
RECLAIMING TOGETHERNESS THROUGH INTERSECTIONAL
COMMUNITY ART EDUCATION

By

KRISTYN LOPEZ

A PROJECT IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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And Dad, Go Gators. We did it.

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MAY 2022

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Major: Art Education

ABSTRACT

This project in lieu of thesis explores the work of artist and educator Corita Kent, formerly known as Sister Mary Corita. The research investigates Corita's "ecstatic classroom" as a framework that centered visual culture, self-direction and willingness to critique dominant social structures, situating her work within an intersectional feminist and community-based art pedagogy. A mixed methods approach was utilized to gather quantitative and qualitative data regarding attitudes of participants in an action research study, with the goal of identifying how visual arts-based interventions may address attitudes that negate social cohesion among American youth and young adults. Initial findings contributed to the development of an online toolkit drawing upon on Corita Kent's community responsive practice, suggesting further reflection on the research design and strategies for implementing CBAE on college campuses.

So yes, I think Mary laughed out loud – she laughed wholeheartedly, without rancor, and with great compassion, and with real reverence. If she were here today in her physical nature she would surely laugh. She would laugh at our wreaths; she would laugh at our pop art; she would laugh – compassionately – at the consternation of some of us at this riot of sound and color, at our uncertainty about its suitability for a day of religious celebration. Frankly, I think Mary would want this day, that she would like to think that it was well explained by calling it her day. She is the cause of our joy – and I hope that we bring her joy by praising her with our hearts on high. If we were only loud and bright, perhaps we could hope only for the indulgent smile of the mother of very small children. Our colors, however, are the colors of the marketplace, the color of life-giving food, and our sounds are the sounds of the here and now, and they are meant to say: mother, I am concerned for my brother, who is your son. My brother starves, he weeps, he dies. He is myself. Today is a loud call to our mother asking her to teach us what she knows of filling the emptiness, drying the tears, and easing the death of our brother. We ask to be taken out of ourselves (this is the whole burden of *'Pacem in Terris'*).

-Sr. William (Helen Kelly) on Mary's Day, 1964, (as cited in Ault, 2006)

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I would like to lay groundwork by telling the history of one of the celebrations at Immaculate Heart College, Mary's Day – where it came from, how we changed it, and how it led to other things. Then perhaps you can look at the state of your own celebrations and get some ideas of how to revitalize them or initiate new ones. - Corita Kent (*Kent & Steward, 2008, p. 178*)

Mary's Day took place every year at Immaculate Heart College (IHC), a private Catholic institution located on thirteen acres of hillside property in Los Angeles. For thirty-two years, Corita Kent, then known as Sister Mary Corita, lived and worked here as a member of the Order of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Originally founded in Spain in 1848, the order became known for chartering and staffing Catholic schools and hospitals across California, Texas, Arizona and Canada. While the IHM Sisters were dedicated to service and education according to religious tradition, the influence of “contemporary philosophy, modern psychology and evolving feminist consciousness” (Immaculate Heart Community, 2022) informed their approach. The order responded enthusiastically to the call of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) to revitalize and modernize the image of the Catholic Church.

The annual Mary's Day celebration was well-positioned to exemplify a renewed relationship between the Church and community. Once a black-clad and deeply traditional affair, Corita imbued Mary's Day with a strikingly contemporary aesthetic. Drawing together trends in pop art and an

awareness of visual culture studies in the field of art education alongside the spirit of Vatican II, the tradition was freed from the dominant structures of quiet Mass, sacred music, and white lilies. Corita's Mary's Day was meant to function as "a day of no functioning, a day of general feasting and rejoicing, a day of being with our friends for one day to show ourselves as a visible community marked with extra colors and extra sounds, a community playing and singing and worshipping and feasting, after which we will go back to our work refreshed and respirationed" (Kent & Steward, 2008). According to Catholic tradition, the "Immaculate Heart of Mary," symbolizes the purity and love of the Virgin Mary as expressed through her inner life – her love for God and her Divine Son, and her compassionate love for mankind (Holweck, 1911). For Corita and her fellow IHM Sisters, Mary's Day was "a time to celebrate the ordinary stuff of life;" an opportunity to embody the Immaculate Heart of Mary through colorful abundances of balloons, banners, flowers, food, signs and songs, a celebration so joyous that "Mary would finally laugh" (Kent & Steward, 2008, p. 184).

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Community-based art education (CBAE) may include any of the following - community projects that teach art skills, public art that involves interaction among the artist/s and members of the community, service-learning art projects that unify communities with diverse populations, and outreach programs designed to empower marginalized groups. CBAE is an approach with roots in social justice and service learning (Lawton, Walker, Green, & Gude, 2019) which provides participants the opportunity to develop a sense of belonging and personal achievement through critically engaged art making practice that centers collaborative, community-engaged work. CBAE emphasizes the development of skills-based and emotional learning goals that may be activated socially, politically, and practically.

Critical Pedagogy. In many ways, CBAE can be considered a visual arts specific explication of critical pedagogy, which considers the political nature of education and asserts that institutions must work towards a common goal of students developing a sense of social responsibility and informed awareness of their cultural situation. Paulo Freire, the main scholar associated with developing Critical Pedagogy (hooks, 2003), asserted that the educational process is never neutral, and that teaching must begin with a negotiation of the tension between roles of teacher and student, so that both participants are in a conversation of co-learning.

Intersectionality. Intersectionality is a foundational concept of social science that complicates traditional approaches toward the study of race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, age, family status, occupation, ethnicity, geography, religion, etc., by acknowledging these factors as interconnected variables that shape an individual's overall life experiences, rather than as isolated markers of identity. The overlapping power structures that accompany these multiple marginalizations or intersectionalities impact how members of these identity groups interact with diverse elements of self and society. This term was coined by Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 (Vivar, Teresa, Lutz, & Supik, 2016) as a reaction to the invisibility and erasure of women from the civil rights movement, and of Black women within the mainstream feminist movement.

Polarization. Standard definitions of polarization describe the simultaneous presence of opposing or conflicting viewpoints, such as can be seen in “hyperpartisanship” or extreme ideological coherence of American political parties (McCarty, 2019). Polarization is a term used to describe not only the divergence or distance between two ideological positions, but that each “camp” is of equal size – polarization also entails parity – and the intensity of each group’s unyielding adherence to their positions (Persily, 2015).

Visual Culture. Whether contextualized as an approach to art education or a postmodern theoretical framework, visual culture can be broadly understood as a field of study through which contemporary society contends with the wide range of visual artifacts that exist beyond the art institution (Duncum, 2001). Henderson (as cited in Duncum, 2001) defines the term as “what it is to see and what there is to see.” Ault’s description of the IHC art department aesthetic may be relevant to an understanding of visual culture in the context of this study. She credits Corita’s mentor, Sister Magdalen Mary, in defining IHC as a space where the secular and sacred were redefined according to Corita’s engagement with vernacular culture (Ault, 2006, p. 27).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As genuine adults, we must work at our first task, which is to make human community. As Barbara Ward put it, “We are either going to become a community, or we are going to die.” (*Kent C. , 1982*)

From 2013-2015, I taught Kindergarten to eighth grade art at a public charter school on the outskirts of a rapidly developing university town enveloped in the agri/cultural traditions of the South. Concern about the negative effects of social unrest and ideological polarization was already intensifying, due to escalating tensions around racial violence, the response of the growing Black Lives Matter movement, and the upcoming presidential campaign. Vitriolic speech and instances of injustice directly challenged the idyllic vision of possibility I observed while teaching at this small school nestled among cow fields. Holiday parties, lunches together, meetings – ideally, school teaching affords artists and educators the experience of working as a collective where the common goal is the well-being of our students, the vulnerable population with whose care we are entrusted daily. I had the privilege of meeting people of faith who were also educators devoted to social change, and I began to consider the

implications of a widening gap between the two social positions – religious and activist – despite many historic and concurrent overlaps. Since then, the political climate of America has grown increasingly contentious, while arts and cultural programming, public education, and the needs of America’s youth continue to be deprioritized.

In *Learning by Heart* (Kent & Steward, 2008) Corita’s former student explains that the book is not meant to be a history, as histories are written after the fact. Rather, the process she, and this study, sought to describe is “living and squirming and very difficult to pin down. The process is one of teaching, learning, growing, and doing things to make the world a better place. Whether that world is within you or as great as infinity” (p. 10). My contrasting experiences as a teacher in a large urban public school system, a small, semi-rural charter school, and a moderately well-funded suburban children’s art museum provide the context for my focus on community education and critical pedagogy. Teaching in these diverse educational settings informed my understanding of the structural inequalities that still complicate the most student-centered educational models. In addition, parenting preschool-aged children has deepened my relational understanding of the demands placed on families, communities and individual teachers and schools to meet the basic developmental needs of young people, and how these demands are inequitably experienced and expressed through systems that disproportionately burden women and members of marginalized communities. During the years I spent away from formal research, I founded a 501c3 nonprofit organization, Wayfaring Painter, through which I offered low and no-cost art instruction in partnership with businesses and institutions ranging from local library branches to brew-pubs. I have undertaken this exploration of Corita’s work to theoretically expand upon my experience as a community art educator and lapsed Catholic working within a system of interlocking institutional structures.

