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**And Thus We Shall Survive:
The Perseverance of the South Side Community Art Center**

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**And Thus We Shall Survive:
The Perseverance of the South Side Community Art Center**

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Thesis

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Dedication

To Dr. Margaret Goss Taylor Burroughs. Without her love and commitment to the South Side Community Art Center throughout her lifetime, this thesis would have no voice.

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Abstract

And Thus We Shall Survive: The Perseverance of the South Side Community Art Center

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This study investigates The South Side Community Art Center in Chicago, Illinois, an art center founded at the end of the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project. The Art Center was only one of a handful of African-American art centers in the nation, and was one of the only locations that black artists could showcase their work proudly on the South Side. An examination is made into the period of time after federal funds were pulled, focusing on 1942-1959, to examine how exactly the Art Center kept its doors open. An overview of the founding of the SSCAC is presented, alongside theoretical lenses used in the crafting of a specific theoretical framework to analyze the Art Center.

This study uses historical interpretation of archive data from the SSCAC from 1942-1959. An investigation of archived information found a noticeable gap in data between 1950-1953, leading to the use of historic imagination surrounding the missing material. Using historical imagination, two hypotheses were put forth to explain the lack

of information found in the archive. First, the historic significance of McCarthyism on black individuals is highlighted. Second, the elusive histories of black women which are often missing from traditional archives is brought forth as a possible explanation for why the data does not seem to exist. The research concludes with a reflection on the difficulty of studying small institutions and specifically the histories of oppressed groups.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Introduction to the Study	1
Central Research Question.....	2
Problem Statement	2
Motivations For Research	4
Personal Motivations	4
Professional Motivations	6
Hypothesis/Speculation About This Investigation.....	7
Research Methods	8
Definition Of Terms.....	9
Limitations Of The Study	13
Benefits To The Field	14
Conclusion of Chapter One.....	15
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	16
The Mecca Was Chicago	17
The Works Progress Administration, Et Al.	17
The South Side Community Art Center.....	23
The Legacy of the SSCAC.....	32
Dismantling the Master Narrative in Art Education History	33
Historiography	37
Conclusion of Chapter Two.....	39
Chapter 3: Theoretical Lenses	41
Introduction to the Chapter	41
Crafting a Lens for Studying the SSCAC	42
Feminist Theory	44
Black Studies Theory	46
Black Studies And Historic Investigation.....	47
Black Studies From the Time Period	49

W. E. B. Du Bois	50
Alain Locke.....	51
Black Feminist Studies Theory	54
Black Feminism and Accessibility.....	55
Black Feminism and Activism.....	57
Black Women and Historic Investigation	59
Connecting Theories	60
Conclusion of Chapter Three	61
Chapter 4: Methodology	63
Early Stages	63
First Steps	65
First Trip – May 2014	66
Woodson Regional Library.....	67
The South Side Community Art Center.....	68
Second Trip – October 2014	71
The Library Archives.....	71
The Chicago History Museum	72
Second Trip to the South Side Community Art Center	74
Chapter 5: A History of the SSCAC, 1941-1959.....	77
Introduction.....	77
1941-1944 – The Removal Of Funds	77
1945-1949 – The Post-War Era	83
1954-1959 – The 1950s	88
1950-1953 – Missing History	91
Historic Imagination and the Historian.....	92
Silence About the SSCAC, 1950-1953	95
McCarthyism.....	95
Women’s History	98
On Missing History	102
Conclusion of Chapter Five	103

Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	105
Central Research Question.....	106
Summary of Findings.....	106
Finding Archival Information.....	108
Recounting Black Women’s Histories.....	109
Suggestions for Future Research.....	110
Conclusion.....	112
References.....	114

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC) in Chicago, Illinois, opened its doors in November 1940, with an official dedication and Eleanor Roosevelt in attendance in early 1941. Founded by the Works Progress Administration's (WPA) Federal Art Project (FAP), the center existed as the only art center created in Illinois through federal funding (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990). One of more than a hundred art centers opened in the United States during the Great Depression, the SSCAC focused on serving the black community that had formed in Chicago during the First Great Migration after World War I, specifically in its South Side community of Bronzeville. After its founding, the SSCAC provided a haven for black artists, becoming one of the first spaces that openly celebrated black art and artists in the United States. Within the walls of the SSCAC, black artists displayed their work, taught art and poetry, and enrolled in classes taught by their peers. The SSCAC, in conjunction with Chicago's little-known Black Renaissance, helped bolster the careers of black visual artists such as Elizabeth Catlett, Charles White, and Archibald Motley Jr., and brought to prominence black leaders like Margaret Goss Burroughs, founder of the DuSable Museum of African-American History.

At the advent of World War II, the federal government terminated both the WPA and the FAP, ending government financial support for the SSCAC's teachers and staff, and channeling funds into the war effort. During this period, many art centers created through FAP funds closed, unable to economically sustain themselves. The SSCAC kept

its doors open, however, and continued as a home for black artists in Chicago. Even today, the SSCAC still functions as a prominent community point within the black community and continues to serve as a cultural beacon and historic landmark within Chicago's economically depressed community of Douglas. Currently, it stands as the only art center independently existing today in its original form from the more than one hundred art centers across the United States funded through the FAP during the 1930s.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

The following research questions drove work on this investigation: How did the South Side Community Art Center manage to continue as an institution in the 1950s after funds from the Federal Art Project were pulled in 1943? How did the community around the SSCAC function to help the Center continue?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

During the Great Depression, the government took upon itself the burden of aiding the American people in order to help them locate jobs. The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was one of the most ambitious projects undertaken by the government during the Great Depression. My grandfather, a youth in the 1930s, was part of the Civilian Conservation Corps that developed to plant thousands of trees in over-forested areas in northern Michigan and performed other jobs in wildlife conservation. Thousands of jobs were developed and sustained through the flood of funding from the government in the mid-1930s. One branch of funding, the Federal Art Project (FAP), started in 1935 with the express purpose of hiring artists. The Illinois Art Project (IAP)

branched out from the FAP, specifically focused on aiding artists throughout the state of Illinois. Historians have recounted the work of the IAP, many of the artists it helped sustain, and its lasting impact. Other historians have written extensively about the FAP, and even more have covered various features of the WPA.

However, little has been written about projects under the FAPs umbrella, including the Community Art Center (CAC) division. What little has been documented about these centers is now dated and filled with descriptive holes and in serious need of further investigation. Though there were more than a hundred art centers founded, there is little historic information about most of them, especially centers developed in rural areas of Florida and Ohio. The information provided for the few that have been recorded lacks concrete information for researchers, and is especially lacking for art educators.

Though written about extensively in relationship to Chicago politics and literature, the SSCAC has not been given its due when seen as a venue of art education, despite its name and obvious involvement in the arts. One of the largest issues in art education history is a lack of the histories of minority groups, including women, people of color, queer educators, and educators with disabilities. Understanding the SSCAC in the context of an art education center, and looking at its history as an arts institution, we as a field can start to correct many of these issues by turning the focus of art education toward under-served and marginalized groups. Important female artists and educators were the backbone of the Art Center; researching these black women art educators helps begin to illuminate a large gap in understanding within the field. My research focused

heavily on the role of African-American women and their work in bolstering a community institution through a period of financial strain. By researching this organization, I called attention to areas of art education that have not yet been acknowledged in history, and began to open the door to what art education is, was, and who we need to emphasize in the art education histories of minority communities.

MOTIVATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Personal Motivations

Much of my life has been bifurcated between two different geographic states. When people ask me where my “home” is, I say that I spent most of my formative life in central Illinois, in a small town that sits at the intersection of two highways and two train tracks, ironically named a “city,” despite the road sign stating “Population: 3400.” Prior to starting high school, however, I moved to New Hampshire, spending important years as a teenager there, living uncomfortably as we attempted to establish a “home.” I then explain that I moved back to Illinois for college, while still identifying a sense of place within New Hampshire and my newly extended New England family. Today, I identify as both a Midwesterner—through 18 years of living there—and as a New Englander. After moving to Texas, it became difficult to identify what “home” actually means to me and, if I have multiple, which ones are worth explaining.

However, there is one place that has always felt like home to me in a different sense—the Currier Art Center at the Currier Museum of Art in Manchester, New Hampshire. This home, unlike my multiple physical addresses, is the location that helped

foster in me a deep desire to learn, to teach, and to make art. After realizing that I didn't fit into my school's art classes, I decided I needed to look elsewhere and find what was missing. The Currier Art Center's Open Studio program welcomed me with open arms, and fostered a creative sense within me that had not blossomed at school. My mentor, Linn, cared about me as a person and as an artist. The director knew me personally and honored my opinions. I originally started going to the Currier twice a week, which led me to take another course and stay later, which carried me into April Vacation volunteer work. This action directed me towards summer break volunteer work, and culminated with a job, and driving up the highway to the Art Center six times a week. I learned the neighborhood and felt comfortable in the city so much larger than anywhere I had lived before. I spent an entire summer working full-time at this minimum wage position. I still consider Manchester my "home," even if I never physically live there. The staff is my family. The Art Center felt more like my home than my actual home did at times.

My interest in this thesis topic stems from my love of the Art Center. Art centers, as places of creation, possess power to transform lives. Extracurricular art education changed my life and led me down a path to my goals. The South Side Community Art Center in Chicago, Illinois has been doing the same thing for black youth and adults since 1941. The brick structure of the SSCAC echoes the building of the Currier Art Center, both converted facilities now bursting at the seams with art and artistic expression. The SSCAC was home to thousands of students throughout its long and storied history, and still stands as a beacon of hope in a depressed neighborhood. I have a home in Illinois, and it still holds a lot of love in my heart. I also have a home in an art center, where I was

encouraged to be myself for the first time. Researching the South Side Community Art Center felt natural and welcoming, like working in a place that shaped a large part of my identity as both an artist and as an educator. While looking at the past of a center that I never experienced directly, I am, in a sense, coming home.

Professional Motivations

A large part of my personal motivation for conducting this study emerges from my feminist, and more recently black feminist, perspective. I have a hard time looking at anything and not seeing the “strings”—the implicit ideas about what is “important,” who should be championed, what ideas are valued and which are shut out. In art education, a field dominated by women, our celebration surrounding women art educators has not been enough. Stankiewicz (1997) stated, “Feminist theory has much to offer a field in which the majority of practitioners have been women while the historically recognized leaders were men” (p. 62). I think many of these ideas about who holds the power in the field is starting to change, yet we as a field have a very long way to go. I wish to be part of this change, by looking to the educators who have shifted the balance of power back into a more egalitarian position. By writing my thesis on marginalized centers of art education, I am beginning to rectify what I see as a grave injustice in the field. I do not simply want to sit back and point out what I see is an issue for change, I am going to help change it. I want to professionally label myself as a feminist, and as someone who is willing to point out inequalities, but then also willing to do the dirty work necessary to rectify those inequalities.

Through my courses at The University of Texas at Austin, I have learned that I have found a calling in understanding art education's history through a black feminist lens. I have significant interest in contributing to the field by digging deeply into historic places, people, and events that have not yet been looked at by historians of art education. The allure of art education history's forgotten secrets draws me to look closely, dig deeper, and thread together information into a compelling historic narrative. By writing this thesis on a topic that seems wholly ignored by historians of art education, I begin to assert myself as an interpreter of art education history, and one with an expressed interest in the underrepresented, the silenced, and the overlooked. My goal is to continue to interpret art education history and bring forward the great stories that time has quieted and give them new prominence within the field. Through writing this thesis, I position myself in the art education historical rhetoric.

HYPOTHESIS/SPECULATION ABOUT THIS INVESTIGATION

The SSCAC is the only WPA/FAP funded art center in the United States that still exists as the same institution wherein it began. Nearly 75 years after its founding, the Center continues to teach art classes, exhibit the work of black artists, and educate the public in the exact same building where it began. A community center functions for long periods of time only when people within the community value it as an institution. My hypothesis for this study is that there were community members who believed the SSCAC important to save, and through hard work on the part of the SSCAC managed to keep the doors of the center open.

The SSCAC formed because of a genuine need for an art center, as identified by members of the surrounding community. These community members brought up the idea of initiating a community art center to IAP directors, and community participation helped solidify the purchase of the building and initiate its opening. Through this community-centered need, the community viewed the creation of the center as essential to their lives. Many other similar programs fail because there is no community buy-in to these organizations. I hypothesize that the SSCAC continues to exist today because of individuals during the 1950s who saw a lasting impact for the community through art education and display of artwork by black artists within their own neighborhood. The Center's survival was due to people who recognized its importance in black society and took charge to make sure it would survive.

RESEARCH METHODS

I applied historical research in this thesis. Historical research was a clear choice when I looked at what I wished to discover through an examination of the SSCAC's past. Using historical methods, in this case, meant investigating archival documents and materials and working from primary sources that were found in archives and other saved materials from the time period in question. This historical investigation included reading and studying letters, minutes, literature produced by the SSCAC, program flyers, and newspaper articles. All this information had to be examined critically and interpreted through a historical lens in order to determine if together they created a cohesive, meaningful narrative about the SSCAC.

Performing historical research, however, is not enough. Beyond this, I partnered feminist historiography and black historiography and their intersection in black feminist theory together to better inform my thesis. Using a feminist lens, a black studies lens, and a black feminist lens helped to focus my research and enabled me to look deeply into matters of race and gender played out within the SSCAC. As an institution built for African-American artists, the SSCAC demanded to be studied through black studies and how it fits into the history of black Chicago. Looking at the SSCAC without consulting black historiography would be not only a disservice, but an injustice. This community center was created as a space for black artists and art educators, and needed to be seen as a black institution. I informed my research of black studies through courses taken at The University of Texas at Austin and consultation of professors outside of my department. A feminist lens lends itself to looking more perceptively at oppressed groups in general. Doing so also aided in looking at the women that established and supported the SSCAC especially, as many of these women later influenced Chicago's history in a more expansive way. Both black historiography and feminist historiography are drastically underrepresented in art education history. Using both of these lenses are intended to broaden our ideas about art education history in general, while giving a unique and pointed look to the history that I researched.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Bronzeville – One of several neighborhoods that is part of Chicago, Illinois' South Side, Bronzeville was known as the “Black Metropolis” between 1910 and 1950. Bronzeville's population surged after the First Great Migration, predominately with blacks moving

from the South and into Chicago. The boundaries of Bronzeville are East 31st to the North, East Pershing Rd. to the South, I90 to the West, and South Martin Luther King Drive to the East. Today, Bronzeville is located in the community of Douglas. The South Side Community Art Center was situated within Bronzeville, and considered Bronzeville as its target audience during its initial years.

Community – According to Knupfer (2006), “community” in the case of the SSCAC was three-fold: “patrons, artists, and viewers who promoted black and African American art; schoolchildren who enrolled in SSCAC classes and attended other activities; and the residents of public housing” (p. 72). This multifaceted community meant that there were multiple audiences that the SSCAC had to cater to, and sometimes to keep appeased.

Community Art Center (CAC) – Coined by Daniel Defenbacher, this term is used to describe informal art institutions set up through the FAP, usually including classes and a space for art exhibitions. According to White (1987), Defenbacher “implied motion and activity that worked for the community’s common cultural good” (p. 2). CAC’s were developed to help bolster the economic recovery in areas of deep depression, like in the Midwest and Southwest, or also to normalize art (White, 1987). According to Mavigliano (1984), “the CAC philosophy was simple and straightforward; it was created to build a larger activity and group expression leading to more complete community sharing in the experience of art” (p. 29). For Davis (2010), the definition of a community art center is marked by exclusion. She postulates, “[community art centers] create safe havens for arts learning that has been marginalized elsewhere” (p. 82).

Federal Art Project (FAP) – Started by Federal Project Number One through the WPA in August 1935, the FAP was created in order to provide jobs for unemployed artists. According to Mavigliano and Lawson (1990), “The aim of the project will be to work toward an integration of the arts with the daily life of the community, and an integrating of the fine arts and the practical arts” (p. xxi). There were four areas that the FAP wished to tackle through its programs: “The creative arts, art education and recreation, art applied to community service, and historical/archaeological research” (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990, pp. xx-xxi). Holger Cahill served as director of the FAP throughout its existence.

First Great Migration – During and after World War I from 1910-1930, blacks from the Southern states moved North, searching for work in large cities such as Chicago, New York, Boston, and St. Louis. The Great Migration drastically changed the demographics of Northern cities. In Chicago, areas like the South Side became predominately demographically black.

Illinois Art Project (IAP) – Started in 1935 as the Illinois branch of the WPA's Region Ten, which included the Midwest states, The IAP divided Illinois into seven districts, with District 3 being focused on the city of Chicago. Approximately 775 artists and administrators were employed through the IAP from 1935 to 1943 (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990).

Master Narrative – Narratives within fields that highlight one, definitive answer to a field. Master narratives use “dialogues in binary, contrasting categories that support the

maintenance of dominant groups” (Stanley, 2007, p. 14). Master narratives reject marginalized stories, narratives told of those in minority groups, or any points of contention that suggests multiple entry points into an argument. In art education history, the master narrative suggests that white men in powerful positions shaped art education history, without critically listening to other viable and influential voices within the field.

McCarthyism – Sometimes also referred to as The Red Scare, or The Second Red Scare, McCarthyism lasted roughly between 1950 and 1956. The growing threat of Soviet Union infiltration of the United States came to a peak with Senator Joseph McCarthy declaring knowledge of Soviet spies in the government in 1950. Public sentiment turned against many Americans who had formerly been associated with Communist organizations during the 1930s and 1940s, causing chaos and disruption among the American population. Much of the hysteria associated with McCarthyism subsided after the Army-McCarthy hearings in 1954.

Second Great Migration – A secondary wave of the First Great Migration, continuing after the Great Depression. From 1940-1970, the Second Great Migration saw the movement of thousands more African-Americans towards large metropolitan cities. Chicago had the second largest increase in the number of African-Americans shifting locations during this time period, with an increase from 8.2% in 1940 to over 34.7% in 1960. The Second Great Migration was larger than the First Great Migration due to an increased need in labor and industry jobs during and after World War II.