The population studied in this project, young people aged 15-25, has endured an environment of conflict and insecurity for the majority or even entirety of their young lives. Facing various forms of violence, socioeconomic disaster and structural change, the so-called “Millennial” generation is experiencing conditions that not only are changing their patterns of transition into adult life but leaving them with the feeling that they must face these difficulties alone (Green, 2017). Many Millennials are too young to have experienced the trauma of 9/11 firsthand, were elementary schoolers during Hurricane Katrina, and may not have had their job prospects directly affected by the first wave of the Great Recession. Yet a majority of teens surveyed in 2018 indicated that anxiety and depression are a major problem among their peers, alongside bullying, addiction, and poverty. Despite an entire global industry dedicated to helping people “connect,” the rate of suicide among people ages 10-24 increased nearly 60% between 2007 and 2018 (Curtin, 2020). According to Putnam (2000), the generational trend towards depression, suicide and general malaise shows young people increasingly afflicted over the decades from 1975-1999, regardless of economic position. Their struggles are not limited to economic generalities of being a “generation in decline” or achieving less, later, than their parents did; as the above quote from Corita and the statistics on suicide reflect, this is a matter of life and death.

Several risk factors for suicide – having experienced trauma, social isolation, societal discrimination or injustice, a history of poor mental health – are also cited as conditions for radicalization to extreme violence (Processes of Radicalization to Violent Extremism, 2015), (Suicide Prevention Research Center, 2020). According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) (Miller & Rivas, 2022), the number of active hate groups operating across America rose to a record high in 2018, after four consecutive years of growth, for a cumulative 30% increase. Racist and antisemitic violence has followed the same escalating trend, with a 30% increase in hate crimes documented during the three-year period ending in 2017 (U.S. House Subcommittee on National Security, International Development and

Monetary Policy, 2020). SPLC explains that traditional tools for pushing back against such organized violence, such as increased law enforcement surveillance and intelligence gathering, is insufficient for dealing with the rising tide of extremism in America, calling instead for “a holistic approach” including investment in social programs and public-health inspired prevention measures (Miller & Rivas, 2022).

The risk factors described above – social isolation, trauma, injustice, poor mental health - also overlap with the environmental conditions familiar to much of our population as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. When schools, libraries, playgrounds, and museums closed in March 2020, the implications of all we already suspected about teacher and caregiver burnout, the inequities of public services, and the failure of American institutions to meet the needs of its most vulnerable citizens reached a fever pitch. Students were thrown into the spotlight as a vulnerable population, and public schools as the key providers of social services - in the way most educators have always understood them to be. State and private institutions, faith communities, social change organizations and businesses alike scrambled to provide stopgap measures to safely continue the provisioning of goods and services, and for a time there was a space for a sense of renewed social cohesion. Yet as we have seen, the global crisis of COVID-19 has instead become a deeply divisive issue, with large majorities of Americans on both sides of the political aisle agreeing that the country is more divided than before the outbreak (Mordecai & Connaughton).

While this study does not specifically target marginalized groups, an intersectional approach considers how all members of the studied population may differently experience dynamics of power and oppression in their day to day lives, how these experiences shape their attitudes, and whether CBAE can mitigate the adverse effects of oppression and social inequity. The aforementioned data regarding mental health clearly indicates the precarity of young Americans’ situation at this time - their needs are not being met through existing institutional or intrapersonal supports; evidence which correlates poor

mental health to radicalization and violence suggests that the future of a progressive American society hangs in the balance.

PURPOSE OR GOALS OF THE STUDY

This project in lieu of thesis will (1) utilize a CBAE approach to develop a toolkit of visual art-based interventions which draw upon on Corita Kent’s community responsive teaching strategies, with (2) the goal of identifying how such interventions may address social attitudes that foster isolation, political polarization and extremism among American youth and young adults. Furthermore, I will (3) demonstrate how examining and embodying Corita’s teaching practice through the lens of intersectionality and critical pedagogy affords art and community educators a discursive model on how social categories (race, gender, class, sexuality, nationality, age, ability, etc.) overlap and affect the way in which individuals may access and respond to cultural resources and make sense of embedded relationships of power (Kraehe & Acuff, 2013). While the research questions outlined below seek to evaluate whether Corita’s “ecstatic classroom” (Ault, 2006) approach has the potential to mitigate measurable political polarization and risk factors for violent extremism, the broader goals of activating CBAE within this context are concerned with addressing young people’s lack of access to or engagement with community, including student life opportunities on the university campus as well as cultural, faith-based or other social organizations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do perceptions of social identity serve to mitigate or exacerbate polarization and social disconnect among the studied population?
2. How does Corita’s mid-1960s teaching practice align with contemporary understandings of intersectional and community-based pedagogy in visual arts education?

3. Does access to community-based arts education programming have the potential to contribute positively to participants' sense of tolerance, belonging and empowerment within their community?

RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The immediate significance of this study is the opportunity to further scholarship on Corita Kent and generate data that demonstrates the potential for community-based art education and critical/intersectional pedagogy in promoting community cohesion. These goals are in alignment with the Corita Art Center's aims to highlight Corita as an artist who championed diversity, equity and inclusion through art, education and social justice advocacy as well as my personal and professional practice as a community art educator and feminist researcher. Although Corita Kent's work is enjoying a new resurgence due to the concerted and creative efforts of the Corita Art Center, there has been limited academic research regarding her pedagogical approach, or research which seeks to situate her work within the context of gender studies. This lens seems especially relevant to a deeper understanding of Corita's impact and position, as evidenced by Ault's (2006) assessment that her legacy is still somewhat marginalized in cultural history - that as a Catholic woman printmaker, her contribution to contemporary American art is consistently devalued.

Corita claimed that "art is the only thing that can educate painlessly" (Glascock, 2007). While the concepts addressed during this research have not always been painless to explore, the initial findings support the conceptualization of the 'ecstatic classroom' as a safe, neutral space for expressing and investigating conditions that contribute to negative social effects as described herein.

She saw life as redemptive, rewarding. To her, original sin was, so to speak, a recessive gene. It showed up only in the shadows; its forms were negation, cowardice, self-distrust.

This was where her art came in. Subtly, not so subtly, she kept offering forms of the joy

that finally prevails, keeps going. In the face of the sin that says dourly nothing can be done. Or says (the same thing) the church is hopeless, life is a drag, don't bother me, time on my hands. (Daniel Berrigan, as cited in Ault, 2006)

In short, the significance of this study is the hope that accessible, community responsive art education might be able to prove that life is not, in fact, such a drag. That there is something – many things - to be done, to keep us going, and that those things can be taught and learned, perhaps even painlessly.

ASSUMPTIONS/REFLEXIVITY

Attempting to situate this project in the context of intersectionality necessitates some reflexivity as a researcher. My agreement with the foundational understanding of intersectionality as defined above is reflective of my own identity and bias – I identify as a woman and a feminist, I believe in systemic oppressions and their multitude of social, cultural, and institutional expressions. Although some of my social locations afford privilege (white, well-educated) intersectionality reminds me of the ways I also experience oppression (female, primary caregiver, single parent, working class, etc.) and to consider how these various aspects of social inequality operate in an interrelated manner. My generational position and religious identity are also deeply entwined with how I perceive the problems I am attempting to address. I am at the cusp of Generation X and the Millennials - I experienced a (middle class, vaguely Catholic) analog childhood, and a digital (working class, vaguely Agnostic) young adulthood. I was a first-year art teacher in 2009. I was laid off and re-hired four times. I believe that racial, sexual and class oppression is central to all issues relating to social inequality and division and approach this research with the assumption that although not ideologically homogenous, many art educators hold similar beliefs as a function of being abstract, critical thinkers who have chosen a life of service.