South Side – The southern portion of Chicago, Illinois, historically divided at the

Chicago River, the South Side comprises of roughly 11 different community areas, including Bronzeville/Douglas. Demographics of this area show the predominance of black residents that have historically and continued to live in this area. Today, the South Side is economically diverse.

South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC) – The name of the organization. The SSCAC is located at 3831 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The organization has stayed in the same building and location since its inception in 1940. Opening in 1940 with a large dedication in 1941, the SSCAC has continued to operate without closing, becoming the only WPA/FAP funded community art center in the United States to do so.

Works Progress Administration (WPA) – Through executive order by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on May 6, 1935, the WPA replaced other initiatives created by Roosevelt and the government and worked to employ those without employment. In August 1935, the WPA started Federal Project Number One (Federal One), which outlined the Federal Art Project.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

For this thesis, I focused on one particular art center founded by the WPA, the South Side Community Art Center, in Chicago, Illinois. I centered my investigation on 1942-1959, a period of financial unrest for the Center due to the sudden removal of federal funds. Multiple historians have previously recounted the founding of the SSCAC, its dedication, and its first few years of life. What has been left out of the narrative has been the aftermath—what happened after the WPA pulled funds, and when the SSCAC

struggled into life on its own, without any federal support. I focused on this time period in order to better understand how it survived, despite the failure of so many similar institutions. I wanted to see who was involved in keeping the center afloat, and how their dedication to the center kept it going. I consulted catalogued materials in Chicago, such as the SSCAC's own archives, the Vivian G. Harsh Collection in the Chicago Public Library system, the archives of newspapers such as *The Chicago Defender*, and physically going to the SSCAC's location.

BENEFITS TO THE FIELD

By researching the SSCAC, the field of art education gains an important voice and insight into community art education of blacks in Chicago during the 1950s. In a time period that helped strengthen art education in so many ways, we know deceptively little about those who stood on the outskirts and tried to make change from this standpoint. Through this research, the field hears a voice not historically privileged. Art education history is proliferated with the ideas and meaningful events that were propagated by white men. This research has the potential to strengthen a huge weak point in art education—our own understanding of those who were less regarded, but still managed to persevere and teach art, despite the odds.

This research will hopefully open the gates for more research about marginalized art education history. Art education knows very little about its own history, and especially little of those who were not in positions of power or notoriety. We as a field have not been critical enough about our history, and as such, shifting who we privilege in

history has been slow to change. By researching the SSCAC, my hope is that others will become interested in the history of black art educators, and especially interested in the history of female art educators of color. Much more research needs to be done on the history of black art educators, and it is my desire that this thesis will help others find new topics in the history of those that the field does not yet know about. Learning more about black art educators, and the art education of minorities in general, lends itself to establishing an equal playing field where instead of learning about dead, white males and their accomplishments in a field dominated by professional women, we can listen to the voices of those who persevered through systemic racism, sexism, classism, and other types of marginalization.

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER ONE

This preliminary chapter was used to help outline several key factors about the South Side Community Art Center and why its history is vital to the field of art education. First, I identified the significance of the founding of the Center, and then crafted two questions about its history I wished to focus on. This chapter also addressed my own personal and professional motivations for this investigation of the Art Center. This chapter included brief descriptions of both my methodology and my hypothesis to this investigation. I included both limitations to this study and its benefits for the field. Through my scholarship, I addressed a key historical issue—overlooked and marginalized groups and individuals—that I believe the field of art education needs to study.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

This chapter explores the literature about the overall organization structure governmental programs that helped facilitate the creation of the South Side Community Art Center. I highlight the history of the South Side, giving context to the area, and then delve more deeply into the federal programs that supported the Art Center. Starting with the Works Progress Administration, and working down to the Community Art Center program, the chapter recognizes the important steps taken by the federal government during the Great Depression, focused on keeping artists and art educators employed. The text then narrows down to the literature that surrounds the Art Center from its inception up through the discontinuation of Roosevelt's New Deal projects during the beginning of World War II. Most of the literature surrounding the South Side Community Art Center comes out of this time period, and is important to understanding a recognizable hole in the record of what is known about the Center.

In the second part of this chapter, I discuss art education historical theory and historiography. The field of art education needs to think critically about its history, and needs to be a place of contention instead of only supporting one, dominant master narrative. By using alternative historiographies and studying alternative history, stories such as the South Side Community Art Center can be seen in a new light, where education of people of color is valued similarly to the education of white Americans.

THE MECCA WAS CHICAGO

At the end of World War I, African-Americans from Southern states such as Mississippi, Georgia, and Tennessee moved in droves to cities such as Chicago, Baltimore, and New York. Looking for work and hoping to leave Southern racism behind them, many saw a land of promise in the North. These African-Americans were the children of former slaves, who left their rural hometowns in search for opportunity in urban areas. For those travelling on the Illinois Central Railroad during the First Great Migration, “Chicago became the symbol of the promise of the North” (Schlabach, 2013, p. 3). The prospect of a world of opportunity was embodied for many in their first glimpses of Chicago's skyline. For those who planned on staying in Chicago, many “African Americans flocked to Bronzeville, the nation's most prominent black community” (Schlabach, 2013, p. 50). The population of the South Side of Chicago surged between the wars, dramatically changing the demographics of the city.

The South Side became a self-contained community, both out of necessity through zoning laws and out of a desire for community members to support their neighbors as black entrepreneurs. Prejudice lingered above the river, and black-owned business flourished within their own home areas.

THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION, ET AL.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was the largest and, arguably, one of the most well-known programs implemented by Franklin D. Roosevelt during his first term of presidency as part of the New Deal. By 1933, at the height of the Great Depression, a quarter of the United States work force was unemployed (Schlabach,

2013). From the inception of the WPA in 1935 to its end in 1943, the WPA infused government money into job sectors that needed laborers. This was done in order for the government to hire unemployed workers with the anticipation that, after the economy bounced back, the employers would repay the government through their continued work and payment of taxes. The WPA was a large organization with multiple branches that focused on different sectors of the economy, often centering on untrained and unskilled labor in order to employ the largest number of individuals. One project, however, Federal Project Number One, focused on trained artistic labor in five different areas. One of these sections was the Federal Art Project.

The Federal Art Project (FAP) was administered by Holger Cahill, and operated from 1935 until 1943. The Federal Art Project employed thousands of artists and art educators throughout the country, working in every media and way imaginable. Young, then-unknown artists like Jackson Pollack and Charles Umlauf initiated their careers by working for the FAP, while more seasoned artists received money to employ young protégés. Most of the artists worked creating FAP-funded murals, while others worked in sculpture, paintings, and FAP posters. Under Cahill and the FAP, for the first time in US history, art became approachable. The FAP “galvanized a national art culture in the United States” (Funk, 2000, p. 86), changing how Americans viewed art.

The FAP’s success had a great deal to do with Cahill’s personality and personal philosophies about art. Cahill's empathy and desire to share art with the greatest number of Americans as possible differentiated him from many of his contemporaries. Cahill’s

philosophy was that, “the ability to appreciate works of art was not the exclusive birthright of a few people” (Mavigliano, 1984, p. 28). Cahill was also unique in that he did not racially segregate FAP money or positions, hiring both white workers and black workers for the same jobs. According to Mavigliano (1984), Cahill was very much influenced by the writings of John Dewey, and was very interested in the ideas of art as experience. However, it was clear during the FAP’s emergence that not everyone in the United States could have this experience. Art museums were situated in major cities, and often came at a price that was unaffordable to many. Artistic communities and artist colonies existed, but were largely insular. Much of rural America did not have access to art, and many citizens failed to engage with artistic encounters until they were much older in life. Cahill’s desire to open up art and art education to everyone possible, regardless of race and economic status, was a strong factor in the creation and implementation of one of the FAP branch projects, the Community Art Center initiative.

John Franklin White (1987) argued that, “When Daniel Defenbacher coined the term “art center” he implied motion and activity that worked for the community’s common cultural good” (p. 1). Under the direction of Defenbacher, the Community Art Center (CAC) program was one of the FAP’s initiatives undertaken to bring art to the populace through free art exhibitions and classes. In the opening lines of *Art in Action: American Art Centers and the New Deal*, White (1987) stated, “Few Americans can recall when they first saw an original work of art. Today we take such things for granted” (p. 1). Art is prolific in our world, with even the smallest towns and rural countrysides having, displaying, and respecting art. However, prior to the Great Depression, art had a

reputation of being “precious museum objects, not something [ordinary people] produced by their own hand” (Funk, 2000, p. 92). Even if individuals were interested in engaging with art objects, geographical and economic factors still played a major role in whether or not one could see works of art. Clapp (1973) stated,

Museums through their galleries and extension activities reach a wide public, but they are limited in scope by geographical considerations. Whole sections of the country have no museums or galleries, and it must be remembered that there are thousands of people in each of our large cities who live too far from the museums and galleries to be able to walk to them and who cannot afford the carfare to ride to them. (p. 204)

Some believed that art needed to be increasingly accessible and more in reach for people who could not easily make a trip to a large art museum or could not afford such an excursion. This occurred while people like Defenbacher argued in support of institutions that made art easier to relate to so that art did not simply live in the museum, but was present in people’s lives as part of their everyday experience. Both of these notions about art helped form the idea of the community art center. Starting in 1935, directly after the foundation of the FAP, community art centers became one of the focuses of the “Instruction” branch of FAP artists. Some of the purposes of the Community Art Center (CAC) initiative were outlined on an FAP-produced poster that read, “1. An Art Center is a Community Program, not a superimposed Federal Project; 2. New Integration of Art in community life; 3. New Audiences; 4. New Standards; and 5. New Opportunities for Art Participation” (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990, p. 66). A WPA circular set out the philosophy underscoring the concept of a community art center:

The purpose of the Community Art Center is to correct the unequal distribution of cultural advantage through the organization of community art centers in regions

and localities where no such agencies previous existed. In establishing these centers it is the objective of the FAP not only to provide the public with opportunities to participate in the experience of art, but also to provide useful work for unemployed artists and teachers. (cited in Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990, p. 66)

Thomas C. Parker, head of Federal Art Centers branch, wrote in 1938, “The WPA federal art centers, within a brief period of two years, have already been a most important factor in American community life” (p. 807). The first art center was the Raleigh Art Center, founded in 1935 in Raleigh, North Carolina (O’Conner, 1973; Parker, 1938). By 1940, over 100 art centers and museums had been funded through FAP assistance (White, 1987), with many of them in states such as Florida, Iowa, Mississippi, Oklahoma, North Carolina, Utah, and Wyoming, where art museums such as the Art Institute of Chicago, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, or the Metropolitan Museum of Art were out of reach (O’Conner, 1973). Community art centers became vibrant and exciting points in a community, especially in communities in extremely rural areas where art and art instruction were hard to find. Parker (1938) boldly proclaimed, “It is our conviction that in a well-rounded community cultural program, the art center should be as indispensable as the public library” (p. 807). Parker’s enthusiasm and emphasis on the importance of these institutions is echoed in many of the essays of the time, focusing heavily on the community development that art and art centers now bring to places people considered to be barren of creativity, especially in the heart of rural America.

Because of the FAP’s large and unwieldy area of control, localized art ventures grew out of the project, especially in areas farther away from Washington, DC. The

Illinois Art Project (IAP) emerged from the FAP's need to split up regulation into smaller, more manageable areas. The Illinois Art Project ran additional programs throughout the state of Illinois, with seven regional areas that focused on specific needs of various communities (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990). Along with the IAP, Illinois had other art projects and art instructors organized by a range of governing bodies, including the Park District and the Board of Education; educators in these programs taught at community centers and in spaces such as Hull House (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990). These other institutions helped employ more teachers than the IAP could alone, usually employing certified teachers rather than just artists, contributing to a greater breadth of art education within the state. According to Mavigliano & Lawson (1990), approximately 775 artists and administrators were funded under IAP from its inception in 1935 to its end in 1943.

The lasting cultural impact of these institutions and their work is difficult to measure. However, over 108,000 paintings, 18,000 sculptures, 2500 murals, 100 art centers, and thousands of prints were made by WPA/FAP-funded artists in the 8 year period of funded projects (Schlabach, 2013). White (1987) suggested, however, that one of the larger impacts of the FAP is the ease of access that art now has within the United States. It is hard to recall seeing the first original piece of work one had ever seen, because now art is ubiquitous in much of America.

THE SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ART CENTER

Many authors and historians have previously covered the beginnings of the South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC) and its cultural significance within Chicago's black radical history. The rallying of black community members from all walks of life—from the lowliest broke artist up through the well-off “bourgeoisie blacks” that populated Chicago, and the transformation of the facility from a tenant home into a beautiful, contemporary Bauhaus-style interior—all capped with a visit from Eleanor Roosevelt at the dedication makes the story of the SSCAC's beginnings sound picturesque and ideal. Mavigliano and Lawson (1990) claimed that, “probably the greatest step forward for the arts in the black community of Chicago occurred in 1939 when the South Side Art Center was founded” (p. 67). The SSCAC's founding has become part of the strong cultural history of Chicago's South Side.

Mullen (1999), aptly stated, “officially, the Art Center was a product of the WPA's Community Arts Center Program” (p. 81). The SSCAC was a WPA/IAP project, listed next to other prestigious projects such as the Walker Art Center and the Harlem Art Center. However, it varied from so many of these other projects in one large and key way—the Center came forth out of community dedication and labor, rather than simply the availability of funds. It was the money, sweat, and time from those within the community that made the SSCAC such an important and vital part of Bronzeville's history. The community breathed life into the project; the FAP helped make it financially happen.

From the offset, women invested heavily in the concept and implementation of an art center. Knupfer (2006) boldly stated, “the idea for the SSCAC began with five women in 1938” (p. 67). These women—Pauline Kligh Reed, Frankie Singleton, Susan Morris, Marie Moore, and Grace Carter Cole—approached the Illinois Art Project (IAP) Community Art Center (CAC) Director Peter Pollack to discuss the formation of an art center in their community of Bronzeville (Knupfer, 2006). Pollack, a white Jewish gallery owner, joined the IAP as Director of the Community Art Center branch that same year (Burroughs, 1987; Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990; Mullen, 1999). Pollack was enthusiastic about art and the prospects of community art centers despite his lack of artistic training, being much more an art enthusiast than a practitioner. Pollack was also already a familiar name and face to these women, as he owned the only gallery on the North Side of Chicago where black artists could show their work on a regular basis. Burroughs (1987) remembered, “it was in this gallery that the black artists were given their first opportunity to exhibit downtown [in the North Side]” (p. 132). Otherwise, black artists were regulated to church basements and local YMCAs to display their works (Knupfer, 2006). Black artists were continuously considered inferior, despite strides made by both the Harlem Renaissance in the previous decade and the important cultural icons who eventually moved to Chicago, such as Alain Locke. These factors made Pollack's gallery unique, and the community knew and respected him, and he felt the same towards them. Burroughs (1987) recalled:

We black artists of Chicago had no place to get together, to exchange ideas, or to exhibit our works. There were absolutely no opportunities for us to show in the downtown galleries (these galleries did not recognize art by blacks as legitimate).

Only a very few of those who could afford it were able to attend classes at the Art Institute of Chicago, or the private art schools. (p. 131)

Pollack was familiar with the need for an art institution on the South Side through his own personal connection with black South Side artists. Pollack and IAP director George Thorpe were mutually interested in founding a place that would display the work of black Chicago artists in and around where many of these artists lived (Mullen, 1999).

After his meeting with Kligh Reed and her fellow socialites, Pollack and Thorpe assembled a group of prominent black community members to discuss the creation of an art center. These “prominent” community members ranged from members of the church, to wealthy middle class blacks like Kligh Reed interested in investing in community, down to poor, politically-involved artists, such as Margaret Burroughs, a young artist who took classes at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago with many other prominent black artists. This meeting helped establish the need for an art center and helped raise public awareness of the project. Pollack and Thorpe approached Golden B. Darby, a popular insurance salesman and investor in the South Side, and Darby became Chairman of the Art Center Sponsoring Committee and a prominent supporter (Burroughs, 1987; Mullen, 1999). Throughout the next two years, over 40 meetings were held to initiate planning for the Art Center (Mullen, 1999). On October 25, 1939, Thorpe explained to the Committee that if they could locate and purchase a facility for the center, the Federal Art Project would pay for the renovations and provide the funds for paying for staff, teachers, and maintenance crews (Burroughs, 1987; Mullen, 1999). This codified the

drive the community members felt and believed in, and helped bolster the belief that this Art Center needed to truly happen.

With this solid promise in mind, the community rallied together, attempting to raise funds in whatever means necessary. A membership campaign started to secure a large amount of funds from the black middle class, with many of the contributors being female schoolteachers or social workers, such as Thelma Kirkpatrick Wheaton. Knupfer (2006) pointed out that the organizers and the enactors of such fundraisers for the SSCAC, such as the “mile of dimes” campaign, were spearheaded and implemented by women. The “mile of dimes” campaign was a program organized by local art teacher Ethel Mae Nolan that tasked young people, almost completely made up of young women, to stand on street corners, holding cans and asking for dimes from those passing by. Burroughs (1987) remembered her own involvement, stating, “I was 21 years old and I stood on the corner of 39th and South Parkway...collecting dimes in a can. I believe I collected almost \$100 in dimes” (p. 133). The annual Artists and Models Ball, already an established program for many within the South Side, became a large fundraiser that helped bring in monetary support for the Center for years to come.

When fundraising started to accumulate enough financial support, Art Center leaders set out to choose a location for the center. Once occupied by some of Chicago’s richest and well-known families, the old Gold Coast region of Chicago on South Michigan Avenue had lost its prestige in the past years. Burroughs (1987) colorfully commented that, “The neighborhood underwent transition and a number of these mansions were placed on the market for a song and a dance” (p. 134). One of these Gold

Coast homes was a brownstone mansion, originally built for George A. Seaverns, Jr., a wealthy grain merchant, in 1893. During the early part of the 20th century, the building belonged to the family of Charles Cominsky, the White Sox baseball magnate. The beautiful three-story building, along with the neighboring two-story carriage house, was purchased for \$8,000 in June of 1940 (Burroughs, 1987; Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990; Mullen, 1999). The community members named the facility The South Side Community Art Center.

The purchasing of the facility of the SSCAC became a powerful move for the community members. The South Side was put to the test by the IAP, forced to raise a substantial amount of money in a short period of time and find a location. However, “the prodigious fundraising activities of the center's committees and the subsequent purchase of the brownstone demonstrated that the center could hold its own” (Knupfer, 2006, p. 68). The SSCACs formative community were put to the test to become a sustainable art center, and passed the test with the purchase of the Cominsky mansion, establishing the community as one who would fight for what they believed was beneficial for the South Side.

The purchase of the facility was not the end of the community support for the center. As Mullen (1999) described, “WPA funds and sweat equity of South Side artists transformed the Michigan mansion, the painters and sculptors literally scrubbing the floors and walls...” (p. 83). Burroughs (1987) described her and other poor artists’ commitment, explaining, “we washed the walls and scrubbed the floors. We painted the walls and we did whatever was necessary to keep the art center going” (p. 142). Between

June and December 1940, the mansion was cleaned and transformed into the Art Center. The first floor was gutted and turned into a gallery, while the two other floors were converted into art studios for classes (Mullen, 1999). WPA workers converted the interior of the building into a New-Bauhaus style construction, with wooden walls and wooden floors. On December 15, 1940, the SSCAC officially opened with a show of local artists. This opening helped introduce the new Center to its community.

Six months later, in May 1941, a dedication ceremony took place with Eleanor Roosevelt in attendance. According to Baker (1987), “[Mrs. Roosevelt’s] presence lent some credibility and permanence to the reality of the South Side Community Art Center Association as a stable institution in the black community” (pp. 9-10). Mrs. Roosevelt’s acceptance to the dedication became a highlight of the event, with renowned author and Howard University professor Alain Locke becoming Mrs. Roosevelt’s personal chauffeur through Chicago.

Burroughs (1987) wrote that this event, though exciting and heavily publicized, made tensions between middle-class blacks and the poor artists palpable. Burroughs and many of her artist friends were told not to attend the ceremony, as they might “disrupt” the proceedings (Burroughs, 1987). The only say they ended up getting in the dedication was a five minute speech that Burroughs wrote that explained how excited she and the other artists were for the creation of their own art center (Burroughs, 1987). These tensions ran high throughout the beginning months of the Art Center, but became worse as time went on, with many of the artists realizing that they were unwanted by those at the top.

Quickly, the SSCAC lived up to its potential and became a bustling community center for the South Side. Burroughs (1987) recalled, “The art center calendar during that dedication year was full and rich. Activities included several stellar exhibitions, lectures, and numerous art classes” (p. 139). Art classes, poetry classes, art exhibitions, and cultural groups began meeting at the SSCAC, capitalizing on the new space (Mullen, 1999). Pollack stated in a report to the WPA that over fifty thousand visitors had been in the SSCAC in the first year alone (Mullen, 1999). On top of this figure, the Illinois Art and Craft Project and the WPA paid for twenty-four teachers to work at the SSCAC during 1941. These teachers “taught more than two thousand students under sixteen, and 647 adults” (Mullen, 1999, p. 98). Women continued being a vital component of the SSCAC, as “the center’s directors and committee leaders were women, and many of its teachers were also women” (Knupfer, 2006, p. 69). The community also continued to help back the Center. According to Mullen (1999), “an advisory committee composed of schoolteachers in the community had lined the Board of Education and the center, while public schoolteachers had enrolled hundreds of students in center art classes” (pp. 98-99). The community saw the SSCAC as a resource they could use, and they capitalized on it.

Despite the success of the SSCAC in its first years, World War II loomed on the horizon. The Attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 left the country in shock, and shook the SSCAC. In his Director’s Report from January 1942, Pollack wrote, “If Chicago’s South Side Community Art Center is to advance along the lines that it should, greater support from the citizens of our city...is imperative” (William McBride Papers, Box 6, Folder 39). Once the WPA was disbanded and funding ceased, The SSCAC

scrambled to raise funds with any means necessary. Membership drives attempted to garner annual support. A flyer, entitled “A Call to Renew Membership,” from 1943, read:

We were fortunate in having the cooperation of the WPA Art Project, but even now, since we no longer have the assistance of the WPA, the community recognizes the importance of the Art Center. We own the Art Center; we bought it; we must support it now.

Membership prices started at \$2. Other avenues of funding included a women's committee that was organized to help raise funds, and artists participated in their own fund-raising events (Burroughs, 1987). Burroughs (1987) recalled *The Chicago Tribune's* article from May 23, 1943, that featured, “activities and accomplishments of the art center in an article in which it promoted the art center's campaign for \$5,000” (p. 142). Despite the massive push to try to stop funds from leaving, the SSCAC program was drastically restricted and lost the exciting flair that they once had, focusing instead on conservative ideas that would guarantee funding (Mullen, 1999).

Though the pulling of WPA funds became a hard date that people could point to, other fissions plagued the Art Center as well. Much like the rest of Chicago, there was a large divide between poor members of the community and middle class blacks. Though there were a multitude of people from the community helping to make the dream of an art center come true, many of the people who were spirited activists were those that Burroughs (1987) later called “bourgeois blacks.” These newly middle-class African Americans saw the creation of an art center as a way to help improve their status in the eyes of their communities and their peers. Having their name tied to an institution that would aid “the poor” in Chicago helped cultivate their image. Irene McCoy Gaines, one

of the more wealthy proponents of the art center was quoted, saying, “I believe this art center will be the most important single factor for the improvement of the culture of the people of the South Side” (cited by Burroughs, 1987, p. 133). McCoy Gaines' comment was a reflection of the middle-class enthusiasm surrounding the creation of the Art Center, but it also shows the reason so many of these bourgeois blacks became involved—they saw it as an approach to improve the neighborhood in a meaningful way, and at the same time, make themselves look like dedicated humanitarians for helping those they deemed less fortunate. There were always tensions between these middle-class blacks and the artists who could not afford to call themselves middle-class. Mullen (1999) described the situation as, “poor painters and cultural workers...found themselves pushed to the margins by the numerous black socialites who had come to attach themselves to this sudden institutionalization of black culture” (p. 85). The artists were excited to finally get a space for themselves and a place to display their art and learn from each other, while also educating the surrounding community. Most of these artists were black radicals or aligned themselves with either the Communist Party or the Popular Front, and saw a Community Art Center as part of their vision. The laborers envisioned the SSCAC as a place to relax from the work they put in during the week, by seeing a show, going to a lecture, or taking a class and capitalizing on newly-found leisure time. The black socialites saw the creation of a center as a rich cultural institution that they could claim ownership over through their participatory and financial contributions.

When money began to run out for the Art Center due to the cancellation of the FAP, the longstanding tensions that had always been present between the black middle-

class and the artists who used the art center began to become even more strained and evident. Burroughs (1987) described her situation as a poor artist who was extremely dedicated to the Art Center, becoming frustrated with the two-faced nature of the bourgeois blacks. She refers to these middle-class blacks as, “culture vultures, [they] were always up front when there were pictures to be taken” (Burroughs, 1987, p. 142). However, when the glamour was gone, many of the middle-class blacks left the SSCAC. Burroughs (1987) described this tendency, stating:

This elite board was with the center when it was riding high, but when the going got rough and the tinsel and glamor were gone, leaving only hard work and the prospect of hard work to keep the center afloat, the majority of those fine bourgeois blacks found any excuse to put the art center down. (p. 142)

Those who were completely invested in the art center were left to do the important work, such as years of fundraising and keeping the center alive and active as an important cultural center in the heart of Bronzeville.

THE LEGACY OF THE SSCAC

This history of the South Side Community Art Center’s beginnings have been documented time and again, with a strong emphasis on the community’s help towards making it sustainable and contributing to its continued survival. However, most of these histories conclude at 1943, when FAP funds were no longer available, with only veiled references to what happened after this time. Mullen (1999) and others after him lamented this issue, stating, “The history of the Art Center exists mostly in internal commemorative records produced by the center, its surviving members, and the city of Chicago itself” (p. 81). This is the biggest tragedy of the SSCAC—its history has not left

Chicago, and what is known is held in those who are still living with experience of the Art Center. This material has not been disseminated to a wider audience, meaning audiences such as the field of Art Education have failed to learn from its deep and strong history. Though there were over 100 Community Art Centers funded through the Federal Art Project, only one survives in its original building, tied deeply to its history as an institution. People made the South Side Community Art Center; it did not develop out of thin air and was not “given” to the community. Its heritage is resonant and strong.

DISMANTLING THE MASTER NARRATIVE IN ART EDUCATION HISTORY

I conducted this investigation of the history of the South Side Community Art Center through a lens of understanding emerging from the history of art education. Art education has its own history, with its own set of assumptions. This history, however, has developed out of a problematic and largely monolithic culture that, until recently, has been left unchallenged. This means that centers such as the SSCAC have been largely removed from out of the narrative when discussing art education due largely to the fact that the Center serves an African-American population.

Art education history is a blurry subject, informed by both art history research and historical research, while also growing out of the field's own understanding of history (Stankiewicz, 1997). As a field compromised largely of practitioners, history can often be ignored, leaving out a substantial chunk of knowledge. It also means those practicing art education history come at it from a unique angle, usually understanding the policy and the education strategies more than understanding the field of history. Stankiewicz (1997)

explained historical research as, “both an art and a science,” using data gathered and shaping it into a readable, cohesive narrative that interprets history, rather than simply stating it (p. 67). By looking closely at art education history, it becomes easy to see how it fits into the greater understanding of history.

According to Acuff (2013), “there is a steadfast master narrative in this history of art education” that has been perpetuated by histories of the field focusing on the history of wealthy, white men (p. 221). Master narratives “cast dialogues in binary, contrasting categories that support the maintenance of dominant groups,” (Stanley, 2007, p. 14). Master narratives are often reflected in history textbooks and “highlight great events and great men, and focus on an idealistic evolution of democracy and education” (Acuff, 2013). Master narratives plague many fields, and frequently keep intellectual distance between the dominant group, often being white individuals and predominantly men, and whomever the dominant group sees as “others,” or people who don’t fit into the confined parameters that the dominant group enforces.

These master narrative histories, like the one currently in place within art education history, usually seem airtight, meaning, “others may not enter it, as their voice puts the narrative to risk of being contaminated” (Acuff, Hira, & Nangah, 2012, p. 7). This master narrative barricades history, and distances those who may have the power to change it. Master narrative are laden with “a type of institutionalized power” that holds the dominant narrative in a position of greater importance over the narratives of others (Acuff, 2013). Students of color have to ask, “What were the historical art education

experiences of people of color? How am I relevant in this discourse and course dialogue?” (Acuff, Hiram, & Nangah, 2012, p. 7). The narratives of people of color are not talked about in the history of art education, and questions about their absence go unanswered through a multitude of reasons, though often defaulting to the lack of numbers of art education historians. Acuff, Hiram, and Nangah (2012) brilliantly highlighted one of the most important reasons to research the history of the SSCAC—by researching the history of an arts organization run by people of color, we as a field can start to dismantle the master narrative that has appeared in art education history and bring in a variety of voices.

In recent years, there has been some pushback against the master narrative and a greater acceptance of counter narratives that see the field of art education as a varied and more contested and vibrant whole. In the introduction of *Remembering Others: Making Invisible Histories of Art Education Visible*, Bolin, Blandy and Congdon (2000) make the case for forgotten histories, looking at the histories that have been “unnoted” by history. They highlight the histories of women, of people of color, of folk artists, and of community arts organizations (Bolin, Blandy & Congdon, 2000). These histories have been quieted by the master narrative present in art education history, becoming overshadowed with time, turning into unheard voices of the past.

Stankiewicz (1997) posed the idea of the master narrative being dismantled through feminist theory, as in art education “the majority of practitioners have been women while the historically recognized leaders were men” (p. 67). As pointed out by

Stankiewicz, master narratives are not just bound by the color line, but too often in art education, it is also bound by the lack of recognition of gender. Kantawala and Kohan (2011) argue that we as art educators “need to raise questions about undocumented histories of American art educators and especially women art educators” (p. 30), in order to fix the imbalance. Despite being a field where women hold most of the positions, men continue to be the focus of how we teach and think about art education history Bolin (2011) argued that “reading and studying history can help us to uncover and examine overlooked information about the past” (p. 56). By looking outside the upheld canon of art education history, art educators can see ideas of those who were not historically powerful, and begin to see our field as rich and diverse in thought and action. Stankiewicz (1997) saw history as shaped by the people writing it, looking from their own time back into the past. History is not neutral, and seeing art education history as such is a disservice to the field and thus to ourselves.

Even though there have been great strides made in adding the voices of those unheard in art education, the field has a long way to go to achieve any sense of balance. Acuff, Hirak, and Nangah (2012) urged, “The educational circumstances and needs of people of color should not be first mentioned when Multiculturalism appears on the chronology of Education” (p. 7). There have always been people of color, and they have always created art, learned about art, and taught art. Without their stories weaved into the narrative of art education history, a huge chunk of our field’s history is lost. “Counter narratives,” or narratives “which do not agree with or are critical of the master narrative” (Stanley, 2007, p. 14) need to become the norm. The prominence of the master narrative

curses our field, and continues to systematically push away those educators of color who wish to see themselves reflected in their practice. The field, as a whole, needs to show greater acceptance of counter narratives. Acuff (2013) stated,

...in art education history, there needs to be a more fluid, complex, interconnected conception of art education wherein various cultures are present and recognized as pivotal in building contemporary art education practices and theory. This is what comprehensive art education looks like. (p. 223)

Part of the issue with these forgotten histories is that they lie incomplete, and can be difficult to interpret. Kantawala and Kohan (2011) point out that, “bringing to print unknown histories of art education is done with caution and care...however, the findings of what are often ambiguous facts about the past do not automatically present us with rich and meaningful histories” (p. 29). It is the historian's role to bring these stories to light and inform them with meaning, purpose, and vitality. Many histories that have been left forgotten and buried are partial, missing information and points that will help historians interpret them. What do we do with these histories, part known and part unknown?

HISTORIOGRAPHY

In order to write history, it is imperative one must understand the ideas and notions of historiography. Like many art education historians before me, I learned historiography after deciding to dedicate myself to the history I wanted to study, not the other way around. Historic research starts with gathering primary sources, such as photographs, board minutes, letters, notes, diaries, speeches, newspapers, published or unpublished sources, or other types of ephemera in order to piece together an interpretation of what happened in the past. Howell and Prevenier (2001) argue that

sources need to be vetted and checked against each other in order to be submitted as evidence. Securing causal links with corroborating evidence is the strongest way to make history as accurate and well-recorded as possible. Then, historians use these sources to re-create what the past looked like, focusing effort into making a plausible account of the past.

Williams (2003) suggests infusing narrative with argument in order to secure both a compelling story with an objective. Historians are not writing history just for the sake of documenting the past; instead, the historian argues a point about a specific moment in time (Bolin, 2013). These arguments are based on evidence, authority, and from a position within historiography (Williams, 2003). Historians use these tools of history to make causal links between events, and then weave together a narrative that best reflects a consideration of the past.

Histories are often written, despite a lack of formal evidence to support theories. Storey (2013) postulates, “It is impossible to know exactly what happened in the past, but that has not stopped people from writing about it” (p. 59). Historians infer details about situations, but not without reason. Storey (2013) argues to use sources in interesting, inventive ways, in order to bring out new ideas and new stories. When so little is written about a topic, the historians job is to find sources that work best together and infuse the story around the sources in a way that is rich enough to show the reader that the historian's inference is plausible.

Historiography as a discipline holds a peculiar spot between multiple fields. As

such, what is “good” or “correct” in the study of one discipline does not mean such advantage applies to another discipline, even if both are studying the past of their respective fields. This is why books such as Kyvig and Marty's (2000) *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* become important. The history of the South Side Community Art Center relies heavily on “other” types of historiographical evidence; some of these pieces of evidence have the chance of not being considered legitimate in other fields of study. Kyvig and Marty (2000) identify multiple different types of “nearby history” that can be used as evidence, including: traces and storytelling; unpublished documents; oral documents; visual documents; artifacts; and landscapes and buildings. By reinterpreting what can be used as historic evidence, historiography opens up the door to multiple different possibilities of what “history” means and how it is understood. Studying architecture along a street might show change in the landscape through a period of time; studying visual documents can be used as raw material to construct a greater understanding of a particular moment in time (Kyvig & Marty, 2000). By failing to listen to the voices of an institution such as the South Side Community Art Center, we as a field lose rich histories that have passed through its walls, but have very rarely been committed to paper.

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER TWO

This chapter discussed the current research around the South Side Community Art Center. The Art Center, though a singular building that has lasted throughout the years, came to be through governmental programs, arts funding, and its founding within a particular moment in time. This chapter has framed the history of the SSCAC through

looking at multiple different contexts: the influx of African-American families to the South Side of Chicago; the Works Progress Administration and its subsequent branches of the Federal Art Project, the Illinois Art Project, and the Community Art Center initiative; and the community surrounding the Center's very beginning. I detailed contemporary research about the SSCAC itself, which primarily concerns itself with its founding in 1940. I leave off the research where most scholarship ends, which is directly after funds were cut from the Federal Art Project.

The second part of this chapter highlights current research in the history of art education, including best practices. This research calls for a need to include multiple, varied voices within art education in order to disrupt and dismantle the master narrative that keeps alternate histories of art education out. I also examined perspectives on historiography, in order to ground my research in the best practices of history.