I am also making the assumption that access to community arts represents an area of value and need within my community. I made no attempt to gather data regarding interest or participation levels in CBAE-type programming at this research before commencing with this study. My assumption is based on the work I have done as a community art educator, the types of programming I observe as a local resident, and the participation/interest in arts instruction at the site of the research.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The minimal number of contact hours between participants in this study, and the small sample size of both survey and workshop participants presents limitation in the generalizability of potential findings. The framework developed by the survey and action research is transferable, but likely to yield varying results in individual localities and learning communities. Many factors could affect the outcome, such as baseline ideology and area demographics, institutional support manifested in access to space and materials, and prior attitudes and experiences in the visual arts. For this study, participants' position as college students attending a top-ranked public university may have demographic implications as well – the group may be homogenous in the type of educational opportunities they have had access to, and in their feelings of belonging due to the social nature of undergraduate life at a large, well-connected university. Those who voluntarily participated in the action research workshops may also embody some underlying homogeneity – undergraduate students who willingly took time away from their existing obligations and committed to a six-week workshop practice may have existing biases regarding the societal or personal value of art education.

Time constraints and lack of established modes of interdisciplinary, inter-, and intra-departmental communication at the research site, including existing barriers between the university and larger community, may have also impacted the reliability of this study. These factors presented

limitations on the efficacy of participant recruitment, which may have contributed to a lack of participation and therefore inability to activate the research within a more representative panel.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This research is concerned with the work of Corita Kent, why it is relevant to examine her work through an intersectional lens informed by Black Feminist theory, and how this approach may be applied through CBAE to mitigate polarization and disconnect among young people. The sources consulted in this literature review include writings and audiovisual recordings by and about artist Corita Kent, scholarship on community engagement and social capital through political, religious and artistic practice, and feminist/critically engaged theory.

Corita Kent: Life and Practice

Come Alive! The Spirited Art of Sister Corita (Ault, 2006) is a biography of Corita's life and work which seeks to definitively situate her as an activist educator and influential contributor to the pop art movement - despite being effectively ignored within most major explorations of the canon. Ault presents a formal analysis of many aspects of Corita's work, describing it as "bold and aesthetically joyful in its offering of spiritual renewal, social critique and political efficacy" (Ault, 2006, p. 12). The publication includes extensive documentation and reproductions of Corita's work and is critical to this research not only as a biographical, pictorial, and chronological reference, but also supports a reading of Corita's work through an intersectional lens, considering her identities as both a Catholic, woman artist and activist. Ault claims that "for Corita, wide distribution was a populist and Christian principle that determined her choice of medium" (p. 16) describing Corita's relationship to her work and printmaking at large as a democratic - and by this same rationale, a modernist Catholic - art form.

Although each source cited above considers the environment of the changing Catholic church in contextualizing Corita's work, *Corita Kent: Gentle Revolutionary of the Heart* (Paccate, 2017) is unique as a biographical source from the primary perspective of church history, authored by a fellow woman religious, Sister Rose Pacatte. She identifies how Mary's Day was in clear conversation with the aesthetic of political protests and 'happenings,' of the 1960's, giving voice to social awareness and social justice convictions within the specific context of life at a Catholic college while connecting to forms and practices of the "outside" world. This approach is also noted by Dackerman (2015) in that Mary's Day exemplified the updated pedagogy already underway at IHC, in which projects pushed to engage fully with contemporary themes, artists and educational theories. While the IHM community was certainly situated within the cultural shifts taking place amid contemporary American artistic and religious spheres, Dackerman argues that Corita was nonetheless an outlier in movements, paradoxically, because of her association with the other (2015, p. 15). The author not only frames this as an injustice and an oversight, but a misreading of the artistic and religious discourse of the time.

Wanzo (2018) provides further historical context to Corita's work, describing the 1960s and 70s as a time of fundamental challenges to Western academic institutions, with social justice activists posing new questions for scholarly investigation. The author also emphasizes the dialectical relationship between power and resistance, and in conceptualizing popular culture as a site where power is both established and destabilized. The negotiation of power between teacher and student is a key component of critical and cultural pedagogies. Although Corita is frequently described by herself and her students as a "task master," her oft-cited "Immaculate Heart College Art Department Rules" support the reading of her classroom as a negotiated social space. For instance, Rule 2 outlines "General duties of a student: Pull everything out of your teacher. Pull everything out of your fellow students," and Rule 3, "General duties of a teacher: Pull everything out of your students." Jan Stewart describes experiencing such

negotiations at Immaculate Heart: “We worked within a rigorously imposed set of rules, but the most important rule was that a new set be established each week. We learned to adjust and become flexible” (Kent & Steward, 2008).

These first-person accounts are instrumental to an attempt to embody Corita’s practice as action research by providing a detailed record of the type of questions, exercises and environments that were posed within the IHC Art Department. In an assignment from *Learning by Heart* (Kent & Steward, 2008), Corita asks participants to look at a tree and its shape for an hour every week, making a list of all the specifics of the tree, its shadows, and related structures. “When you get past making labels for things,” she suggests, “it is possible to combine and transform these elements into new things.” Corita writes that we must “look at things until their import, identity, name, use and description have dissolved” (pg. 20). In *Ten Rules for Students and Teachers: Corita on Teaching and Celebration* (Glascock, 2007), Baylis Glascock attempted to create a cinematic equivalent of Corita Kent’s approach, a “kinetic montage” (Dackerman, 2015). The film includes several interviews with Corita as well as recordings of her classroom and community activities, filmed between 1964 and 1985. Glascock describes documenting Mary’s Day 1964 as record of an experiment in using pop art as a tool to reinvent the traditional (Ault, 2006). Themes of reinvention and renewal are found frequently throughout Corita’s writing and in narratives of her life and work, a piece of her overall philosophy that may be in part attributable to her beloved mentor, Charles Eames. Corita describes Eames not as an art teacher, “but an artist who taught – taught by words, films, exhibits, buildings, classes, visits, phone conversations, and furniture.” She suggests that from Eames, she learned about connections - to drop “outworn distinctions and separations,” to see new relationships, and understand that there is no line where art stops, and life begins (Kent & Steward, 2008, p. 40).

Community and Social Capital

The pop art movement and the recommendations of Vatican II can be similarly understood to have embraced “reform, relevancy, experimentation, collaboration, youthfulness, intentionality, openness, humor, protest and the vernacular” (Dackerman, 2015, p. 26). Corita is consistently lauded as having braided together the spirit of these cultural shifts, centering social justice through her visual expressions of faith. However, as cited in research undertaken by the Center for American Progress (Siddiqi, Graves-Fitzsimmons, & Lautier, 2021) increasing diversity in the United States has been met in part by reactionary conservatism that uses faith as a tool to narrow, rather than expand, the definition of who belongs, and who does not

Social psychologists have grappled with the political interactions of “in- and out-groups” - the perceived “us” and “them” - for generations. In *Bowling Alone*, Putnam (2000) describes American society as having been suddenly pulled apart from one another and from our communities over the last third of the century. The author identifies two types of social capital: *bridging* social capital is inclusive (for example, civil rights movements, youth service organizations, some religious organizations) and seeks to encompass the experience of people across social strata, while *bonding* social capital is more inward looking, tending to reinforce homogenous identities (gender-segregated groups within religious institutions, ethnic fraternal organizations, elitist social clubs. Perhaps due to the growth of consumerism and a culture of intense individualism, many institutions of “bridging” social capital have declined. Investigating the root causes for such generational malaise, Putnam’s research points to age and education as the main predictor for most forms of civic engagement – activity in church or other organizations, voting, reading and watching the news – and that several sources of data suggest that “the younger you are, the worse things have gotten over the last decades of the twentieth century” in

terms of general contentment with life, symptoms of malaise, and likelihood of dying by suicide (Putnam, 2000, p. 264)

The theory of contact hypothesis suggests that getting to know “others” from outside of one’s own identity group can reduce prejudice, though only when certain criteria are met – such as sustained contact, engagement with more than one “out-group” member and a genuine exchange of ideas taking place between individuals of similar social rank (De Wit, Van der Linden, & Brick, 2019). Community-based art education may provide a rich environment for such intergroup contact, and action research studies, in which participants examine their own thinking and practices to effect positive change (Lawton, Walker, Green, & Gude, 2019) further underpin these goals as a research approach which centers experiential learning and collaboration. The authors describe CBAE as an example of engaged pedagogy/andragogy that engages learners in the educative process because it is relevant to their lives, supports a multicultural and pluralistic society, encourages student empowerment, and links theory to practice in meaningful and motivating ways. They propose a list of tenets for community engagement that describes reasons artists and educators should practice CBAE, including the ability to form connections, encourage communication, extend learning, seek relevance, develop pride, build understanding, promote social justice, express identity, emphasize art’s role in a democracy, build support for the arts, and facilitate transformation. This text also provides reference to more specific frameworks that often exist within the CBAE practice and consider intersectional and cultural pedagogies critical to contemporary community art praxis.

Hickey-Moody and Wilcox (2009) suggest that art educators and socially engaged practitioners may activate such collaborative intergroup contact, providing a safe space for participants to find common ground through exploration of interfaith traditions. Through their research engaging with interfaith communities through art making and social media, the authors sought to identify togetherness

in this plight of entangled differences. Claiming that arts-based practices offer an ideal way not only of accessing but reorganizing emotional investments, the authors outline how a CBAE approach may provide a safe space to engage with concepts that can work against divisive cultural messages while also encouraging participation in community life. Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner (cited in Siddiqi et al., 2021) explained the relevance of an interfaith setting as explored by Hickey-Moody and Wilcox, and embodied in Corita's personal practice, to democratic work as a function of holding each other accountable:

“It’s not about imposing one tradition on the polity, it’s rather to refract all of our faith traditions through a lens of shared values and shared concerns... that brings us together to say, ‘OK, what do we demand of America because of our faith traditions?’”

Despite the growing influence of right-wing Christian nationalism during recent decades, most religious traditions embody the belief that each individual belongs to an interconnected human community. The report developed by Siddiqi, et al. (2021) through a project with Auburn Seminary seeks to correct for the underrepresentation of the pro-democracy faith movement in American society. The authors discerned five critical themes underpinning the work and ideologies of twenty-eight pro-democracy religious leaders as follows – building an inclusive democratic movement, centering the experience of Black Americans, grounding democracy in a shared sense of community, meeting the urgency of the momentum and being political but not partisan. During an interview with a staff member at the Corita Art Center, I asked about the rationale for defining Corita directly as an activist, and feminist. The interviewee responded that although Corita might be described as an activist, she was not a radical (Cha, 2022). Siddiqi, et al. (2021) found that although the democratic faith leaders did claim progressive values most aligned with religious community, they were reluctant to align with a political party, as these dichotomies only further divisiveness. Instead, the group insisted on the importance of

embracing nonpartisanship to overcome the perceived correlation - especially among young people – between religious and far right ideologies.

Intersectionality and Black Feminist Theory in Art Education

The concept of intersectionality was developed within Black feminist theory, articulated in the works of scholars such as Kimberle Crenshaw and Patricia Hill Collins, and activist group The Combahee River Collective. Black feminists first defined intersectionality in a proclamation describing the struggle against racial, sexual, heterosexual and class oppression, and committing to an integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. “The systems of these oppressions create the conditions of our lives” (The Combahee River Collective, 2014). As an analytical framework and pedagogy, intersectionality considers the effects of multiple marginalizations and examines gaps in research and policy where interactions of privilege and oppression are inadequately addressed. Ideologies are shaped by social identity. There is, therefore, no rational way to understand political polarization except as a result of systemic and interlocking oppressions, resulting in ideological distance between groups.

Collins (2006) compares the Black Arts and Feminist Art movements as both striving towards a world where participants feel safe, authentic, and whole, through transformation of dominant social orders. However, she explains that the two movements’ similarities have been underutilized precisely because of a certain sense of individualism – the imagining of one’s own cultural history and identity as separate and unique. The author cites activist and writer Audre Lorde as an eloquent voice in critiquing the tragedy of activists’ hesitancy or refusal to acknowledge the diverse overlaps of their communities. In 1979, Lorde declared that “As women, we have been taught either to ignore our differences, or to view them as causes for separation and suspicion rather than forces for change. Without community, there is no liberation, only the most vulnerable and temporary armistice between an individual and her

oppression. But community must not mean a shedding of our differences, nor the pathetic pretense that these differences do not exist” (as cited in Collins, 2006, p. 719). According to Collins, Lorde defining unity as a coming together of elements which are inherently diverse and varied in nature made her one of only a handful of “courageous visionaries” who openly drew from and shaped both the Black liberation and feminist movements. The author also asks, relevant to discussion of Corita Kent, how postwar cultural workers saw their own role and work within sociopolitical movements. Placing these two movements in conversation allows reflection on the institutions and environments in which they took place, creating another mode of intersectional inquiry.

Acuff (2018) defines Black feminist theory (BFT) in terms which relate to this study, not only through challenging traditional notions of research which contribute to preserving the status quo, but also by defining Black feminist theory as having been developed by experiential knowledge and daily lived experiences, as a lens through which multiple truths can exist. Acuff deems the use of narrative and original voice critical to BFT research, citing Knight’s 2007 autoethnographic narrative as a call to other art educators to “reflect on their own personal histories in a similarly critical way, so that a discourse is initiated which ‘leads to substantive educational reform by exposing and eradicating oppressive systems and practices that create, maintain, and perpetuate inequities in art education’” (as cited in Acuff, 2018). She cites a lack of empirical studies in art education that utilize a BFT lens and also conform to “institutionalized understandings of research,” and advocates for non-Black art educators to conduct research that calls out and challenges dominant hegemonic practices.

RESEARCH METHOD

To this end, I have utilized a mixed methods approach to gather both quantitative and qualitative data regarding the effect of the “ecstatic classroom” pedagogy of Corita Kent, an approach which centers

collaborative and experiential learning and values the everyday lived experience of the individual as a critical source of knowledge production. Methods braiding is a practical scaffold which contributes to established models of mixed methods research by incorporating arts-based research techniques as part of a fully integrated and synergistic research design (Watson, 2020). This study was planned with such a design in mind, utilizing multiple qualitative strategies including action research, key informant and in-depth interviews, narrative analysis, and biographical research, as well as creation of a survey and documentation of processes and visual artifacts created during workshop sessions. The artifacts and strategies developed were published online as well as in a printed workbook.

To further situate the study within a community-informed narrative and answer specific questions outside the scope of my own practice, I conducted in-depth interviews with two religious leaders, five artists and a member of the Corita Art Center staff. This study received IRB approval ([#IRB202102915](#)).

Participants

Study participants were recruited according to purposive and convenience sampling – all local students and community members aged 15-25 were eligible to participate, but populations were specifically targeted for recruitment based on geographic and academic proximity to the research and workshop site, such as flyers posted in the Education, Women’s and Gender Studies, Liberal Arts and Fine Arts buildings and related academic area mailing lists. I also considered strategies for mitigating potential sampling biases. As such, advertising language emphasized the study as an open-ended art workshop that required no prior art experience. The recruitment text also suggested that the study would address social attitudes but did not refer specifically to any political or ideological framing. In so doing, the goal was to correct for a potential self-selection bias that could result in a panel where a disproportionate number of participants had existing, well-developed art practices, or higher than

average interest in political engagement. A total of 31 participants responded to an initial survey (see Appendix B) eight of whom attended at least one of six, two-hour weekly workshop sessions on the university campus. Approximately 40 students participated in the pre-study recruitment activity.

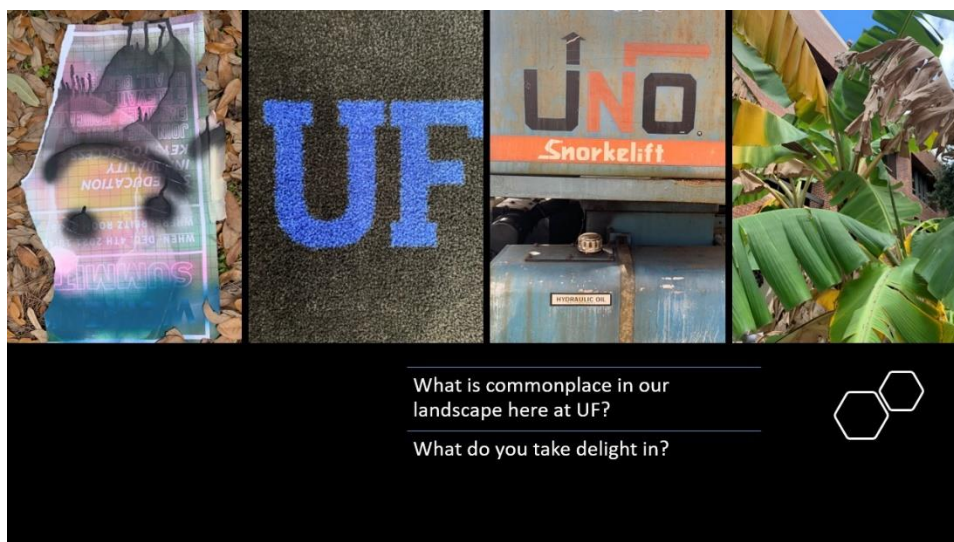


Figure 1, Slide from workshop session

Research Site

The experimental workshops took place on the university campus, in and around the Art Education studio space. This classroom is within the College of Education, housed in a historic building just a short walk across the street from the Fine Arts area but in an area of campus somewhat remote for non-education majors. There is no public parking within several blocks of the building – participants either walked from other areas of campus or held university parking passes to allow access to the adjacent parking garage. Recruitment activities were held at the plaza outside of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences building, in an area where a variety of social, academic, and political organizations regularly host informational booths and activities. These locations were both chosen for reasons of convenience as well as with the intention of situating the research within the most relevant environmental context.