Chapter 3: Theoretical Lenses

INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

The previous chapter discussed the history of the South Side Community Art Center and the current research surrounding the organization. However, this research is only a fraction of what the Art Center has done, and is unable to answer many of the questions that its 75 year history creates. This chapter highlights the theoretical lenses that I used to better interpret the history of the SSCAC, by diving into feminist theory, black studies theory, and black feminist theory, in order to interpret data and create a fuller picture of the Art Center. The aim of this chapter is to dig into theories that surround the creation of the SSCAC to gain a richer understanding of the conditions that helped foster the Center's growth and sustained existence.

This chapter first highlights feminist theory, which has been utilized in understanding the history of art education by other scholars within art education. The second section discusses black studies theory, which is uncommon in the history of art education. However, figures drawn from black studies, such as W. E. B. du Bois and Alain Locke, were crucially important to the formation of the Center. The third section focuses on black feminist theory, which has so far failed to be incorporated into the history of art education. By looking at black feminist theory, the history of the SSCAC gains valuable insight into how the women of the Art Center, who are often credited as keeping the institution alive, may have thought about themselves and their work. The last part of this chapter ties all of these ideas together, creating a succinct lens that I utilized to better understand the threads of history surrounding the SSCAC.

CRAFTING A LENS FOR STUDYING THE SSCAC

As discussed in the previous chapter, the history of art education has been overwrought by the influence and voices of white males in positions of power (Acuff, 2013). These were quite often well-educated politicians and decision-makers, rather than those actually practicing art education. The narratives of education offered by scholars of these men frequently create a master narrative that defines art education within quite narrow parameters, removing deviation and alternative voices from these dominant lines of thought. In order to diversify our field to become inclusive of everyone who is and can be an art educator, we must be willing to take risks and investigate tough, hidden topics. Writing about the South Side Community Art Center makes a definite stride in the correct direction for the history of art education, and helps begin to bridge gaps that have been left unaddressed and unanswered for far too long regarding art educators of color. However, simply writing and recording the Art Center's history and inserting it into dialogue with art education is not enough. In order to fully explore the SSCAC, I needed to infuse my search with appropriate theoretical frameworks that helped interpret my findings in different and more authentic ways. This chapter highlights the theoretical frameworks I utilized to better understand those working to sustain the Art Center through some of its toughest years.

In this investigation, I crafted an argument using theoretical frameworks from other disciplines. Specifically, I used feminist theory, black studies theory, and their union in black feminist theory. Art education has always been a field of borrowing, using different theories developed through other fields to better understand our own. As

Villaverde (2008) explained, “theory often affords a certain way of thinking that helps to frame the world, self, and others” (p. 52).

Certain theories have taken root within art education literature in the past decade. Feminist theory and queer theory have both been noticeable in how we understand and interpret a field filled with both female and queer bodies, helping to define art education as multifaceted and separate from antiquated master narratives. These theoretical lenses have helped diversify the field significantly, and helped bring out new voices from the art education classroom that are often excluded from male-dominated, heterosexual histories. However, a deep understanding and grasp of black and black feminist theory has yet to percolate throughout the field, despite the continued presence of art educators of color. Just as using feminist theory or queer theory helps to better define a long-standing presence of cultural “others” within art education, black theory and black feminist theory aids art education in its understanding of black practitioners and black students who must still have to work too hard to make themselves present within art education narratives.

Studying a female-led organization through a feminist lens made sense for this investigation, as women were and are today an important component of the Center’s survival. However, the SSCAC is not simply a female-led organization, so it was necessary to dig deeper. As I studied a black organization within a black community, it became important for me to fill my understanding of this organization through a recognition of black scholars and black voices. In a field that lacks many features of black understanding, it becomes important to inject my investigation with their work, and make these scholars a part of the larger conversation. In addition, the historic leaders of

the SSCAC during this troubled time were black women with a vested interest in keeping the center open through whatever means they saw possible. Any understanding of the motivations of these black women, despite not having any primary sources from them, can be approached through both feminist and black feminist studies.

I have included this chapter about the methodological and theoretical lenses I utilized for this study, as they are central to the argument I have crafted about the SSCAC. By using feminist theory, black studies theory, and black feminist theory together with my art education background, I crafted for myself a specific lens to use throughout this investigation in order to better understand the complex features of the Art Center. These lenses help reveal systems of oppression that have obscured a deep understanding of the Art Center for nearly 75 years. By using theory to articulate my argument, I am able to interpret those systems that kept the Art Center from reaching a larger audience within the art education community. These lenses also help reveal many of the unknown pieces of information that hide between the lines of history that we have lost through systemic oppression and over time.

FEMINIST THEORY

The first theoretical lens I utilized for investigating this topic was feminist theory. Feminist theory has been used by scholars in art education since the 1980s, available to the field from feminist art history theory. The study of women has made understanding women's histories within art education more approachable, especially when historic sources within art education rarely mention women. Feminist theory, in its most basic form, re-centers the lives of women as important figures within histories that often

exclude them (hooks, 1989). Women have been historically undervalued as individuals, and their histories have been left out of official accounts. Feminist theory attempts to reinterpret these histories of women, in order to see the active role and influence of women in the many gaps within history. Shapiro (1992) defined feminist theory as “both a powerful tool of (re)vision and (re)writing and a problematic that continues to unsettle familiar modes of explanation” (p. 2). Feminist theory hopes to reclaim that which has been systematically created to exclude women.

Feminist theory also hopes to complicate those answers that seem too simplistic, creating dialogue that is often disregarded by master narratives. Davis (2012) has explained feminism aptly, stating:

Feminist methodologies, both for research and for organizing, impel us to explore connections that are not always apparent, they drive us to inhabit contradictions and discover what is productive in these contradictions and methods of thought and action; they urge us to think things together that appear to entirely separate and to disaggregate things that appear to belong naturally together. (p. 193)

Master narratives simplify history or issues, turning them into a cohesive storyline that is easy to follow and appears to be factual. However, feminism takes these master narratives and complicates them, bringing up points that go against the simplified version and creates new issues to discuss and tackle. By doing this, feminist theory creates new dialogues within old narratives, creating spaces for counter narratives to emerge that do not have to align with the hegemonic thought. By engaging with feminist thought while reading and interpreting art education history, we realize that “the recounting of history is fraught with human flaws, blinders, and conditional advocacy...so [while engaging] with historical figures, events, and ideas remain suspicious and inquisitive of what is unsaid,

undocumented, and simplified” (Villaverde, 2008, p. 18).

By breaking open master narratives and re-centering the roles that women have played in history, feminist theory also works towards identifying and breaking down systems of oppression. Hicks (1990) noted that, “one of the central purposes of feminist theory is to uncover mechanisms by which the subordination of women in Western societies is perpetuated” (p. 36). Women are continuously seen as inferior and their work is devalued due to prejudice and sexism. Women artists’ contributions have continuously been diminished and traditional women’s crafts continue to struggle for acceptance as an art form (Ament, 1998; Nochlin, 1971). Female-dominated fields of work, including teaching and nursing, are often devalued both in pay grade and in status as a worker (Collins, 2009). By using feminist theory, women in undervalued fields secure knowledge of their work, and regain control of their own narratives. Feminist theory helps us to interpret the systematic oppression that women face in their work and in their lives by identifying and then reinterpreting societal issues through an understanding of systematic gender inequality.

BLACK STUDIES THEORY

In contrast to feminist theory, black studies theory has been extremely underutilized in the field of art education. This is likely due to, in large part, the fact that the field of art education is populated primarily by white women, who most likely have little to no exposure to black studies ideas during their education. These demographics are changing, however, and as such, I believe that black studies will become more present as a way of studying people of color and their unique artistic experiences. By grappling

with the black experience, art education starts to deepen its understandings of oppression, injustice, and solidarity.

Black studies theory examines the experiences of African-Americans and other people of color who are a part of the African diaspora. Black studies is not a new field, but rather, “the progeny of centuries of research that seeks to redress long-standing misconceptions of Black inferiority, African heritage, and cultural significance” (Bobo, Hudley, & Michel, 2004, p.1). The work of black scholars, often either disregarded by white scholars or hailed as the work of a lone intelligent black individual, are centered within black studies, given priority, and interpreted by other black scholars. Black studies has been deeply influenced by academic scholarship in history, philosophy, and comparative literature, and other forms of creativity, including music, poetry, literature, and art.

Black Studies And Historic Investigation

A large subset of black studies is literature dedicated to reinterpreting the history of those of the African diaspora, which have more often than not been excluded from master narratives all over the globe. Studying history of African-Americans is extremely difficult work, as many records of their activities simply do not exist. Predominant Western-created archives have been historically controlled by white men and, as a curated body of knowledge, keep out information that breaks away from the norms set in place by white society. This means that historic information is often unintentionally racially charged and missing information about African-Americans. More often than not, African-Americans have been very limited in positions of power to create and keep

primary documents about their own history, and those in power saw little need to keep records of blacks, who they viewed as inferior and unworthy of documentation.

African-American authors have discussed this issue of the archives as a part of their methodology. Hartman's *Lose Your Mother* (2007) very overtly discussed the issues surrounding historic and archival work for those wishing to study black history. Her account detailed the pitfalls of studying a race that continues to be seen as other and non-human in Ghana, a large hub of the African slave trade. Hartman (2007) reflected on her experiences being unable to write history about people whose records history itself has forgotten, lamenting, “I was determined to fill in the blank spaces of the historical record and to represent the lives of those deemed unworthy of remembering, but how does one write a story about an encounter with nothing?” (p. 16). Hartman's (2007) thoughtful meditation digs into a core issue within recounting black histories—there is, more often than not, nothing that the historian can interpret, because there is simply nothing available. Hartman (2007) later described the archives she investigated as tombs, explaining:

The archive dictates what can be said about the past and the kinds of stories that can be told about the persons cataloged, embalmed, and sealed away in box files and folios. To read the archive is to enter a mortuary; it permits one final viewing and allows for a last glimpse of persons about to disappear. (p. 17)

The traces that may have been buried in history have now disappeared, if they existed at all. Whatever tangible indications there were are living in a mortuary of an archive, tucked away for posterity in cold, dark boxes, often not reflecting a whole or even accurate account of those encased.

Hartman's (2007) struggles with the archive are not unique to her or her experiences with the Ghanaian archives. They are a prevalent issue when attempting to reinterpret the history of many black individuals and groups. Because of a legacy of black inferiority, even after emancipation, keeping archival documents was difficult and records were often not well maintained. Within the United States, black archives are few and far between, and often contain gaps that are not seen in archives assembled by and about white individuals and groups. This means that those attempting to study African and African-American histories often have periods of history that are lost to time, only to be recovered through alternative means, including oral history or historic imagination.

Black Studies From the Time Period

Black studies has a storied history within the US that influenced black thinkers for the past century. Authors such as W.E.B. Du Bois (1903) and Alain Locke (1925) were historically significant black thinkers who were both highly influential to black studies as a field and to black artists and activists throughout the first half of the twentieth century. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a seminal text within black studies, was first published by Chicago-based publishing house A. C. McClurg. Alain Locke's *The New Negro* became a defining text during the Harlem Renaissance, and Locke even attended the SSCAC's opening as a guest of Eleanor Roosevelt (Schlabach, 2013). The works of both these men became central literature for black intellectuals throughout the nation, and especially for those residing on Chicago's South Side.

W. E. B. Du Bois

Du Bois' groundbreaking work, *The Souls of Black Folk*, “[redrew] the boundaries of a cultural universe” for African-Americans (Hubbard, 2003, p. 1). Du Bois centered the black experience, with his concepts of double consciousness, the color line, and the Veil shaping the emerging language of black studies. His prose in *Souls of Black Folk* captured the passion of the educated black, not finding comfort in being black or being American, and always standing as an “other.” He heavily criticized Southern Reconstruction and the continued trap of debt created for African-Americans, citing unfair prices for crops through Southern crop sharing and exorbitant prices placed on goods (Du Bois, 1903). In his essay, “Of the Meaning of Progress” (1903), Du Bois lamented the state of Southern and rural education through his own experiences teaching in Appalachia, stating how education was a way to improve one’s standing. However, due to racialized inequalities on all sides, gaining an education remained out of the reach for far too many within the black community. Even those who received an education were stymied through oppression and racism, often meaning their education served little purpose. Du Bois was an educator, an activist, a writer, a poet, and a scholar, who continued to inspire others through his passionate work for black individuals throughout the diaspora throughout his lifetime.

Du Bois also had a strong belief in visual art as a way to help sustain a high culture for African-Americans, and saw potential in its political abilities. According to Kirschke (2003), “In Du Bois's eyes, the black artist would carry a burden, a great social responsibility” to help develop a culture that blacks could participate in (p. 173). Despite

not discussing visual art in any real extent in *Souls*, Du Bois voiced his opinions about art throughout the Harlem Renaissance. Du Bois was also a mentor for black artist and art educator Aaron Douglas, who was hired by Du Bois to design artwork for Du Bois' writings, and later became an influential art professor at Fisk University. Du Bois' interest in the arts as a means of achieving culture and through his own experiences as an educator and dedicated to educational pursuits helped to solidify him as an important writer for those within the visual arts and in education fighting for racial justice, such as many of the artists at the SSCAC. Du Bois' definitions of the lived experience of people of color also helped define how artists and activists saw themselves and their work, becoming an important cultural text to understand early African-American art.

Alain Locke

Alain Locke, a contemporary of Du Bois, became an important voice to African-American cultural workers during the New Negro Movement, later renamed the Harlem Renaissance, during the 1920s in New York. Prior to Locke's book, Harlem was a cultural epicenter for overturning the belief that the black body was “an inferior subject, incapable of creating aesthetically pleasing works, and as a living embodiment of the ugly encased in a biologically determined and unchanging racial category” (Harris, 2006, p. 89). Locke's (1925) anthology *The New Negro* defined the cultural production of African-Americans within a new paradigm, using Harlem as “The Culture Capital.” Locke's edited volume contained black fiction, poetry, drama, music, and essays, including one by W. E. B. Du Bois, along with African motifs by Du Bois' protégé, Aaron Douglas, and illustrations by Winold Reiss.

Locke's (1925) introduction emphasized his belief in culture as a way for African-Americans to create a new identity, and to become equals in the eyes of whites through cultural production of art. Locke (1925) saw that “immediate hope rests in the revaluation by white and black alike of the Negro in terms of his artistic endowments and cultural contributions, past and prospective” (p. 15). Locke saw the plurality of the movement to be one of its largest strengths, creating culture in multiple terms, bringing together those who, Locke claimed, “have been a race more in name than in fact...more in sentiment than in experience” (1925, p. 7). These artists focused on African-Americans as complicated, living individuals, instead of as the stereotyped, romanticized primitive Africans (Harris, 2006). Locke saw artistic expression and aesthetic appreciation as a key to racial uplift (Harris, 2006). Locke's efforts focusing on African-American cultural production became one of the most important works out of the Harlem Renaissance, and Locke became the face of black theory in the 1920s.

Locke was also influential in helping to shape pedagogy in the arts. According to Harris (2006), “Locke's approach to pedagogy was enlivened by his cosmopolitan approach to community and values: cultural education in the arts creates alternative, non-racist, xenophobic, ethnocentric values and ways of viewing persons as full agents” (p. 90). Locke believed that education through culture and the arts helped enable a more cohesive community, as the arts are not based upon rigid categories of reason or dialogue.

Locke was an important figure contributing to the founding of the South Side Community Art Center in more ways than simply being a great theorist. Locke had met with members of the SSCAC in 1940 to develop an exhibition of black artists that would

eventually be displayed at the SSCAC (Mullen, 1999). By November of that same year, Locke published his second book, *The Negro in Art* (1940), which heavily featured Chicago artists including founding members of the SSCAC. The book analyzed the works of Bernard Goss, Archibald Motley, and Charles White, among others, helping to solidify members of the SSCAC as part of the growing African-American artist canon (Mullen, 1999). Locke also cited FAP-funded centers as part of the cultivation of the black artist, stating, “the equally important job of carrying the Negro artist, too long isolated from the folk, back to one of the most vital sources of his materials” (Locke, 1940). Though often seen as having romantic ideals, when compared to Du Bois, Locke's ideas surrounding culture through artistic expression became extremely influential to cultural workers throughout the Harlem Renaissance and beyond. Locke's invitation to the South Side Community Center's opening solidified his place in the understanding of black arts, and how important the Center's opening was to the black community. Locke's involvement in the FAP in Chicago brought his ideas into contact with the artists of the SSCAC, likely influencing how they thought about their own work and the work of community art centers for African-Americans.

Locke and Du Bois were both interested in racial uplift through art and writing. Because of their widespread influence on intellectual African-Americans, and Alain Locke's presence at the SSCAC's official opening, it is very likely the teachings and writings of both Locke and Du Bois were highly influential for the men and women of the SSCAC.

BLACK FEMINIST STUDIES THEORY

Black feminist studies, a marriage of the two previous fields discussed here and yet completely distinct from both, has been almost entirely left out of art education studies. Black feminist studies is relatively new in comparison to feminist theory and to black studies theory, so it is not much of a surprise that the literature of this field has not yet seeped into art education. Using a black feminist lens for viewing the SSCAC provides more interesting and realistic insights into the Center's important members and staff who helped sustain the SSCAC's life far beyond that of any other WPA center in the United States. By interpreting the lives of black women, separate from the lives of black men and white women, we can begin to more fully understand the experiences of all those involved with the Center, without the exclusion of individuals with the least cultural capital in the eyes of the master narrative (Collins, 2009).

At the heart of black feminist studies is a desire for the lives and challenges of black women to be seen as legitimate and valuable. Black women face discrimination based on both their race and gender. Through this, they have found both solidarity and exclusion in both black studies and in feminism. Black feminist studies believe that “Black women are inherently valuable, that our liberation is a necessity” (The Combahee River Collective, 1982, p. 15). Women and African-Americans are both historically undervalued and oft ignored in historic contexts. The black woman is considered so low that her existence is often negated because she is seen with no redeeming qualities, such as whiteness or masculinity (Hartman, 1993). Going against this dominant narrative and believing in black feminism and black feminist ideas can be interpreted as inherently

political acts. Hull and Smith (1982) discussed this political nature of black feminism, stating, “The combining of these words [black and women] to name a discipline means taking the stance that Black women exist—and exist positively—a stance that is in direct opposition to most of what passes for culture” (p. xvii). By putting the focus on a group of individuals completely ignored by many histories, we politicize ourselves and our ideas with the radical idea that everyone deserves to be heard.