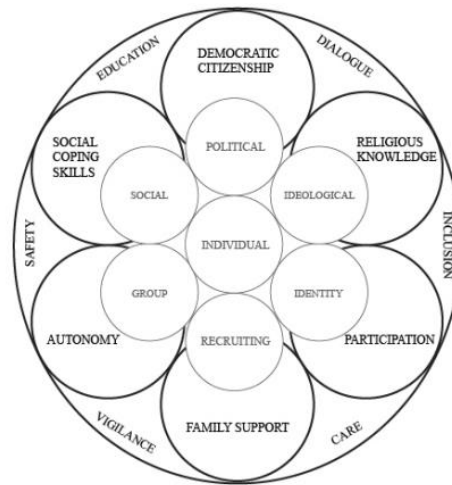


Figure 2 Extended kaleidoscopic overview (Siecklelink & Gielen, 2018)

Data Collection Procedures and Instrumentation

To develop survey items, I consulted sources concerned with community-based interventions for preventing and countering violent extremism (P/CVE), which consistently highlight that active promotion of youth participation and leadership “ensures a community’s future by investing in youth” (Siecklelinck & Gielen, 2018). I considered the risk factors for violent extremism as outlined in P/CVE literature and formulated questions that related to the “extended kaleidoscopic overview” (Figure 2) of risk, protective and promotive factors formulated by Ranstorp as central to establishing positive identity-oriented dynamics that strengthen individual and societal resistance. I also examined data and instruments from the University of Florida’s (2014) International Critical Thinking (IntCRIT) and International Communication (IntCOMM) scales (Appendix C), to contextualize cultural learning goals outlined in the University’s outline as well as the study of Siddiqi, et al (2021).



Figure 3, Study recruitment event on university campus

A recruitment event was undertaken prior to the first workshop meeting, in which a hands-on activity was set up in the plaza outside of the Liberal Arts & Sciences building. At this time, students in the plaza were invited to participate in the pre recruitment art activity (Figure 3), learn more about the study, and take an informational flyer which included a QR code link to the pre-test survey. The anonymized online survey was administered via Qualtrics. The survey investigates participants' perception of social "other," attitudes regarding art in community, tolerance, their sense of empowerment and belonging, and defines identifiable triggers for attitude extremization and ideological polarization.

Action research is a framework which allows the teaching artist to engage as researcher and practitioner, engaging with both participatory and observational roles to solve a practical problem (Lawton, et al., 2019). It is a widely accepted method within feminist and community-based scholarship due to the collaborative position of researcher to participants, reflecting the value of interdependence

among peers, researchers and community allies (Doucet, Pratt, Dzhenganin, & Read, 2021). This emphasis on interdependence is paralleled in the records of Corita's classroom practice and therefore ideologically well-suited to gather information on her 'ecstatic classroom' strategies.

Data Analysis Procedures

The methods braiding technique (Watson, 2020), employs both simultaneous and sequential data collection, allowing for adjustments to approach and focus of methods during the research process. This approach emphasizes the value of a research journal maintained throughout the project to facilitate both reflexive and analytic functions, creating a record of how multiple points and modes of inquiry are integrated across the project. During the process of planning, conducting, and reflecting on this study, I have utilized a variety of journaling and note-taking strategies. During interviews and workshop sessions, I took handwritten notes on actions and conversations. When not actively engaged with fieldwork, I frequently recorded voice memos and noted my own reflections using Google Keep, a mobile app which synchronizes across several devices. I periodically reviewed the collection of entries and transcribed data into a cumulative spreadsheet to organize various sources and descriptive coding was created to assess emerging patterns. Notes from reviewed literature and other texts informing the research were also tracked and included in the spreadsheet. The information was then categorized according to themes that were further developed within the literature review and the survey (art in community, openness/tolerance, empowerment/belonging, attitude extremization, ideological polarization). This framework allowed me to maintain a consistent focus when analyzing and "braiding together" several types of data.

Retrieved survey data was analyzed through descriptive statistics to analyze any patterns in participant attitudes. To this end, I worked with a standard program of data analysis (Excel), as well as

the reporting and visualization tools native to the Qualtrics platform. Raw survey data was stored on the Qualtrics server, and related Excel files were kept in an electronic folder.

FINDINGS

Throughout this experiment of embodying Corita's classroom strategies and utilizing a methods braiding technique, I drew upon interdisciplinary modes of inquiry based on my research interests in art education, feminism, and political science, gathering multiple sources of information that provided context, challenge, and confirmation around my research questions, as addressed below. To consider the question of how Corita's teaching practice aligns with contemporary practices in visual arts education, I examined reflections and interview notes for areas of cohesion between Corita's work and the practices of myself and interviewed colleagues, as well as biographical analysis for evidence of how she contended with marginalization. In addressing how perceptions of social identity serve to mitigate or exacerbate polarization and social disconnect, as well as whether access to CBAE programming has the potential to contribute positively to participants' sense of tolerance, belonging and empowerment, I reference findings from survey data as well as discussions that took place in workshops and interviews.

Corita and Contemporary Practice (Finding #1)

In defining Corita's 1960's teaching strategies within contemporary approaches to intersectional and critical pedagogy, I consider findings from several sources of narrative data which define Corita's social justice-based artwork as political engagement, underscore her focus on the vernacular and the local and examine how she negotiated the double standard of creative production within traditional institutional frameworks. Biographical sources also position Corita within what we today consider art as social practice, citing the collaborative and democratic nature of her medium and process (Ault, 2006)

as well as how she navigated the multiply marginalized position of being female from a working-class background, a woman religious, and as such, living in (albeit deliberate) poverty.

On planning Mary's Day, Corita explains that "as with any commission in those days, I started it going and the students did immense amounts of work and shared much of the responsibility" (Kent & Steward, 2008). In addition to happenings, celebrations and her serigraph practice, Ault (2006) describes other projects undertaken by Corita during her career at IHC, including private commissions from companies such as IBM and for the world's fair in New York, giant disposable exhibits, murals on local buildings, theatrical backdrops and the meticulous supervision and documentation of students' independent work. Claiming that "I really did art on the side," Corita centered her artistic production primarily as an embedded practice through her work as an educator and collaborator at IHC, frequently inviting students to work alongside her on these commissions as extensions of the curriculum.

The Mary's Day events drew public attention to the college and to Corita's work, but most importantly, fostered an overall sense of "togetherness" across the IHC campus community. Despite her humility and commitment to collaborative work, Corita was developing notoriety as "the face of the changing nun in post-Vatican II America" (Pacatte, 2017). In 1966, she was named one of nine "Women of the Year" by the Los Angeles Times, and in 1967 graced the cover of Newsweek. This public attention likely complicated the already contentious position of the IHM Sisters within the archdiocese of Los Angeles. After the 1966 Mary's Day celebration, IHM superior Mother Humiliata received a reprimand for the "very unfavorable publicity that attended the fiesta last week," suggesting the sisters issue a formal apology to the IHC alumnae (Dulle, 2018).

Within a few years of his appointment as archbishop of the Los Angeles Diocese in 1948, Cardinal Joseph McIntyre had begun a heavy-handed interference into the affairs at IHC. In 1965, he carried out an investigation of the order, sending a team of priests with inquiries such as "Do you think that the

sisters' sex life is affected by reading novels (Paccate, p. 54)?" Cardinal McIntyre was an authoritarian figure at odds with the dynamism of the progressive IHM sisters, his actions evidencing "not only the prevailing patriarchal attitude of the cardinal and his associates but a profound lack of trust for, and understanding of, the life of women and mission of the sisters." Although the negative implications of authoritarianism and patriarchal oppression are already suggested as factors in the way female bodies were policed by Cardinal McIntyre, Paccate also indicates a deeper conflict based in the political economy of the Church and its role within the larger educational system - more nuns with more freedom to pursue higher educational goals meant less teachers on the ground.

McIntyre was critical of Corita's art, speaking out against her serigraph print *tomato* (1964) in which she quoted fellow educator, Sam Eisenstein's reaction to the 1964 Mary's Day celebration: "If a canned food company feels justified in saying their tomatoes are the juiciest, it is not desecration to say, 'Mother Mary is the juiciest tomato of them all.'" Although this could be read as a challenge to Church authority, Dackerman (2015) asserts that *tomato* also shows Corita's commitment to the revitalizations engendered by Vatican II, specifically the shift from Latin Mass to use of vernacular language. By borrowing from cultural vernacular, the infamous serigraph is described by the aforementioned scholars as an expression of making the Gospel more accessible. However, as Dackerman further explains, the serigraph also offered an updated conception of female divinity. In the words of Corita's friend and co-conspirator Father Daniel Berrigan, "all hell broke loose" after the publication of *tomato*. Voicing his understanding that within structures of the Catholic society, Fr. Berrigan describes the conflict through his claim that men "owned the icons of the Blessed Virgin," and thereby "owned" women (Ault, 2006, p. 116).