Black Feminism and Accessibility

Black feminist theory believes strongly in being inclusive of every type of woman, and being accessible for every type of woman. Feminist theory, as mentioned previously, can often be categorized as “white feminism,” or a feminism that champions the voices of women, but only a very specific subset of women (Pence, 1982). Black feminism, on the other hand, challenges that belief in listening to the voices of the few, and rather, partakes of them all. Kelley (2002) defines black feminists as “the theorists and proponents of a radical humanism committed to liberating humanity and reconstructing social relations across the board” (p. 135). Black feminism has a deep commitment to the restructuring of society for equality and equity, rather than playing in the boundaries drawn up to exclude them. Audre Lorde's often-misquoted speech, “The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House” (1984) focused on this issue, pointing out the hypocrisy she witnessed at feminist conventions. She boldly claimed that, “advocating the mere tolerance of difference between women is the grossest reformism. It is a total denial of the creative unction of difference in our lives” (Lorde, 1984, p. 111). Lorde (1984) saw that without the acceptance of all women under

feminism, the theory of feminism stands on weak legs that will never draw together all women. By staying within the patriarchal system, white feminists could not break boundaries or see beyond to a fully inclusive world. Pence (1982) described how her understanding of inclusion through white feminism actually did not break any of the dominant boundaries set up by patriarchy and racism, and instead played inside it. She admitted, “while I fully understood how sexism dehumanizes men, it never crossed my mind that my racism must somehow dehumanize me” (Pence, 1982, p. 46). Pence (1982) implored white women to re-examine their own biases and be inclusive in both word and deed through a more integrated approach brought up through black feminism.

Black feminism also redefined who can be seen as an authoritative source of theory. As black women have historically been without any power, those who want to include more women have to redefine the boundaries keeping certain women out of theory. Kelley (2002) listed these new theorists, “to include poets, blues singers, storytellers, painters, mothers, preachers, and teachers” (p. 137). Collins (2009) included women in *Black Feminist Thought* who included maids, former slaves, and grandmothers, whose voices have not been legitimized due to their lack of education. Collins (2009) argued that, “without tapping these nontraditional sources, much of the Black women's intellectual tradition would remain, 'not known and hence not believed in'” (p. 19). By introducing these voices of those normally excluded by other types of academia, black feminist theory opens up opportunity to all women, regardless of their educational level or their abilities.

By redrawing the boundaries around who can access black feminist theory and

who is included within it, black feminist writers also redefined how theory is written. Discussing this, bell hooks (1989) noted that theory is often seen as inaccessible for many, especially for women. She declared, “my goal as a feminist thinker and theorist is to take that abstraction and render it in a language that makes it accessible—not less complex or rigorous—but simply more accessible” (hooks, 1989, p. 39). By focusing on accessibility, hooks removes herself from the world of academia, which has often stifled literature with inaccessible theory. By writing in a language that removes jargon, black feminists give others the opportunity for engaging in their writing, with or without the knowledge base of academic language. Many others, such as Lorde and Davis, instead turned theory into action, becoming political activists alongside their roles as theorists.

Black Feminism and Activism

Black women, despite and due to being marginalized through both their race and gender, have a long and storied history of activism for both racial and gender equality. The Combahee River Collective (1982), a black feminist lesbian organization headed by Barbara Smith, identified prominent black female activists and part of their collective struggles, stating:

There have always been Black women activists—some known, like Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Frances E. W. Harper, Ida B. Wells Barnett, and Mary Church Terrell, and thousands upon thousands unknown—who have had a shared awareness of how their sexual identity combined with their racial identity to make their whole life situation and the focus of their political struggles unique. (p. 14)

Identifying these historic women as part of the black feminist movement demonstrates that black women's activism and black feminism are not only partnered, they are practically the same. Patricia Hill Collins (2009) wrote extensively on the topic of black

women's activism, and its relationship to the larger studies of black women in general. Collins (2009) used the term “group survival” when discussing black feminist activism. She identified black feminists as individuals either fighting for organizations that legitimized black women, or for organizations to accept them. Activism came in many forms for these women, ranging from political involvement, to community work, to education.

Collins (2009) saw education as a form of resistance from oppression. Even if women were not educated themselves, they would urge their children and grandchildren to gain an education, and use education to resist the systematic oppression they faced. Black women “saw the activist potential of education and skillfully used this Black female sphere of influence to foster a definition of education as a cornerstone of Black community development” (Collins, 2009, p. 226). Collins postulated that education and activism are inextricably linked, especially for black women. The language that talked about educators and activists are related to one another. She went on to state:

The power and status earned from women’s roles as cultural workers served to reinforce the importance of Black women's roles as educators. Black men and women who were perceived by the community as leaders of the struggle for group survival were described as “educators.” Working for race uplift and education became intertwined. (Collins, 2009, p. 227)

Educators were part of the activist dialogue as participants in social action and change. Collins (2009) stated, “it is no accident that many well-known U.S. Black women activists were either teachers or somehow involved in struggling for educational opportunities for African-Americans of both sexes” (p. 227). For many African-Americans, education has been historically used as a mode of revolution, and as a way to

change the world to include them. For women, educational jobs were traditionally some of the few professions that were considered acceptable forms of employment. For black women, using this position as an educator to be a form of resistance was an accessible way to make significant change within their communities.

Black Women and Historic Investigation

The difficulty that Hartman (2007) described in *Lose Your Mother* when discussing archives, however, only becomes exacerbated when one focuses their efforts on black women studies. Not only are there few records available, but “reclaiming Black women's ideas involves discovering, reinterpreting, and, in many cases, analyzing for the first time the works of individual U.S. Black women thinkers who were so extraordinary that they did not manage to have their ideas preserved” (Collins, 2009, p. 16). Women's history is difficult to interpret because the information is missing or unwritten. This means that historic work in black feminist studies takes extra effort in order to re-create their history and understand their stories. Despite these hurdles faced by those who want to study black feminist histories, “it has continued to be important for women of color to occupy space in the theory of knowledge because of historical exclusion” (Whitehead, 2008, p. 23). The South Side Community Art Center, a facility that owes much of its creation and sustained existence, needs to be interpreted through black feminist studies, in order to ensure the fact that the women involved can have their stories preserved and heralded as important and legitimate.

CONNECTING THEORIES

Feminist theory, black studies theory, and black feminist theory all have overlapping similarities. Each aims to elevate minorities into conversation with oppressive master narratives, creating alternate histories and to problematize that which has often been overlooked as being too simple. Each theory hopes to answer questions surrounding the silences formed when looking at women, African-Americans, or women of color. However, these theories have not always agreed with one another, and often demonstrate major theoretical gaps when put into practice by authors that possess conflicting points of view. The relationships between these theories are often rocky, with practitioners not seeing eye-to-eye on how topics should be considered and explored. Smith (1982) described this strained relationship between feminism and black feminism by focusing on the bare definition of feminism, and seeing holes created by second-wave feminism of the 1960s and '70s:

The reason racism is a feminist issue is easily explained by the inherent definition of feminism. Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of color, working-class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbians, old women—as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but merely female aggrandizement. (p. 50)

Smith (1982) sees white feminism as ignoring those who do not fit into the clear-cut definition of white, upper-class women. By singling out only one subset of women for feminism to focus on, feminism ignores the issues facing the broad spectrum of women. Smith's argument against feminism is solved by an inclusion-based version of feminism, and solved deeper through the use of black feminist theory. The theoretical arguments employed here often cover one section of theory very well, but have large gaps that

cannot be overlooked.

Without recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of each of these theories, we risk missing major points of discussion that could potentially open up new areas of dialogue. Black studies, especially when discussing Du Bois, is highly patriarchal, as he privileged the black male experience and largely ignored women or stereotyped their roles as homemakers. Feminist theories often privilege the white, middle class female experience over that of the black female. Black feminist studies, heralded by writers like Collins (2009) and Kelley (2002) as a way to cover all the bases ignored in other theories, has been left out of art education theory and would not be as strong without discussing the other theories that have slowly made their way into art education throughout the recent years. Focusing on just black feminist theory would also ignore the historic importance of canonical writers of the time, such as Locke and Du Bois. By using all of these theories in tandem, theoretical discussion covers multiple points about the South Side Community Art Center that otherwise would likely be missed.

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER THREE

This chapter highlighted the three theoretical lenses I used to study the South Side Community Art Center. First, feminist studies, has been used within art education to uncover the histories of women within art education and is a launching point for further theoretical lenses. Black studies, while not well used within art education history, is historically important to the SSCAC and helps explain issues in studying the histories of black institutions. Finally, black feminist studies has not been used within the study of art education history, but aids in interpretation of this Art Center, an institution largely run

and maintained by black women throughout its history.

Chapter 4: Methodology

EARLY STAGES

The identification of this research topic happened both deliberately and serendipitously. After reading Clayton Funk's chapter, "Education in the Federal Art Project" in Bolin, Blandy and Congdon's *Remembering Others: Making Invisible Histories of Art Education Visible* (2000), the history of Federal Art Project's (FAP) education initiative piqued my interest. Funk's discussion of the Community Art Center (CAC) Initiative excited me, reminding me of my own art experiences within an art center that helped solidify my interest in art as a legitimate career path. Funk's all too brief statements about CAC's importance as bearers of what we now consider art education and appreciation into rural and impoverished areas awoke in me a keen interest in the Federal Art Project.

After identifying an area of interest within the FAP, I came across Mavigliano and Lawson's (1990) *The Federal Art Project in Illinois*. As an Illinois native, I found myself intensely interested by the title alone, hoping to find information regarding some of the art I experienced while growing up. Mavigliano and Lawson (1990) dedicated a large portion of the book to charts and tables outlining artists hired by the Federal Art Project and its local branch, the Illinois Art Project (IAP), and locations of FAP-sponsored artworks in Illinois. The book delineated every small detail of the Illinois Art Project, including a mural in my hometown post office. It was within this volume that Mavigliano and Lawson gave a brief, six-paragraph description on the founding of the South Side

Community Art Center as an IAP-funded program, stating that it was the only art center established with the aid of the Federal Art Project (1990). This brief description was the catalyst for my continued investigation.

I soon realized that there was not much information published about this Art Center. One resource I did find, however, was *Popular Fronts, Chicago and African-American Cultural Politics, 1935-1946*, by Bill V. Mullen (1999). Mullen's language surrounding his text about the SSCAC deeply influenced the writing of this thesis, and helped me realize the egregious error that has left the SSCAC out of so many discussions. I contacted Dr. Mullen, currently at Purdue University, asking him for more information on the SSCAC after stating I was struggling finding information about the Center other than in his book. He promptly replied, pointing me to a few resources and mentioning that the SSCAC is still open and running; he encouraged me to visit. Despite his help, I knew that writing about the Center would become a huge undertaking, and one that I was unsure about its length or depth.

Through my initial investigation into the SSCAC, I realized that there were questions I saw arise that seemingly were unanswered through anyone's current research. Chiefly, I found that knowledge of this last surviving art center from the FAP was extremely limited. Mullen (1999) states, "Outside of George Mavigliano and Richard Lawson's passing and incomplete account...the history of the Art Center exists mostly in internal commemorative records produced by the center, its surviving members, and the city of Chicago itself" (p. 81). Despite its achievements and long life span, the SSCAC has not reached those who might benefit from understanding its existence. After this

initial investigation, I attempted to search for any information that could help me piece together a more cohesive storyline about the “after” of the SSCAC—the period directly following the time the FAP money dried up, and when all records seem to vanish. What I found instead was a silence. This information void percolated from 1942 through the present day, with only breadcrumbs of information that others found scattered about, but failed to elaborate on. Despite multiple authors mentioning the SSCAC’s continued existence and touching on its endeavors, no one said what happened during this period of what Dr. Burroughs (1959) described as a “struggling hand to mouth existence” (p. A11). Everything that could be found about this after period was a vague allusion to a history filled with strife, but no one had fleshed out what caused the tension and what the strife looked like during those periods. I wanted to investigate this silence, and figure out what, if anything, hid beneath.

FIRST STEPS

Due to the nature of the Art Center being largely ignored by history and the lack of information available to me, I knew I would have to seek out different research avenues in order to answer certain questions. One of my first moves was to contact Dr. Juliet Walker in the Department of History at The University of Texas at Austin. Through conversation, I discovered that she was a native Chicagoan and a former professor at my undergraduate university, and might be able to join some of the puzzle pieces of the SSCAC together more succinctly. To my immense surprise, I found that Dr. Walker's mother, social worker Thelma Kirkpatrick Wheaton, was a constant volunteer for the SSCAC throughout her lifetime. Dr. Walker pointed me in the direction of both the

Chicago Defender archives and her mother's archive at the Chicago History Museum, in my attempt to find more information. After meeting with Dr. Walker, and noting her enthusiasm for my investigation, I realized that part of this thesis would be navigating the subject as an extremely important part of other people's lives. The South Side Community Art Center was more than a mere institution; it was the lifeblood of a community for many people, and a piece of history they held dearly.

I experienced firsthand the issues of working with small institutions through my first attempts at making contact with the South Side Community Art Center. My initial contact, an email I sent asking for permission to write my thesis on the Center in late-January 2014, went unanswered. I realized by mid-March that the lack of response was due to them changing emails and contact information, but leaving the older information still available online. I sent a different email to the newer email address, which once again received no response. In early April, I finally decided to make a phone call to the SSCAC. After leaving a voice mail, I made contact with Clinton Nichols, Program and Office Manager, for the first time. I explained the intent of my thesis and my desire to search the SSCAC's archives. Clinton told me I would need to submit my work to their archive committee if I wished to gain access. I submitted to him a description of my work. I did not hear back by the time I first headed to Chicago.

FIRST TRIP – MAY 2014

From the beginning, I decided that I would make two trips to Chicago to gather information. The initial trip would be to gain a feel for what I was getting into; the second, I would focus my efforts and help connect the informational gaps that remained.

Making two trips made more sense than attempting to gather all the information in one visit and finding myself overwhelmed and possibly lost in the material I could and could not find. I focused my efforts on making the first trip about gathering as much information as possible, and locating sources of information, so that I could spend my second trip getting into the finer details and examine overlooked material. I am fortunate to be well-connected to people who live in the Chicago area, and knew that making these trips was well within my reach and my financial ability.

Woodson Regional Library

I took my first trip to Chicago in the beginning of May 2014. My initial stop in Chicago was at the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection, located in the Woodson Regional Library, a branch of the Chicago Public Library in the southernmost part of Chicago. Named in honor of Carter Woodson, founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, which was begun in Chicago in 1915, Woodson Regional serves the southernmost black community as one of the largest of Chicago's public libraries. When I reached the building, I walked into the light-shrouded library and headed towards the Vivian G. Harsh Reading Room. Being my first “real” archive experience during this investigation, I asked the librarian behind the desk for help. She directed me to one of the standing computers, and I went through the digitized contents of the collection to determine which specific archives I needed to view. After identifying the archive boxes I wanted to look through, I sorted my way through selections of papers and documents of Fern Gayden, Frances Minor, and William McBride, looking for information about the founding of the SSCAC, its continued history, and any resources

that referred to the 1950s. I also found out that some sources I wanted to access, such as the Rita Coburn Whack papers and the Susan Cayton Woodson papers were still being processed and were unavailable for public viewing. For this reason, whatever resources were secured in these files, would not be available for me to examine. This felt like a bit of a blow to my research, as my time in the archives was limited and I wanted to find any and all documents that I could.

Whatever I had hoped or expected to find in that library archive did not appear there. The only article I found in those boxes from the 1950s within the archive was the Constitution and By-Laws of the SSCAC from 1957, housed in the Frances Minor papers. The rest of the content came from the early 1940s or the 1970s, with much about the Center's founding but little to nothing discussing the SSCAC's activities in the time between these years. Once again I found vague allusions to what happened at the SSCAC, especially in the content of Illinois museum exhibitions that celebrated the Center, without solid evidence to support these activities. It became quite apparent why much of the history of the Center lay undocumented—its records may very well not exist in any tangible form.

The South Side Community Art Center

The next day I drove to the South Side Community Art Center for the first time. After doing six months of research and minor secondary investigation, I knew that this trip would be pivotal to my thesis research. I drove the length of Michigan Ave. The four mile drive took me down into the South Side, and after I parked the car I pulled out my

purple Moleskin notebook, my designated “thesis journal,” and scrawled out a few observations:

The further South you go on Michigan Avenue, you realize a shift. The buildings stop being “new,” their beauty coming from their age. Large, brick and stone buildings line the street, but they all seem lonely. There are spaces in between; it's obvious that some of the buildings here have been razed. Michigan Ave is wide and spacious. Down here, parking is easy to find. As I made it to the SSCAC, things shift even more. There's a vacant lot nearby, covered in dandelions.

Beyond the field is a factory, or a school, or an apartment complex. There's a church next to the SSCAC; a short, stocky building with no windows. It's May, so some trees are bare, while some have small buds. I wonder how the street has changed since the SSCAC opened.

Yellow caution tape covers the stairs. There's a huge puddle in front, probably from this morning's rain. I park near the vacant lot so I don't have to park in the puddle. The building is dark—darker brick than any other building in view. If I didn't have the address, I would have missed it.

I sat in my father’s truck, waiting until the clock hit 1. I watched an individual walk into the building, around the caution tape on the steps. I figured this approach meant that I, too, could walk around the caution tape and get inside the building. I walked into the South Side Community Art Center, new and yet familiar from all the photographs I had seen of its interior and its exterior in the past six months. A man sat at the desk tucked next to the stairs, who I would eventually be introduced to as Clinton Nichols, my first

contact at the Art Center. He gave me a few pamphlets and told me to look around on the first and second floors at their exhibition spaces. While I explored, I wrote down my experience, finally stepping into the space I had been studying at a distance for so long.

I'm told to look around at the exhibition they have on. The interior walls, new in 1940, are pock-marked from hundreds of shows. A man is installing an air conditioner. The building smells beautiful and old, like my tante's old home. When I go upstairs, the ceiling is in obvious need of repair. The third floor is a large classroom with 16 windows. Art lines the floor. I found out later it's for the upcoming art auction.

After my initial exploring of the facility, I asked to talk to someone about the Center and archive permission. Clinton and I realized we had already been in contact with each other, and he had me go upstairs and talk with Arcilla Stahl, at that point the interim Executive Director for the SSCAC. Arcilla and I talked for a short time about the Center's history. According to her, there were gaps that she, a life-long dedicated staffer and volunteer, did not know. She gave me a few leads to check out, and confirmed information that I had found previously. Arcilla gave me her own tour of the Center, which included pointing out Gwendolyn Brooks' favorite part of the building, a small alcove area with bay windows looking over Michigan Avenue, and up to the third floor, describing what the day-to-day activities of the SSCAC were now. She couldn't give me access to the archives that day, due to there only being two archivists, and both had full-time jobs. She urged me to stay in contact and to come back when I was ready in October.

SECOND TRIP – OCTOBER 2014

I returned to Chicago in October 2014 to continue my research. Before returning, I identified four archival sources that I wanted to investigate thoroughly for more information: the *Chicago Defender* online archive available through the Chicago Public Library; the Thelma Kirkpatrick Wheaton papers at the Chicago History Museum; the SSCAC's own archive; and further examination of the Vivian G. Harsh Collection archives. I planned to spend a full week in Chicago in order to follow up on all of these research directions, giving myself ample time to carry out my investigation.

The Library Archives

My first order of business was to go through the digitized *Chicago Defender* archives available through the Chicago Public Library. I had not accessed these archives earlier, and reading articles from the *Chicago Defender's* national weekly paper and *The Daily Defender*, the Chicago-only daily newspaper, opened up a new dimension to my research that had not been investigated yet. The *Defender's* archive helped give a daily voice to black Chicagoans, and provided me with a pulse and life of a time period that I found often lacking in such rich detail. However, the handful of articles I found still did not join together the pieces of history I was missing, and I knew I had to continue my search.

The next day, I took the Red Line to its terminus at 95th street, and made my way once again towards the Woodson Regional Library. As I took my second trip to the Vivian G. Harsh Collection, I wondered what else, if anything, I would find. On my first trip I had felt overwhelmed, and I had found only a small bit of new information about

the time period under question. What would this second trip reveal? However, whatever feelings of doubt I had were pushed away when I finally accessed the archive. Coming back to the archive and feeling familiar with the space helped me immensely when it came down to looking for new information that could assist my investigation.

The biggest change I found was the availability of the Susan Cayton Woodson papers that were previously being cataloged and were inaccessible. Accessing her archive, along with a second look at the Frances Minor papers, the William McBride Papers, and the Fern Gayden papers, enabled me to see holes I had missed on my first visit. Another change was seen within myself as a historian and understanding what I was attempting to find in answering my research questions. Previously, I had assumed that I needed pieces of information from the specific time period under question, and any outside information would not be useful. This meant that there were large amounts of secondary sources left unread. In this second visit to the archives, however, I knew that leaving any stone unturned would lessen my opportunity to find useful information. This helped me locate other key items of information, and reinterpret other pieces of the past I had not considered earlier.

The Chicago History Museum

In the middle of the week, I attempted to make my way to the Chicago History Museum to access their archives. Unfortunately, delays hindered my visit. By the time I reached the museum's entrance, I had only a short time to go through the archive. This would have probably been enough time, had the Thelma Kirkpatrick Wheaton papers I was there to peruse had actually been catalogued. Instead, what I found were 16 boxes of

uncategorized ephemera. In response, I had to guess what documents were relevant and those that were not, and was able only to go through 5 or so boxes.

Exasperated, I explained to a librarian what I was looking for, disappointed with the state of the archive. “Oh,” she paused. “Those organizations,” she said, referring to the Art Center, “were big on doing the stuff,” echoing my sympathies. Even without consulting her database, she knew I was pretty unlikely to uncover much about the Center. The records were missing and scattered, and no one at the Art Center had the knowledge base to start or really maintain a comprehensive archive for many years. Though documents were kept, sometimes they were spread out over multiple collections, and often did not come back to the Center. This librarian knew I was searching for a needle in a haystack, and probably was not going to locate anything, even if I was lucky.

My examination of the Thelma Kirkpatrick Wheaton papers was cursory, at best. I attempted to sort through her collection, and pull out meaningful pieces of information. What I found, however, were less documents that pieced together missing history, but instead an understanding of the type of person who so willingly dedicated her time to a space such as the Art Center. In my thesis journal, I scribbled an observation:

Most of those involved in the SSCAC were not only married to one social project. Rather, these women saw activism as a defining characteristic, and devoted themselves to their church, to art centers, to museums, to libraries, and any other organization they believed benefitted their community.

Mrs. Wheaton was not just a member of the Art Center. She was a well-known member of her community. A social worker in her day job, she was also a board member

of the SSCAC, a lifelong volunteer at the DuSable Museum of African-American History, a member of her church's choir, a member of her local YMCA, and a member of the Afro-American Genealogical and Historical Society of Chicago. On a handful of Post-it notes, I read her personal definition of volunteerism, which she seemed to hone in over years of work. It became clear that, though she valued art, Mrs. Wheaton valued the struggle to better oneself and one's community, and felt that she was part of a larger community that needed her input to succeed. Despite the Wheaton papers not having the golden key, I instead learned about the dedication of those involved in the Art Center, and how powerful many believed the Center could be.

Second Trip to the South Side Community Art Center

I saved my trip to the South Side Community Art Center for the end of the week, in order to fit my research schedule with their hours of operation. I also hoped that what I could find in their archives would help solidify and pull together all the other trails that I had found throughout the rest of my searches. However, I learned firsthand that archival work is sometimes a game of chance. I contacted Clinton Nichols, the SSCAC's program manager, over a month prior to my visit. He had me send him my thesis proposal that he would later forward to the Archive Committee. After waiting and making contact with Clinton multiple times before my trip, I received no formal decision from the Archive Committee about my visit. I ended up resigning myself to walking into the Center and hope for archival access. Thursday was a beautiful Autumn day, and my hour-long commute down to the Center was filled with watching hundreds of lightly-bundled

Chicagoans enjoying one of the fleeting days of nice weather before winter claimed the Windy City.

When I eventually got to the Art Center, I knew that I was going in with only a hope. I reintroduced myself to Clinton, asked about the archive visit, mentioning how little time I actually had in Chicago. Clinton got me on the phone with Arcilla Stahl, now one of the archive committee members after the Center had elected a new Director, and I had to explain my timeline to her and how I needed to get in within the time I would be in Chicago. One of the issues with working with small institutions means that direct approaches, such as sitting in the lobby on the phone with the archive committee members, may be the only way effective communication can happen. Arcilla could come in the following day, so I agreed to revisit the Center then. Clinton recommended watching a documentary about the SSCAC developed by the local PBS station in the early 2000s, titled *Curators of Culture*. The documentary highlighted the Center's cultural significance, and included interviews with Margaret Burroughs and other Art Center founders and staff members. The documentary covered the 1950s briefly, focusing heavily on the fundraising efforts of the women who attempted to keep the Center together, while touching on issues such as the effects of McCarthyism on the Center. After finishing the documentary, I thanked Clinton, and planned on coming back the next day.

Friday was when I was finally able to access the archives. I walked into the brownstone, determined to find something, *anything*, that would link the pieces of information I had together. I was escorted by Maséqua Myers, the new Executive

Director, up the stairs. Arcilla Stahl sat in the third floor room, all fifteen windows letting the bright blue October sky into the studio. There were no lights on, because there was no need for them. As Arcilla met me and asked what boxes I needed to see, I looked out the windows. I could see the glistening buildings of downtown. They seemed a world away from the old brownstone in Bronzeville.

I worked my way through the Center's first four archive boxes, pouring over the contents, waiting for the magic information to fall into my lap. However, that did not happen. I learned new information, scribbled down large block quotes from pamphlets and form letters, but none of the documents that I had hoped could be used as "definitive proof" came to me. Instead, the more I found, the more questions came out of the woodwork. *Why did certain things happen? Where did these ideas come from, and what eventually happened to them? What is actually missing? Whose narrative does the archive support?* The deeper I went, the more questions came up, and I knew so few of them would end up having definitive answers. By the end of the day, I sighed, packed up my things, thanked Arcilla and Clinton again for all their help, and departed the Art Center, leaving with a thousand more leads than I had explanations.

Chapter 5: A History of the SSCAC, 1941-1959

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the pieces of information found from 1941-1959 that helps to join together a history of the South Side Community Art Center during this time period. I explore three main sections of history: 1941-1944, during the height of World War II; 1945-1949, stretching the post-War years; and 1954-1959, the latter part of the 1950s. The second part of this chapter is dedicated to a section of history that is missing from the archives of the SSCAC between the years of 1950 and 1953. For these four years, I chose to critically examine reasons for why this gap in information exists, providing two plausible reasons why information about the Art Center at this time is missing.

1941-1944 – THE REMOVAL OF FUNDS

On the morning of December 7, 1941, the history of the United States of America changed forever. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, evolved into the beginning of the United States' official entry into World War II, ending over twenty years of relative military peace and a governmental policy of non-intervention. Up until the attack on Pearl Harbor, the US had spent most of its resources since President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's election to office attempting to fix and stabilize a shattered economy, rather than getting involved in the tense politics in Europe (Gillon, 2011). Most Americans, including the President, knew that the unrest in Europe and Adolf Hitler's rise to power

would soon spill over into US participation, but many civilians hoped that the US could hold onto its stance of isolationism for as long as possible (Gillon, 2011). However, the bombing of Pearl Harbor changed public sentiment, and many supported American involvement abroad. Artists and educators employed with funds from the Federal Art Project (FAP) realized the entrance of the US into World War II meant the end of federal support for the arts and, in turn, their programs.

The South Side Community Art Center (SSCAC), like all other federally funded community art centers (CAC) that started in the six years leading up to Pearl Harbor, scrambled to figure out what their next step would be. The CAC program was never intended to be a full handout to these organizations, and instead attempted to facilitate financial independence through community engagement (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990). The CAC initiative asked that communities who benefited from CACs help support certain functions of an art center, such as rent and utilities (Mavigliano, 1985). After these communities established funding, the CAC program administered funds to these organizations to pay for teachers, maintenance staff, and office managers, provided that programs ran at these institutions were kept free of charge for participants (Mullen, 1999). Despite this modeling by the government, however, many individuals who worked for art center organizations saw the removal of federal support spelling doom for their institutions. Mavigliano and Lawson (1990) said it well when they stated, “If there was a problem nationally with the CAC concept, it had to do with the preparing communities to assume the economic responsibility for the centers once the FAP ended” (p. 70). Most of the CACs were established in rural and impoverished areas of the US, and without

support from the government many art centers knew that the communities would have no chance in supporting them in full. Those in charge of CACs knew that they would end up shuttering their doors without outside funding sources or a spirited monetary campaign.

At the SSCAC, things looked grim. The South Side was always an impoverished area, and the community surrounding the SSCAC would struggle to support an art center that could function at the capacity that the Center did the year after its opening. Peter Pollack wrote in his 1942 Director's report, entitled "What We Can Do in '42," that, "If Chicago's South Side Community Art Center is to advance along the lines that it should, greater support from the citizens of our city...is imperative" (William McBride Papers, Box 6, Folder 1). Those involved in the SSCAC knew that the only reason the Art Center got off the ground and became viable was through government underwriting, and that the South Side community's poverty had not changed in only a handful of years. Luckily, however, SSCAC members had garnered much community support before the SSCAC was founded and had kept most of the momentum going through its first year. If the SSCAC were to succeed, founding members would have to continue to cultivate a community of support within the local African-American community, and also tap into other resources, and specifically the black middle class who lived in the community.

As discussed previously, the black middle class had a tenuous relationship with the artists and bohemians of the Art Center. Many bourgeois blacks saw the Center more as a symbol of culture, rather than a living organization that helped those with little means. This meant that once funds ran out, tension became more apparent than at the founding.

Middle-class African-Americans who already supported the SSCAC during their inception were asked to support the center now as funds were being withdrawn. Pauline Kigh Reed's treasurer's report implored members to sustain their membership, writing in letters to members that, "Since Federal Aid on cultural projects is to be withdrawn June 30th, the South Side Community Art Center faces the necessity of financing its own staff which means increasing, yes—doubling, its budget" (1942). Reed, herself a member of the black middle class and a social worker, implored her community members to work with the Center to sustain it.

Debate swirled around when the funds to the SSCAC were officially cut off. Pauline Kigh Reed's membership letter suggested June 30, 1942. Writing years later, Margaret Burroughs stated that funds were not pulled until February 1943 (Burroughs, 1987). What is known, however, is that FAP programs had a bit of lead time prior to funds being fully removed. Despite this advanced warning that the funds were being cut, CACs were still in shock when the money for the Center ran dry. The SSCAC knew they needed to continue finding support within their community. A call to renew membership went out in 1943, appealing to the fact that the South Side community members owned the SSCAC, and hoping that sustained support would keep them afloat:

We were fortunate in having the cooperation of the WPA Art Project, but even now, since we no longer have the assistance of the WPA, the community recognizes the importance of the Art Center. We own the art Center; we bought it; we must support it now. (William McBride Papers, Box 6, Folder 41)

Costs of becoming a member were kept minimal, and the lowest rung of membership ran for \$2 annually. It was clear the Center wanted to keep the costs manageable so that

community members could contribute, even in the smallest way possible.

Despite these steps, however, the SSCAC still had to drastically reduce its offering of programs after the WPA's conclusion. According to Mullen (1999), “the center's programming was severely restricted and turned decidedly conservative in an attempt to maximize economic returns” (p. 99). The radical programming and exhibitions they previously exhibited were not considered viable due to their niche audience. Rather, exhibitions that had broad appeal were chosen to draw larger audiences into the Center. These broader appeal exhibitions included a posthumous retrospective of sculptor Richmond Barthe and the works of Henry Ossawa Tanner, a religious realist painter from the turn of the century (Mullen, 1999). These exhibitions were both important to black artists, but were safe options as both Barthe and Tanner were well-established, classically trained artists. The experimentation that was encouraged at the Center's inception had been stripped away to focus on those exhibitions and activities that could attract the most people through the doors and what made the best financial sense.

Pollack stepped down as director in 1943, citing tension between the vision of himself and the community. However, this appears to be an overgeneralization of the real issues that forced Pollack to step down. Mavigliano and Lawson (1990) stated that Pollack had a “patronizing attitude” toward the SSCAC’s community and often spent time taking credit for what black art center members had done (p. 68). Indeed, even in Mavigliano and Lawson’s (1990) brief explanation of the founding of the SSCAC, they cited Pollack as the one who had “developed an interest in the FAP and formulated the initial idea for a black art center,” not crediting any African-American help in

development and pitch of the idea to Holger Cahill (p. 67). In a quote recalled by Cahill, Pollack's patronizing attitude is obvious:

You could stay in the slums of the city of Chicago on the south side, west side, or northwest side and not see any original artwork. The schools has no artwork to mention, and there was no place to see art unless you went to the Art Institute. And a lot of people didn't go there. My toughest job of all was to try and build an art center in the very heart of the slum of the city of Chicago, which was a Negro neighborhood. (cited in Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990, pp. 67-68)

Pollack saw himself as a savior of the South Side with this Art Center, bringing art to the "slums" where he believed no art could be found, rather than considering that the real issue was that impoverished communities such as the South Side did not have any place dedicated exclusively to showing art.

Community members also saw that Pollack surrounded himself, nearly completely, with the black middle class, and very rarely interacted with artists or community organizers. Instead, he directed the African-Americans he rubbed shoulders with to take care of running the Center, masking his incompetence as director by using others as his right hand (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990). One woman even recalled his actions as using everyone as an "errand boy" rather than taking care of anything himself, due to his lack of ability in carrying out how an art center should be run (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990). The artists saw Pollack's actions and lack of interaction as stifling their voices, and the middle class saw Pollack as only a figurehead. Pollack himself believed that members of the SSCAC were prejudiced against him as a successful, white, Jewish man. He successfully acted as a liaison between the Illinois Art Project (IAP) leaders and the black community, and the success of the SSCAC's founding and first years were a

testament to that (Mavigliano & Lawson, 1990). After his tenure, Pollack took a position at the Art Institute of Chicago, once again returning to the North Side of the city. Rex Gorleigh, one of the founding members of the SSCAC, stepped in as the new director, officially becoming the first black director of the Art Center.

During the tail end of World War II, documentation surrounding and concerning the SSCAC faltered. The war took its toll on the Center, and no documentation from the Art Center could be found in their archives from the year 1944. The US involvement in World War II was taxing on the entire population of the United States, and Chicago and the South Side felt the strain along with the rest of the country. It is not surprising, then, that material from this time period seems not to exist.

1945-1949 – THE POST-WAR ERA

After the end of World War II, things were looking up slightly for the SSCAC, but the Center continued to struggle. Rex Gorleigh wrote in his 1945 director's report that the Center had problems keeping the building staffed with teachers, despite having a large number of students in the community wanting to take courses. Volunteer positions were plentifully staffed, especially for female-dominated positions such as clerical work, but teachers were hard to keep employed. The Center did not have the funds available to hire many regular instructors, and restricted their class schedule accordingly, cutting off much of the community from the SSCAC. This was a problem that many of those involved with the SSCAC knew had to be fixed.