One of the things Jesus did was to step aside from the organized religion of his time because it had become corrupt and bogged down with rules. Rules became more

important than feeding the hungry. (Kent C. , The Scribner Encyclopedia of American Lives, 1999)

At the end of Cardinal McIntyre’s investigation and a related Vatican-appointed commission in May of 1968, it was determined that the IHM sisters were not living “an authentic religious life,” and were given the option to adhere to his standards, disband, or become a secular institute. By this time, Corita had already sought a leave of absence and dispensation from her vows.

Ideology and Belonging (Finding #2)

After developing the survey instrument and recruitment activity to promote the study, I administered the survey via Qualtrics, and analyzed the resulting data. Of 31 students surveyed prior to the workshop, 80% indicated that they do not believe the American justice system is fair and unbiased (Figure 3), and almost 70% said that they do not trust the government (Figure 4).

Q19 - The American justice system is fair and unbiased.

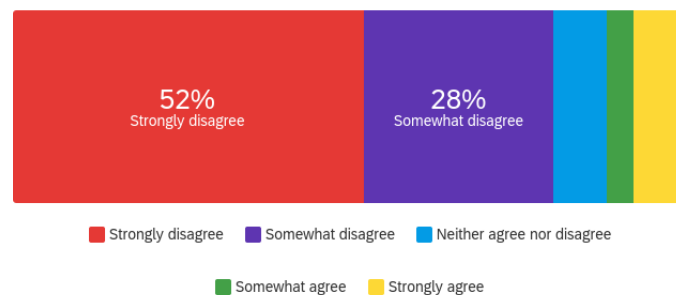


Figure 4, Survey item.

Q30 - I trust the government.

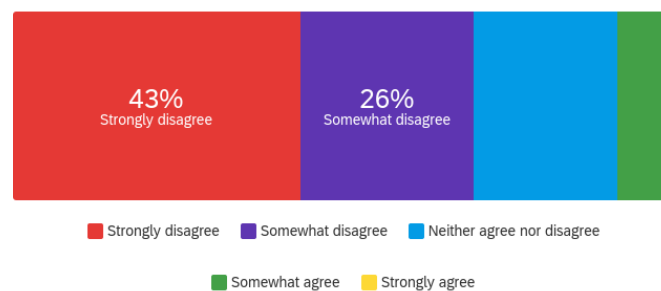


Figure 5, Survey item.

Areas of cohesion from the survey data may evidence some homogeneity among the studied population, as college students at a diverse university with many opportunities for engagement, but limited engagement with developing cultural learning and communication skills. For example, 96% of respondents report having friends of diverse cultural or racial identities, but only 44% feel comfortable asking questions about race and culture. This finding is also reflected in the UF IntCRIT & IntCOMM Attitudes and Beliefs survey. Over the course of five academic years, responses to the IntCRIT/IntCOMM survey indicated that students value knowledge of cultural beliefs and norms, but do not actively prioritize developing this knowledge, and did not feel confident in their ability to communicate effectively with members of other cultures (University of Florida, 2014).

During workshop sessions, participants also expressed feelings of uncertainty about the culture and the nature of “belonging” within the university community. For instance, a female participant during session two indicated feeling disconnected from the surrounding city outside of the college, noting the difficulty of navigating public transportation and even suggesting that new students might benefit from a short course on local history, culture, and tips for getting around the city. One local artist mentioned art students may be particularly sensitive to feelings of isolation, as “desperate for coolness” (Shortt, 2021).

Several participants and interviewed practitioners mentioned their own individual experiences of faith-based youth groups and other extracurricular social opportunities that took place within religious or secular organizations (such as Girl/Boy Scouts, sports teams, performing arts groups) and the difficulty of managing some level of cognitive dissonance between wanting to “belong,” but not conform - to be accepted without sacrificing authentic expression of identity. During interviews, a local artist imagined the difficulty of choosing this form of autonomy for his future family, and a Corita Art Center

staff member also discussed these entanglements in the context of the intersecting spiritual and secular demands in honoring Corita's work (Cha, 2022).

Notes taken during workshops and interviews also reflect a recurring theme of military families and the relation to a contested sense of identity. For example, two female participants during session three discussed the tensions of belonging to a globally situated community that promotes inclusivity in practical terms but is often considered politically homogenous, and one interviewed local artist described the privilege of having diverse playmates due to their family's military service.

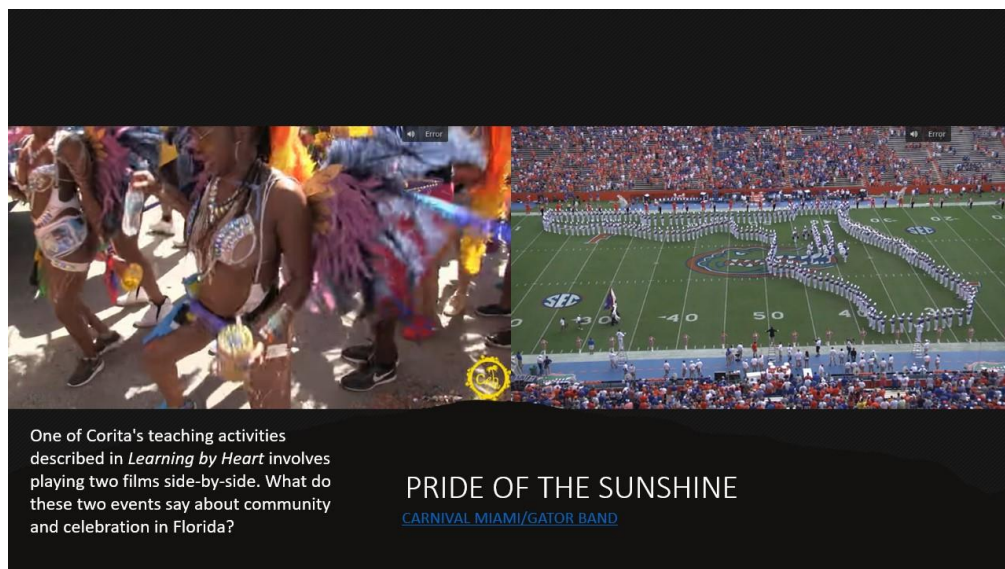


Figure 5, Film exercise during workshop session, "Pride of the Sunshine"

Practice and Polarity (Finding #3)

In workshop session #2, we explored the aesthetics of celebration as a tool for considering such complicated identities as described above, creating assemblages with party décor, and examined Mary's Day celebrations and parties across different local subcultures. Utilizing Corita's technique (Kent & Steward, 2008) of showing two films simultaneously allowed for a concrete visual exploration of social cohesion that was energetic and filled with nuance. Hearing the national anthem played alongside dancers "whining" to Soca music at Carnival, Miami's Caribbean street festival (Figure 5), or the bright,

dissonant display of police vehicles leading the annual homecoming parade against footage from one of our local waterways. This activity was designed to challenge concepts of “tradition” and hegemony that inform our situated perception of visual culture. Within the context of this study, this practice was enacted in direct conversation with the goals of addressing polarization.

Prompted to describe what political polarization looks like, participants during workshop session #1 described “Republican/Democrat,” “not listening to other sides and opinions,” “separation through ideals,” and “communication breakdown.” Although the survey data cannot be considered representative of the student body of the studied university, initial findings demonstrate some ideological distance on specific issues, as well as responses that are aligned with factors associated with attitude extremization. For example, almost 70% of surveyed participants indicated their belief that it can be hard for someone their age to find a job. Job and economic insecurity suggest potential to feel a sense of victimhood, and joblessness is consistently correlated with negative outcomes (Sieckelinck & Gielen, 2018).

When discussing the efficacy of political protest signs during workshop #3, participants considered the polarizing nature of many of the visual/textual statements found in these artifacts. One female participant commented on the commercialization of protest aesthetic and sentiment, claiming that most protest sign slogans could just as easily be found on t-shirts or coffee mugs available at a local department store. Expanding on this point, she suggested that the nature of protest slogans is inherently divisive, resulting in the restriction of conversations by centering moral dichotomies, rather than leaving an opening for dialogue. “It just makes people mad, and then they shut down.” Slogans such as “Defund the Police,” in this participants’ opinion, are seen as statements rather than attempts at solutions.