Part of the solution to correcting the issue of insufficient funds was to keep the Center afloat by being conservative in programming and ideas. According to Mullen

(1999), “the center’s postwar agenda included insuring its political and commercial credibility by repressing dissenting Left voices” (p. 191). As with the period right after funds were cut from the Center, the board and directing members of the SSCAC believed that financial viability were more important than the voices and opinions of leftist thinkers and artists that had once been a part of the lifeblood of the institution. The end of World War II did not help bring leftist voices back into the space. Rather, the continued lack of funding kept these voices silent.

However, the SSCAC also had to be proactive in gaining new financial support, instead of relying solely on cutting programs. The staff of the SSCAC knew that fundraising within the community was one way of securing a short-term future for the Center. They launched a fundraising campaign at the end of March 1945 to help stabilize the SSCAC and keep the Center in operation. The Center heralded themselves as “the only Negro Art Center existing” in the nation, imploring their community members to support them. The SSCAC drew on community development and racial uplift as a basis for advertisement, as they stated, “to carry on the work of the Art Center means that the public must rally to its support and that each and every one of us in the community is certainly responsible for the development of this cultural program” (SSCAC Archives, Box 1, Folder 16¹). The Center appealed to the need for a space for cultural production in order to convince community members to contribute to the Center financially. After the campaign's completion, the SSCAC’s new director David Ross considered the fundraiser

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, all archive information is cited by archive name, box number, and folder number.

a success, stating that fundraising “proved conclusively that a direct appeal for contributions thru [sic] a well-organized drive would bring in several thousands of dollars added revenue each year” (SSCAC Archives, Box 2, Folder 18).

The SSCAC was well aware of its importance as a tool of helping blacks within their community learn and cultivate art. In a brochure from 1945, the Center advertised its importance as an intellectual space, stating:

Art classes may be used as a means of bringing individuals together through a channel of well-organized art programs, designed to stimulate creative thinking into recreational activity. But, more important, those who seek art as a hobby and a recreation become so influenced because of the experience that not only does their sense of values towards art alone increase, but, in addition, their approach toward creative thinking is shown in an improved pattern of living. (SSCAC Archives, Box 2, Folder 18)

The importance of what the Center was doing for the community was not lost upon the Center. Those who worked at the SSCAC knew its importance in cultivating artists in young students and, possibly more importantly, improving the lives of those in Bronzeville. Art was important, but exposing the community to artistic thinking was even more crucial.

In 1946, David Ross took over as the Director of the SSCAC. Ross was a forward-thinking director who had grandiose plans for the Center. In his Director's Report for that year, Ross stated that he accepted the position as director due to his “fundamental interest and awareness of the vital need for a true Negro art center in America” (SSCAC Archives, Box 2, Folder 18). He admired the Art Center's community support, and the ability of those involved to gain backing from every corner of Bronzeville. Ross acknowledged the wonderful connection that the SSCAC had with the

community, stating, “It has been with the support of those of the community who recognized the cultural advantages and service which the Art Center affords, that the institution has thrived” (SSCAC Archives, Box 2, Folder 18). Ross knew that community development through the arts was the only way that the SSCAC would be able to stay afloat.

Ross understood how non-profit institutions worked, explaining the SSCAC’s financial issues by saying, “Ways and means of obtaining revenue is a problem that faces every institution which operates with contributions, memberships, and minor promotions as the basic sources of revenue” (SSCAC Archives, Box 2, Folder 18). He understood the issues surrounding funding at the Center, but he also knew that the SSCAC was not alone in its money issues, and that much could be accomplished in spite of financial problems. Ross desired to expand the SSCAC's influence in Bronzeville, while emphasizing the Center's significance as the only type of Art Center of its kind to establish its importance as a cultural institution. Ross’ optimism was a welcomed blessing to the Center. However, the SSCAC had already fallen on hard times, and Ross knew something needed to happen in order to bring the Center back into the eyes of the public.

Ross was interested in attempting to start up an accredited art school at the SSCAC for black students. They wanted to create a place similar to the School at the Art Institute of Chicago, which would cater to the needs of black students in the community. Black students were allowed to go the Art Institute of Chicago, however it was not at the same capacity as whites because tuition was still extremely expensive and the journey to the Art Institute was often a hefty commute of four miles or more. Students at the

SSCAC's proposed art school would attend classes there for two years, and the school had emphases in both 2D and 3D, gaining an associate's degree.

The SSCAC's art school succeeded and existed for one semester, before the program fell apart due to low enrollment. The creation of the Chicago Transit Authority in 1947 linked much of Chicago together by creating a centralized group to run public transportation, which combined the multiple separately owned 'L' lines (Chicago Transit Authority, 1967). This gave greater ability for those on the South Side to reach places such as the Art Institute of Chicago through a much more affordable rate and a connected train line. The SSCAC's school had a hard time competing with the School of The Art Institute, where many of the artists who taught there had also attended. Despite some community support, the program became unsustainable. By 1948, a letter from Ross to a colleague explained how he loaned \$100 to the SSCAC for the establishment of their art school, and, when Ross went to leave the Center and after the art school had failed, the Board of Directors took a long time repaying his loan.

In 1948, the SSCAC had fallen into even more difficult circumstances. The Center sent out letters to local black businesses around Bronzeville and throughout the South Side asking for in-kind donations to help remodel the interior of the Art Center, specifically donated rugs (SSCAC Archives, Box 2, Folder 26). It is unknown how many of these types of letters went out, and if any of them received responses. The letters do, however, suggest that the SSCAC could not afford the rugs or a building remodel on their own, and were asking charitably for them as a way to cut costs.

In 1949, another membership drive took place, hoping to gain new, sustained

membership for the Center. The success of this drive is unknown. On September 24, 1949, Margaret Burroughs (née Goss) was elected President of the Board of the South Side Community Art Center (“Pilot”, 1949). Burroughs' presence at the Center and her ability and drive helped give her control over the board, and demonstrated a new ability for leadership in the artist class. Her addition as the President of the Board helped expand the reach that artists had in the internal workings of the Art Center, which was, until this point, controlled by the black middle class. The Center's waning “new” factor, plus their financial instability, caused many middle class African-Americans to lose interest, leaving control of the Center to the artists and writers who had invested in the Center from the beginning. This was a positive shift for the artists, many of whom had been shut out of decision-making processes since the SSCAC's inception.

1954-1959 – THE 1950s

During the second half of the 1950s, a shift is seen in the language found in internal documents within the SSCAC. The entire staff had become volunteer only to keep costs as low as possible (SSCAC Archives, Box 3, Folder 2). On March 23, 1954, a form letter from David Ross was mailed to potential donors of the Art Center, stating, “I talked with you some time ago about the Art Center, and no doubt told you that we were in the process of getting the program going again” (SSCAC Archives, Box 3, Folder 2). Ross' message stated that “the doors of the Center are now open daily for the first time in many years,” and they had recently started children's classes (SSCAC Archives, Box 3, Folder 2). The letter also indicated the Center had stopped exhibiting works of art, though exhibits were planned in the future. Another document, an undated form letter,

condemned the Board of Directors of the SSCAC for being inactive, creating a chaotic institution with no leadership (SSCAC Archives, Box 3, Folder 2). The Board had failed to meet for a quorum numerous times, often citing scheduling conflicts. The form letter suggested that so many board members were delinquent in their attendance and activity that letters were being mailed out to almost all of them, asking them to step down from their position. Both of these documents suggest that those at the SSCAC had grown complacent, and that a shift happened to shake the Center out of its current state. Both letters ask for action in order to better the SSCAC, and help return the Center to its former glory and activity level.

June 1954 saw the startup of a number of different fundraising drives for the Art Center. One of the most popular was a Pyramid Drive launched to raise \$1000 for the SSCAC's budget. The Pyramids were a female-driven program that had SSCAC-affiliated women invite other women in the community into their homes for "cake and coffee" for a \$1 donation fee ("Pyramids", 1954). The hostess would then instruct the invited women to do the same at their home, asking donations from other women. This created a pay-it-forward type of tree, where one woman would help start a chain reaction of donations through a social event. According to the *Defender*, these Pyramids were so popular with the women of Bronzeville that they continued on throughout the entire month. Women were historically the primary fundraisers for the Art Center, often creating unique ways of soliciting funds, including this Pyramid. Fundraising was a great way to involve the middle class black women who were supportive of the Center, and one that was extremely popular with women in the community. It is safe to say that

fundraising efforts such as the Pyramid Drive were ways that helped keep the Art Center viable during its hardest years.

By 1957, a letter from Helen Eichelberger stated that, “we are quite proud of the progress we have made in our last two years” (SSCAC Archives, Box 3, Folder 23). Indeed, the turnaround of the Center from 1954 to 1957 was admirable, though not completely adequate. The Center was determined to gain 500 new members by June 15, with the *Defender* praising the Center, stating, “the record definitely establishes that the center has successfully projected its program throughout the community” (“Drive”, 1957). A junior group of teenagers was established at the Center to provide volunteer service and work during “social activities” (“Juniors”, 1956). Despite these many positive strides, however, in the President’s Monthly Report to the Board it was pointed out that artists could not be enticed into joining with the Art Center (SSCAC Archives, Box 3, Folder 23). Even though it was an “art center,” the SSCAC could not keep artists in the Center.

In 1958 and 1959, two ambitious fundraising events took place. The 1958 drive was to raise \$25,000 for the Center, which was a daunting task. By 1959, Wilhelmina Blanks had organized a collectors’ benefit at the Center. Blanks, a longtime member of the SSCAC, spoke candidly with the *Chicago Defender* about the Center’s financial need.

Blanks pointed out that:

Our center has experienced long years of successful operation and this has been possible only because our friends maintain this cultural asset in our community. But as we enter the 1959-1960 season, we find that we are in a particularly difficult financial strain...It is crucially important that the community rally to our support at this time. The very existence of the center is at stake. (“Benefit”, 1959)

Blanks' honesty about the need of the Center opened the door for an opinion piece by Margaret Burroughs, over a decade after she had been voted President of the Board. This statement lambasted the South Side community that had, in her mind, a false belief in culture that never translated into action. Burroughs "seriously question if our Negro intellectuals have any real concern for the preservation of culture in our community," as she saw the Art Center's struggle as a preventable demise that others were not helping to relieve (Burroughs, 1959). The SSCAC's "hand to mouth existence to keep the doors open" was needless in a community that believed they were so highly cultured (Burroughs, 1959). At the end of the article, she pleaded with her audience to go to the Center and help support it, saying:

Bring your children to see its exhibits. Buy tickets to its fundraising events. Remember that in the final analysis: "All else passes; art alone remains." Show that the desire for art and culture is not dead among one million bronze Chicagoans. (Burroughs, 1959)

Burroughs' plea is a call of a woman who was frustrated and sad with the state of affairs, deeply believing in a cause for which she continued to struggle.

1950-1953 – MISSING HISTORY

An observant reader will notice that my interpretation of the SSCAC's timeline contains a missing section of time. In the documentable history of the South Side Community Art Center, there is a noticeable gap. The hole in document availability runs from 1950 up through 1953, spanning four years in silence, with no recorded materials to explain this omission. In 1949, there is no evidence of the Art Center slowing down or

stopping; rather, it seems like it was going in an active and energetic direction, electing Margaret Goss Burroughs as President of the Board and moving towards a more artist-inclusive space. When documentation picks back up in 1954, however, it is obvious that the Art Center had fallen onto hard times, and that individuals were “in the process of getting the program going again” (SSCAC Archives, Box 3, Folder 2). So, what happened in the interim? Why did the SSCAC stop producing documents? What may we learn from this silence?

Historic Imagination and the Historian

In Saidiya Hartman’s *Lose Your Mother* (2007), the author described her experience digging into an archive and hoping to find information on black slave women.

When she realized there was no information in these archives, she wrote:

My graduate training hadn’t prepared me to tell the stories of those who had left no record of their lives... I was determined to fill in the blank spaces of the historical record and to represent the lives of those deemed unworthy of remembering, but how does one write a story about an encounter with nothing? (p. 15)

Hartman’s experience with silence in the archives is similar to what I found when I delved into researching the SSCAC. As much as I want to fill this thesis with a historical account of the Art Center through documents I have found, instead, there occurs a deafening silence and lack of information other than conjecture and repeated stories. Like Hartman, I found myself questioning how to really understand the meaning of an empty or incomplete archive.

Many of the details surrounding the SSCAC’s harder years are missing from formal archives. As an institution continually funded through generous support, in-kind

donations, and volunteerism, records that would help give a broader picture of the Art Center have disappeared into the void of time. Its history is embedded into the fabric of Chicago's South Side, but is missing the tangible details that historians desire. All that can be found about the Art Center between 1950 and 1953 is conjecture and large phrases that hint at a past without tangible details. This means that much of the missing links between documented incidents in this investigation and, specifically, the gap between 1950 and 1953, have been filled through thoughtful yet grounded historic imagination.

No matter the subject, a historian often has to make leaps of judgment, assuming things happened a certain way based on their evidence. At few times there are “right” answers when it comes to interpreting history. However, some historical interpretations are more plausible and supportable than others. Definitive or “objective” history does not exist; it is up to the historian to put forth a likely interpretation of what could have occurred (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). History is interpretative, and bends to the individual writing it. One person’s “fact” can be another person’s support against a position in history.

History also reflects the time period wherein it was written, at times more than the period that it discusses. When investigating events in a time that is between 55-75 years past, I am, as the historian, taking theory that was in its infancy during this time and using it to analyze what happened at the Art Center. I take my cultural assumptions as a person in the present and apply them to the past, directly altering how things are interpreted historically. Despite this condition seeming like a weakness in attempting to find the “real” history, in reality, reflective ambiguity is a strength in conducting historical

interpretation. Addressing this notion, Bolin (2009) stated, “well-supported speculations and imaginations can be useful devices to assist one in initiating intriguing and significant explorations and readings of the past” (p. 120).

For this investigation, I filled the undocumented voids within the SSCAC's history with historically supportable pieces of information to craft a plausible explanation of ebbs and flows of documents about the Art Center. By looking at the history of Chicago and the larger history of the United States, I found pieces of history that help to link together the known and the unknown in the SSCAC's records. These historical moments, usually involving the larger culture of the US, helped to establish a variety of interpretations regarding the SSCAC, especially in the “silent” years of 1950-1953.

History is a complicated expression of zeitgeist, of both the subject's time and the era of the historian. This mysterious gap of information about the SSCAC may have well been caused for many reasons, all of which can be argued. However, as a researcher, I attempted to weave together a history of the Art Center that makes the most sense by investigating critical race theory, feminism, and the actual evidence that I do have, paired with overarching themes and narratives. In response, what I have put together are two plausible interpretations regarding the lack of data available about the SSCAC, and each of these interpretations give what I believe to be a strong case explaining and navigating this lack of physical evidence about the Art Center in the years 1950-1953.

SILENCE ABOUT THE SSCAC, 1950-1953

McCarthyism

A likely factor leading to the missing history of the South Side Community Art Center is Senator Joseph McCarthy's campaign against communism, known as either McCarthyism or the Red Scare. In early 1950, freshman Senator Joseph McCarthy claimed that he knew the identities of a large number of communists working for the government (Schrecker, 2006). Years of anti-communist sentiment, gaining momentum in light of the communist victory in the Chinese Civil War, the increasing threat of Europe's Iron Curtain, and the arrest of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, had turned public sentiment conservative and staunchly against radicals or communist sympathizers (Schrecker, 2006). McCarthy's claims came at a precise time to create the Red Scare, spreading fear of communist spies or the threat of treason throughout the country.

Individuals connected to communist or far-left leaning organizations were ostracized out of fear that the sentiment would tie back to others. Artist organizations removed from their rolls many of the artists they formerly associated with. According to Schrecker (2006), "because communism had appealed to artists, intellectuals, and other middle-class professionals, McCarthyism drew its most prominent victims from those fields" (p. 379). The appeal of communism made it proliferate throughout the 1930s and 1940s as a political party interested in labor equality and civil rights for African-Americans (Schrecker, 2006). The Red Scare officially snuffed out the great strides made towards civil rights by 1930s radical groups. Because of the link between communist popular front movements and civil rights, many advancements made during the early part

of the century were stifled or eliminated through anti-Communist sentiment and activities.

Due to its ties to the New Deal, which many people believed was a communist undertaking in and of itself, ties to black radical organizations, and the artists themselves having communist ties, the SSCAC was a prime target when the Red Scare started to take hold. In an effort to mitigate the prosecution of the Center and face closure, those in charge of the SSCAC decided to cut ties with any artists who had political or social ties to Communist Parties. This alienated from the SSCAC a great number of the artists and community organizers that helped to shape the Center. Many original founders of the SSCAC were associated with popular front movements and communist organizations, and a large number of meetings held at the SSCAC were leftist-leaning or communist groups. By disavowing their link with communist organizations, the SSCAC lost a significant number of its core founding artist members.

One of the people removed during this communist purging of the SSCAC was Margaret Burroughs, the newly elected President of the Board. It is unknown if she was forced to step down from the Center through organizational pressure or if she stepped down willingly, but Burroughs retired from her position shortly after being elected to it. Burroughs had known ties to the Communist Party, was an outspoken Leftist activist, and was a candid speaker against the black middle class controlling the SSCAC. Burroughs' ties to the Communist Party, however, did not falter. She invited blacklisted singer Paul Robeson to the Art Center in 1952, securing her ties to other American communists (Mullen, 1999). By 1953, Burroughs left Chicago altogether, spending time with former

SSCAC artist Elizabeth Catlett in Mexico City. Mexico City's strong ties to the Communist Party, including Diego Rivera's artistic influence and harboring Leon Trotsky until his assassination, made it a safe haven for American communists fleeing McCarthyism. Many black Chicago artists, including Charles White, Hale Woodruff, John Wilson, and Lawrence Jones studied at the Taller de Grafica Popular, a printmaking collective based in Mexico City (Mullen, 1999). Mexican influences became apparent in the work of Burroughs, Catlett, and others who spent time as ex-pats in Mexico.