Summary Across Findings

An interviewed local artist described a parallel between Corita's work and his own as "winking at" the type of authoritarian language often found in everyday texts found in signs and slogans (Shortt, 2021). Corita Kent is perhaps best known for her text-based works, the bold serigraphs which claim, "yes people like us," asking viewers to "open wide...that the King of Glory may enter in," as well as "open wide the exits from poverty to the children of the poor." When Corita borrowed text and images from the gas station and grocery store, she placed her work within the evolving conversation of American pop art. But by expanding on the vernacular by quoting liberally and intentionally from both secular and religious sources, she was positioning her work as an element of social and political action. Corita was committed to making her work accessible, engaged constantly with the intersectionality of the everyday, embodying "broad knowledge, visual complexity, and sophistication, and thereby expressed deep respect for viewers" (Ault, 2006, p.30). Exploring these tenets of her work through art education pedagogy has resulted in a rich exploration of what it means to be a democratic educator (hooks, 2003) in contemporary society.

Drawing from notes taken during workshop sessions, I found that none of the participants were studio arts majors, yet a majority of those surveyed indicated engaging with art activities on their own through self-study such as YouTube videos or other modes of independent learning. Less than 11% had taken a class in the community, but 96% strongly agreed that art is "something everyone should be able to enjoy." However, participation in the survey was minimal, and the attendance during the workshop sessions was inconsistent, despite participants' enthusiasm and engagement when present. Several factors were indicated regarding barriers to attendance, primarily conflicts in schedule, difficulty of commute across campus, and lack of free time outside of academic and work obligations. As a college with a high-profile athletics program and extremely stiff competition for enrollment, the expectation for

cohesive identity – a literal team spirit - is embedded across student, faculty, and staff roles at the university where this research took place. Yet for many students, a lasting, empowered relationship to community and belonging is not as simple as participation in athletic game day traditions or coming to a few art workshops.

The survey data also reflected that 68% of respondents did not belong to a religious, volunteer, or political organization in their community, with 36% further emphasizing they did not, and do not want to. However, 41% indicated having volunteered with a religious, political, or other community organization. This supports Putnam's (2000) claim, that although social connectedness and community involvement among young Americans has eroded over the past several decades, multiple studies also point to a substantial increase in volunteerism and community service. Although this trend may be explained by external pressures such as graduation or scholarship requirements, the author also links the rise in volunteerism with the decline of other forms of civic participation. Volunteerism and community service are indicators of political engagement, not disaffection, and both survey and workshop participants described in a variety of ways their awareness and responsiveness to complex social issues of national and global significance.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The implications of this study may be widely applicable to interdisciplinary considerations of social cohesion, disconnect, and polarization, within and outside of the boundaries of art education. Theories which suggest that a rise in individualism has led to negative social effects must not ignore the reality that many public and private organizations do not actively embody the values (equitable access to food, health, transportation, childcare and educational services, anti-racism and anti-sexism) that serve and protect the vulnerable among their "team" or "flock." For individuals who are disenchanted

with such institutional structures, volunteerism and community action may be one way to serve the desire for autonomous, self-defined social bridging.

Q27 - I find myself drawn in to debates on social media.

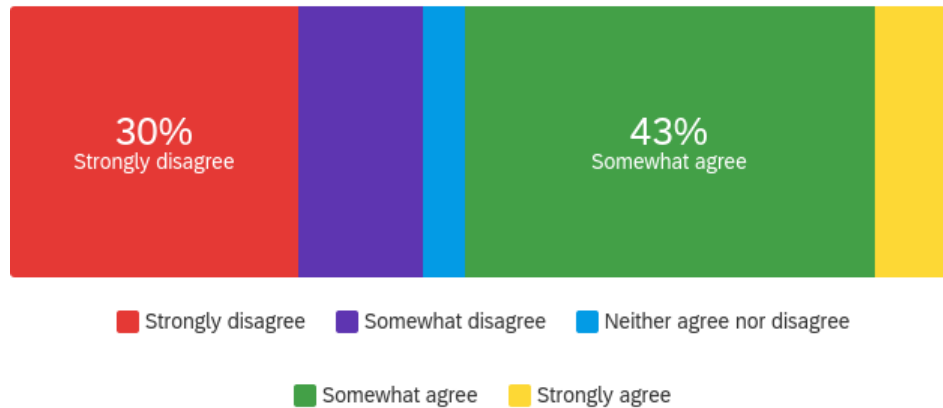


Figure 6, Survey item, "I find myself drawn into debates on social media."

However, as the survey data suggests (Figure 6), this potentially well-meaning democratic impulse is often expressed in less constructive – but more accessible - terms. Therefore, I suggest that social participation does not necessarily correlate to civic investment in the ways we may have predicted in the past, underscoring the need for further research into culturally responsive, participatory modes of community development. By activating a critical pedagogical approach which centers democracy and cultural responsiveness, in collaboration with those institutions which may be sites of contested trust and belonging, it may be possible to build community cohesion.

Significance, Implications and Recommendations

For educators, Corita's teaching strategies can inform an approach that actively works towards an ideological shift, away from considering education as a means of joining a professional class, towards thinking about "education as the practice of freedom" (hooks, 2003). When children are penalized for inventiveness and playful, creative thinking, it can be difficult to counteract the "bias of the authority." In the arts and sciences, however, the ability to "play around with materials and ideas" becomes a valued

skill – Corita posits that “the world would benefit greatly if this were true in political science and statesmanship as well” (Kent & Steward, 2008). The visual arts studio is already uniquely well-positioned to facilitate bridging social interactions. According to one interviewed practitioner, the studio is a place where well-supported students may feel safe to not only be vulnerable, but to fail (Shortt, 2021). Providing accessible, participatory cultural arts services may result in the creation of a safe space to set goals, to fail, to be wrong, and to build new structures, inclusive not only for individuals but within institutions and communities. Corita writes that “we are each other's sources.” When we activate critical pedagogy to promote democratic conversation, community members can make new connections. Through a community-based arts approach, participants may “become aware of subtle shading and implications” (Kent & Steward, 2008) of new people and structures; empowered to play around with ideas, a sense of belonging is co-authored, responsive, and made by hand.

Conclusion

Rule 1 of the IHC Art Department Rules states, “Find a place you trust and then try trusting it for a while.” This rule typifies a critical tenet of Corita’s philosophy and CBAE which may have been absent in many phases of my research. *“Providing the opportunity for open-ended, critically engaged art making around participant-defined collaborative projects will facilitate skills-based and emotional learning goals that may be activated socially, politically, and practically.”* What was missing from this early iteration of my abstract and therefore within the foundation of this project is critical to all community-based projects – finding common ground and finding the time. Though many strategies were employed to engage more deeply with asset-based community development at this research site, responsiveness and effective collaboration is a result of relationship-building, which has been complicated by the very global events and institutional barriers which effects this project seeks to mitigate. “Providing an opportunity” for a safe space to negotiate, construct, and to fail also requires the development of mutual trust between

participants, facilitators, and institutions, necessitating a time commitment that was outside the scope of this project and my personal capacities as a working parent. In short, it is unsurprising that a community-based project could not be fully realized in the course of one semester by one graduate researcher.

Effective collaboration in community arts requires an environment in which interdependence is understood as integral to a healthy society, in which justice and equity are valued. It requires asking people what they need, asking students how we, as educators, can be of service (hooks, 2003). My research supports the position that, like Corita, we as classroom teachers, community educators, and representatives of academic institutions are positioned to be of service – and as Corita described as the purpose of the artist, to alert people to things they might have missed. Corita suggests that our tools and materials define structure, and that “the more you struggle, the more definition of intent will be there. If answers come too quickly, it often means that we don’t really understand the question and need to keep asking” (Kent & Steward, 2008, p. 83). I just wanted to recreate a version of Mary’s Day at this university - but participants talked about community education in terms of learning AutoCAD, photography and bookmaking, the possibility of taking single-credit classes on skills like wildlife survival. In this example, the possibilities of a CBAE approach to Corita’s practice is well-supported – learning alongside the participants in my study through action research has allowed me to define my intent as a practitioner and develop a deeper understanding of the questions I should be asking.

As teachers we try to participate in the process of empowering people to be the artists they are. And as artists, we accept responsibility to create – to realize our immense powers to change things, to fit things together in a new way. As artists we work every day. We make our own lives every day; we care for our family every day. It is hard daily work, this creative process. But it is also greater than personal. We are asked to care for others as well – helping them to create their lives as we were helped. Our work is global – we are asked literally to help make the countries of the world fit together in new ways. We begin this making, of course, in our own selves, our homes, our own country, but we can't stop there. To dream about painting and not also to work at it doesn't ever bring about a painting. To dream about creating a new world that is not teetering on the edge of total destruction and not to work at it doesn't make a peaceful world. So it is important that we are creative people working daily on the greater picture as well, bringing to it all our skills of imagination and making. We make this larger picture also with hard daily work, by specific actions. All our creative skills are needed to keep up this tremendous work. And we work on it so that we and our children may have a world in which to fulfil our reason for being here – which is to create. (Corita Kent, cited in Kent & Steward, 2008)

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APPENDIX A

Immaculate Heart Art College Rules

IMMACULATE HEART COLLEGE ART DEPARTMENT RULES

- Rule 1 FIND A PLACE YOU TRUST AND THEN TRY TRUSTING IT FOR A WHILE.
- Rule 2 GENERAL DUTIES OF A STUDENT:
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR TEACHER.
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR FELLOW STUDENTS.
- Rule 3 GENERAL DUTIES OF A TEACHER:
PULL EVERYTHING OUT OF YOUR STUDENTS.
- Rule 4 CONSIDER EVERYTHING AN EXPERIMENT.
- Rule 5 BE SELF DISCIPLINED. THIS MEANS FINDING SOMEONE WISE OR SMART AND CHOOSING TO FOLLOW THEM.
TO BE DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A GOOD WAY.
TO BE SELF DISCIPLINED IS TO FOLLOW IN A BETTER WAY.
- Rule 6 NOTHING IS A MISTAKE. THERE'S NO WIN AND NO FAIL. THERE'S ONLY MAKE.
- Rule 7 The only rule is work.
IF YOU WORK IT WILL LEAD TO SOMETHING.
IT'S THE PEOPLE WHO DO ALL OF THE WORK ALL THE TIME WHO EVENTUALLY CATCH ON TO THINGS.
- Rule 8 DON'T TRY TO CREATE AND ANALYSE AT THE SAME TIME. THEY'RE DIFFERENT PROCESSES.
- Rule 9 BE HAPPY WHENEVER YOU CAN MANAGE IT. ENJOY YOURSELF. IT'S LIGHTER THAN YOU THINK.
- Rule 10 "WE'RE BREAKING ALL OF THE RULES. EVEN OUR OWN RULES. AND HOW DO WE DO THAT? BY LEAVING PLENTY OF ROOM FOR X QUANTITIES." JOHN CAGE
- HELPFUL HINTS: ALWAYS BE AROUND. COME OR GO TO EVERYTHING. ALWAYS GO TO CLASSES. READ ANYTHING YOU CAN GET YOUR HANDS ON. LOOK AT MOVIES CAREFULLY, OFTEN. SAVE EVERYTHING-IT MIGHT COME IN HANDY LATER.
THERE SHOULD BE NEW RULES NEXT WEEK.

APPENDIX B

Survey Instrument

1. Educational level (9th-12th grade, college 1st-4th year)
2. Experience in visual arts (high school, college, community, at home, none at all)

Indicate from 1-5, 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree

Art in Community Openness/Tolerance Triggers extremity Empowerment/Belonging Ideological Polarization

3. Making art is something everyone should be able to enjoy.
4. My experience in making art has been positive so far.
5. I have friends of different cultural/racial identities.
6. I think that minority/marginalized groups are safe in my school/community.
7. I have the power to help make decisions in my school/community.
8. My personal identity feels complicated.
9. I feel uncomfortable asking questions about race/culture.
10. I can look to leaders in my community who share my background or views.
11. It's true that some stereotypes are based in reality.
12. I find it acceptable when someone wants to discuss their gender or sexuality.
13. I can find something in common with almost all of my peers.
14. I believe that there should be limits to free speech.
15. Political protest is a right that should be protected.
16. All citizens should have access to firearms for self-defense.
17. The American justice system is fair and unbiased.
18. Police officers make my school/community safer.
19. Artists must take responsibility for the impact of work that might be offensive to others.
20. I feel safe expressing my political views in my school/community.
21. It is inevitable and acceptable that some laws will restrict certain individual freedoms.
22. My views are adequately represented by politicians currently holding power.
23. I belong to a church/temple, volunteer/political organization, or other group in my community.
24. I have been a target of bullying or harassment based on my personal identity.
25. I find myself drawn in to debates on social media.
26. I feel anger or resentment towards people who just can't understand my views.
27. I trust the government.
28. It can be difficult for someone my age to find a well-paying job.
29. Critical race theory is a valuable tool in public education.
30. Which of the following groups/ideologies do you consider to be extreme in their views? (Check all that apply.)

-Antifa

-Aryan Brotherhood

-Black Panthers

-"Anti-vaxxers"

-Black Lives Matter

-Democratic Party

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|--------------------------|
| -Feminism | -Nation of Islam | -Republican Party |
| -Green Party | -Oath Keepers | -Westboro Baptist Church |
| -Ku Klux Klan | -PETA | -Other: _____ |
| -Libertarian Party | -Proud Boys | |

31. I have taken the following actions in my community: (Check all that apply)

- +volunteered for a political campaign
- +volunteered for a local non-profit or charitable organization
- +volunteered with a religious organization
- +communicated with a state/local lawmaker (governor, city commissioner, senator, representative, etc.)
- +attended a protest, rally or other demonstration
- +donated to a political campaign
- +donated to an activist or other political organization

APPENDIX C

Summary of items, University of Florida's (2014) International Critical Thinking (IntCRIT) and International Communication (IntCOMM) scales

SUMMARY OF ITEMS

Item	Factor	Component
1. I consider different perspectives before making conclusions about the world.	CT	Analysis
2. I am able to manage when faced with multiple cultural perspectives.	CT	Solution Finding
3. I am open to different cultural ways of thinking in any international context.	CT	Judgment
4. I can make effective decisions when placed in different cultural situations.	CT	Reasoning
5. Knowing about other cultural norms and beliefs is important to me.	CT	Judgment
6. I am able to think critically to interpret global and intercultural issues.	CT	Analysis
7. I actively learn about different cultural norms.	CT	Solution Finding
8. Understanding different points of view is a priority to me.	CT	Judgment
9. I can recognize how different cultures solve problems.	CT	Reasoning
10. I can contrast important aspects of different cultures with my own.	CT	Judgment
11. Knowing about other cultural beliefs is important.	CT	Judgment
12. I am able to recognize how members of other cultures make decisions.	CT	Analysis
13. I demonstrate flexibility when interacting with members of another culture.	COMM	Adaptability
14. I prefer to socialize with people of my culture.	COMM	Adaptability
15. I am confident that I can adapt to different cultural environments.	COMM	Production
16. I am able to communicate effectively with members of other cultures.	COMM	Production
17. I like working in groups with students from other countries.	COMM	Acceptance
18. I feel comfortable in conversations that may involve cultural differences.	COMM	Sensitivity
19. When working on a group project, I enjoy collaborating with students from other countries.	COMM	Acceptance
20. I often ask questions about culture to members of other cultures.	COMM	Awareness
21. I enjoy learning about other cultures.	COMM	Awareness
22. I appreciate members of other cultures teaching me about their culture.	COMM	Sensitivity
23. I am able to interact effectively with members of other cultures.	COMM	Production
24. I appreciate differences between cultures.	COMM	Acceptance
25. I feel comfortable discussing international issues.	COMM	Adaptability
26. I can clearly articulate my point of view to members of other cultures.	COMM	Production

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AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Art education has been the critical focus of my professional practice since 2007. Exploring materials and processes with students and other community members has allowed me to develop meaning through a variety of media and learning environments. I've spent summer camp seasons in bright, shiny museums and boggy, bug-filled state parks, afternoons spent making art with young residents in shelters as well as on the basketball court coaching cheerleading. These positions represent only a few aspects of the wild and boundless possibility of youth empowerment.

As a professional tattooer since 2009, staying curious about the many entanglements of this craft is likely to be a lifelong pursuit. My personal work as a zine maker has now spanned over twenty years, and my work at the University of Florida in bookmaking and letterpress printing has been a welcome enhancement to this practice and occasional, much-needed diversion from other research tasks this year.

When I paused graduate studies in 2016 prior to the birth of my first child, it was with the understanding that I was leaving the university community and the classroom committed to my new life as a parent. I knew I had to keep working through this new lens - to find other, more accessible, equitable, and responsive ways of learning and generating knowledge. It's a ridiculously trite cliché, but my "job" as Mama has been the most challenging, humbling and radicalizing. Parenting is a process that transformed my passion into MISSION.

In 2017, I founded Wayfaring Painter, a 501c3 nonprofit arts organization with a focus on engaging the Gainesville, Florida community with accessible, contemporary artmaking practice. My community practice through Wayfaring Painter has informed many of the research questions undertaken in this project.