It is not surprising that the SSCAC later on had a hard time holding onto local artists in the community. Those who ran the organization forced many of the founding artists out of the space, and soon others realized that the sentiment was that they were not welcome. By attempting to hold conservative values, the SSCAC alienated a large section of their population, specifically those who were at the bottom of the Center's social strata, and were the most willing to come to their aid. Margaret Burroughs never abandoned the Center; she championed it throughout her long lifetime. However, the effects of the Red Scare on the institution left scars that were hard to fight off throughout the remainder of the 1950s.

McCarthy's influence and fear-mongering ended in 1954, when McCarthy was brought to trial in the Army-McCarthy hearings, which were covered on live television and thus allowed the entire Nation to watch his undoing. By this time McCarthy's Red Scare had lost favor and McCarthy's support dwindled. Those who had been persecuted were able to re-emerge without the fear that had hounded them for many years. It seems plausible that 1954 is when the documentable history of the SSCAC resurged, and the

Center started “going again.” As the strong intensity Red Scare subsided, those persecuted were able to return to their positions without fear, and places such as the South Side Community Art Center benefitted from their revitalized presence and activity.

Women’s History

There is another, more nuanced factor that may account for the “missing history” of the South Side Community Art Center. Three women, Fern Gayden, Wilamina Blanks, and Grace Thompson Leaming, purportedly supported the Center almost exclusively during the early 1950s. These three women were all active members of the SSCAC during and after this period and, according to many of the secondary sources found, were the ones most keenly active in keeping the Art Center alive. According to Knupfer (2006), who also notes Margaret Burroughs’ and Ida Mae Cress’ importance to the Center, “despite the neighborhood’s poverty, the SSCAC was able to remain a vibrant institution through the 1950s because of the perseverance and organizational skills of Wilhemina Blanks, Fern Gayden, Ida Mae Cress, Grace Thompson, Margaret Goss Burroughs, and many other women” (p. 71). These women, among others, are the seeming primary reason that the Center lasted through this tumultuous period and, consequently, are why the Art Center continues today.

The documentary evidence of women are often difficult, and at times impossible, to find. This may be due to the fact that these women did not have the support needed to document their own histories. Patricia Hill Collins (2009), arguing the difficulty of retracing women’s history, stated that “reclaiming Black women's ideas involves discovering, reinterpreting, and, in many cases, analyzing for the first time the works of

individual U.S. Black women thinkers who were so extraordinary that they did not manage to have their ideas preserved” (p. 16). Women often do not leave behind the same records as their male counterparts, largely due to the fact that they were simply too busy to stop and archive related information and their accomplishments. Blanks, Gayden and Leaming were all women who worked in the community and were involved in multiple organizations, not just the Art Center. It would not have been feasible for them to pause, sit down, and write their own histories, especially during a life-or-death period for the Art Center. It is unknown who was the Director at this time, and any information from them has yet to be found.

Women have always stood as the backbone of the South Side Community Art Center. Since its founding, women have taken on leadership roles to get the Center off of the ground, often staying in support roles with an eye towards community involvement. Women were the individuals organizing fundraising events, including the Mile of Dimes, organized by schoolteacher Ethel Mae Nolan and enacted almost exclusively by young women. This is true for the coffee and cake Pyramids held years later (Knupfer, 2006). Women involved in the SSCAC activated other women in their social circles, and many of the teachers at the SSCAC were young women. Middle class women saw the Art Center as a cause they could get behind, and often were some of the biggest supporters of the Center, even if not those carrying out in leading roles (Knupfer, 2006). One long-term member of the SSCAC, Thelma Kirkpatrick Wheaton, a local social worker, was a proud volunteer of the Center. She defined her own type of volunteerism, saying that “volunteerism is the commitment to help one’s fellow man, to become increasingly

involved, to use whatever talent or ability one has. It is truly a rewarding experience of giving and receiving” (Thelma Kirkpatrick Wheaton Papers, Box 3). In one of Wheaton’s kept Digests, an underlined section reflected similar values, stating, “my own philosophy on such matters is quite simple: whatever is worthwhile is worth working, striving, sacrificing, and struggling for” (Bunche, 1949). Women surrounding the Art Center were willing to sacrifice whatever it took to keep important locations such as the SSCAC afloat, even if it meant much hard work with little personal benefit. It is not surprising, then, that when the SSCAC went through one of its toughest periods, it was the women who stuck around to direct and assist the Center during this time.

Even in light of this, however, there is a lack of information about women at the SSCAC in general. The first three directors, if not more, were men. Men had most control over the Board of Directors, and even most of the well-known artists out of the Center were male. Female voices, though not completely absent from the SSCAC’s early years, were lessened considerably. Women are often conditioned to hide their accomplishments, and are often not seen as legitimate even when they do want their work valued (Collins, 2009). Though there might have been large numbers of women working at the SSCAC, information about what they were doing is lost to time, other than a handful of names that persisted throughout a number of years. Wilhelmina Blanks, Fern Gayden, and Grace Thompson Leaming are some of those women.

In many secondary sources, Blanks, Gayden, and Leaming are listed as the three women that kept the Center together during the 1950s. These individuals were all middle class working women attempting to keep the SSCAC afloat by themselves during the

Center's hardest time up to that point. Wilhelmina Blanks was employed as a social worker on the South Side, and Fern Gayden worked for multiple newspapers as a writer and also as a caseworker (Schlabach, 2013). All three women were also heavily involved with social politics and church organizations throughout the South Side, and were known community leaders.

It has been said that Blanks, Gayden, and Leaming gave their own money to the Center to keep the lights on and pay the bills (Knupfer, 2006; Schlabach, 2013). These women were so dedicated to the Center that they used their own funds to pay electricity and heating bills, rather than allowing the facility to close when little money was available. Eventually, they were also the ones who decided to mortgage the building, in order to keep the Center afloat during its roughest period (Knupfer, 2006). This decision must have been extremely difficult and not taken lightly. The Center had been purchased during its founding and belonged to the community since its inception. Mortgaging the building was likely only done out of desperation to keep the doors of the SSCAC open as long as possible. Though it is known that the building was mortgaged, there are no documents explaining the mortgaging of the Center. It is likely, however, that the Center was not receiving visitors or substantial donations during this time, and might only been open for short hours each week. What is known, however, is that the Art Center had previously prided itself on its purchased status. The mortgage had to be a last resort in order to keep the Center open through a rough period, and was a difficult decision that these women made, rather than closing the doors of the SSCAC.

Despite a paucity of documents, what is known is that Wilhelmina Blanks, Fern

Gayden, and Grace Thompson Leaming continued to work for the SSCAC even after this tumultuous period. Blanks served in multiple roles at the Art Center, including secretary and as a member of the Board of Directors. She was one of the organizing forces that helped create successful fundraising campaigns for the Center. Fern Gayden became President of the Board in 1960, and remained President for ten years, dedicating much of her time and effort to rebuilding the Center during the 1960s. She was later the Board's correspondence secretary, working on a Board comprised of other women, such as Thelma Kirkpatrick Wheaton, Margaret Burroughs, Frances Minor, and Susan Woodson. Grace Thompson Leaming became Treasurer of the Board, working at the Center for many years. These women were continuously dedicated to the SSCAC. Even during its toughest period, they made the hardest decisions for it, and continued on to keep the Center afloat during the entirety of their lifetimes.

ON MISSING HISTORY

Both McCarthyism and an understanding of issues regarding women's history are ways of explaining the missing information pertaining to the SSCAC between 1950 and 1953. Both theoretical lenses help provide possibilities regarding why documents cannot be found, and both are larger issues that may help us to interpret more fully this specific incident in question. There are multiple interpretations surrounding the reason these pieces from the past are missing from the archives, and these are only two that could be identified from multiple possibilities. This missing information could, for argument's sake, be hiding in a box in someone's attic, and contain documents that help explain the history during these years in more specific ways. However, both of the arguments put

forward here are grounded in the understanding of the Center, its history, and its experiences during a particular moment in time. Though other arguments could explain this missing history, I believe that the impact of McCarthyism and the phenomenon of missing women's history in general provide well-grounded theoretical possibilities regarding what may have happened during this missing section of the Center's existence, and help us to better understand the issues faced by the SSCAC during this difficult period. By using these interpretations, we can better understand why this information may be missing and also put the SSCAC into social and historical contexts that embrace conditions far beyond the South Side of Chicago.

CONCLUSION OF CHAPTER FIVE

This chapter investigated the history of the South Side Community Art Center between 1942 and 1959. After the removal of funds at the end of the Works Progress Administration, the Center floundered, while attempting to find a new funding source to pay for educators, exhibitions, and staff. The Art Center attempted to reach out to the community that helped found the Center, and began to create funding sources throughout the South Side. However, by 1954 the Center was in dire straits, removing all of the Board of Directors and attempting to re-establish itself within the community. The SSCAC spent the rest of the decade working towards financial independence.

During the course of this investigation, archival information between 1950 and 1953 could not be found. This silence in information created a space for me to explore the reasons why this silence existed through historic imagination. I hypothesized two probable reasons why information might not be available during this period. The first

hypothesis was that the gap of information corresponds to the second Red Scare. This forced many of the individuals who founded the Center, many of whom were outspoken communists, to stop their association with the SSCAC. Without those individuals helping run the Center, much of the structure of the Art Center faulted, creating a gap in archival information. I also hypothesized that the second probable cause for this lack of data could be due to black women's history being so hard to find. The three women that have been recorded as the women who kept the Center together were all women with families, full-time jobs, and other commitments. It is not surprising, then, that these women did not have time to keep documentable information for an archive. It is plausible that this gap in information is due to the fact that women's histories often do not get recorded.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study explored a period of missing history for the South Side Community Art Center from 1942-1959, a moment of time that has been undocumented by historians. Its purpose was to attempt to analyze the history of the Art Center and bring it into prominence in art education, in order to gain a greater understanding of black art educators. Through my exploration of Chicago archives, visiting the Center, and a deep understanding of issues regarding studying black art institutions, I have uncovered a piece of rich history in the Art Center that needs to be interpreted through art education in order for the field to benefit from its long and storied history.

The South Side Community Art Center still stands in its 1890s brownstone at 3831 South Michigan Avenue. Years of wear and tear differentiate it today from the photographs of the Center from the 1940s or 1970s, but the building is instantly recognizable on its street. The interior of the building is in need of repair, and there are hundreds of holes pockmarking the main floor exhibition space, recounting the numerous exhibits held within its walls. Within these exhibition spaces, however, there is recognition of the past, and the continuity into the future. The building became a Chicago Landmark in 1994, and is now designated an unchanging marker of Bronzeville. Seventy-five years after its founding, the Art Center continues to fill a void in the representation of black artists within the Chicago area. The SSCAC remains a testament to the strength of African-American art on the South Side.

CENTRAL RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this investigation was to explore the following questions: How did the South Side Community Art Center manage to continue as an institution in the 1950s after funds from the Federal Art Project were pulled in 1943? How did the community around the SSCAC function to help the Center continue?

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

An observant reader will notice that the central research question that drove this research is not completely reflective of the data presented in the thesis. This is due to the often non-linear path of historical research, which often takes unexpected twists and turns. These turns in trajectory often leads to much more fruitful understandings of history, even if they are not where the investigation began. Bolin (2013) explained that “there are times when enigmatic obstacles and seeming dead ends rise up to challenge the historian; thus possible alternative investigative directions, ideas, or approaches must be considered” (p. 152). Historic research may seem like a straight-forward methodology, but oftentimes becomes snared and redirected through the investigative process. This leads to different interpretations and changes in understanding, leading to different, but oftentimes more fruitful, results.

I began this thesis interested in how the community rallied around the Art Center, keeping it afloat for so many years while other similar institutions perished. During the course of my investigation, however, I found that, rather than the community in general, a handful of women were the individuals involved in keeping the Center together during its toughest times. Secondly, I found that what was missing from the archived information

was actually more compelling to me than the information that was available to me. Thus, my thesis turned towards historic imagination, focusing more heavily on the possibilities of why certain information is difficult to find, rather than the information that is there.

I would also like the reader to note that this thesis began to take its own path over the course of the year's writing process. Theses come into being gradually over time, and change the writer as much as the thesis physically changes. Much of this change within this thesis is due to taking courses in African-American studies at The University of Texas at Austin while in the middle of the writing process. While I gained a greater understanding of black studies, I also began to gain greater insight into my work, and realized that the direction of this thesis had to accurately reflect the real condition of the individuals involved. This means that the question formulated at the beginning of this investigation did not have an understanding of the condition of black women, which became a large part of this thesis' final form. Because of this growth, the thesis' actual trajectory has ended up being reflective of my current understanding, rather than any notions I had prior.

This study employed historical methodology paired with a lens crafted from feminist, black studies, and black feminist theories to assist in my research into the missing history of the South Side Community Art Center. I combined archived materials from multiple Chicago archives to investigate a missing moment of history that had not been researched by historians of art education. Through this research, I identified a silence of voices within the archived information. With an overarching understanding of historical issues present during this time period, specifically during the Red Scare and an

understanding of the complicated nature of recounting histories of black women, I identified two possible reasons for why there is a hole in the recorded events at the Art Center during a specific moment in time, and why archival information about the Center at this time may not be accessible. While doing this research, I came across multiple larger issues that occur writing histories of marginalized communities that highlight the difficulties in this line of research. These are discussed as follows.

Finding Archival Information

Saidiya Hartman (2007), while attempting to research the Ghanaian slave trade, visited Cape Coast Castle, hoping to learn more information by visiting the physical site of some of the traumatic history of the slave trade. When describing her experiences, she stated, “I closed my eyes and strained to hear the groans and cries that once echoed in the dungeon, but the space was mute... I didn’t hear a peep” (Hartman, 2007, p. 116). Hartman’s description of her desire to hear the voices in the spaces where she put herself mirror my own desire and subsequent disappointment when I stepped into the South Side Community Art Center for the first time. I had hoped to see and hear the information I was researching, as if these voices would resound in the spaces around me. This was not the case.

When I mentioned my topic of research to a librarian at the Chicago History Museum, she stated, “Those groups...were big on doing the stuff.” She was referring to the fact that there is little archival information for me to sort through to find information about the Art Center, and she was correct. There are a host of factors that could determine the lack of information I found in the archives. However, I believe that a lack of available

information from this time period has to do with the nature of the SSCAC and how, likely, those keeping the Center afloat during tumultuous periods did not have time to properly archive pertinent materials for posterity. Later, all the information on the SSCAC became scattered throughout Chicago, failing to be centralized as one individual gave an archive to a library, and another to a museum. Other small, local institutions that are plagued by periods of struggle have similar issues in attempting to recount their histories. These hardships, however common, speak to the fact that these histories need to be researched by someone, in order to gain what we can from the plethora of data that might be scattered in these various locations. This research is arduous and takes a lot of time, but the ability to piece together a semblance of a narrative from multiple locations creates a rewarding and rich narrative.

Recounting Black Women's Histories

By the time I started researching the SSCAC, it was a much-stated, though never cited, fact that the Art Center was saved by Fern Gayden, Wilhelmina Blanks, and Grace Thompson Leaming, who had kept the doors of the Art Center from shutting during its hardest period by giving their own money to pay bills. It was known that the building had to be mortgaged by these women. In my search of limited archival information for this thesis, nothing noted the mortgaging of the facility, how much money each of these women gave from their own pockets, their official positions during the early 1950s within the Art Center, or how they turned the Center around during this difficult time. However, the fact that they *did so* hung in the air. Despite not having archived material stating that these women aided the Center, it is still a known fact that they were the only ones willing

to make the tough decisions. All I could work from was the fact that others recorded it was those women who aided the Center.

Histories of women, and especially black women, are extremely difficult to recount, as their lives have often been obscured in shadow by patriarchal and racist ideas. Their histories are seen many times as “less important” and as such they receive little attention. I believe that these women were the only ones present to make these tough decisions, but did not have the time or situation to compose and keep archived material about their struggles. As such, all we are left to consider is this legacy of an idea that has been recounted time and time again, without documented corroboration.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was focused on the first 20 years of the Art Center’s existence, and the understanding that we can gain from the Center’s formative years. However, this study has not begun to scratch the surface of what the Art Center could inform us about the history of art education, especially for marginalized communities. In 2015, the South Side Community Art Center celebrates its 75th anniversary as an institution. There is still more research that can be conducted about the Center’s history, as this study did not even touch in any significant way over a third of its existence as an institution. There was a strong resurgence of interest in the Center during the 1960s with the momentum gained through the Civil Rights movement. Understanding the ebbs and flows of the Art Center’s history could help give us vital information on community cultural buy-in and how arts facilities can survive even periods of turmoil. A study on the Art Center’s present, and how it navigates itself in spaces focusing on the future and the past, would

also be a valuable topic to explore. Doing so would provide the field a portrait of the Center that could detail an issue faced by many aging institutions.

Another possible research topic would be researching the life of Dr. Margaret Burroughs, who was both a largely important member of the community and also an extremely important black art educator. Dr. Burroughs' long life was dedicated to the Art Center, to creating spaces for black artists, and for education. We as a field do not know enough about historic art educators of color, and especially women of color. Dr. Burroughs spent her entire 97 years of life as an advocate for black art and artists on the South Side and throughout the world. Researching the lives of dedicated and multifaceted women such as Dr. Burroughs and their impact within their communities on the importance of art would open up a dialogue in our field about who we value in our histories and who is currently removed from consideration through the use of a master narrative.

As the years go on, we have been losing the voices of those involved with the Art Center during its formative years. A timely oral history project focused on those involved at the Art Center and possibly even their children and friends could weave together a wonderful and vibrant picture of the SSCAC that is slowly being lost to the passage of time. The children of those involved may give us detailed pictures into the lives of those who dedicated themselves to supporting black art, and give us glimpses into what the Art Center was like years ago. These types of firsthand accounts would be invaluable in the years ahead, in order to more fully understand the impact of the SSCAC on its community members.

Lastly, I encourage those interested in institutions such as the South Side Community Art Center to research spaces and individuals who created and supported art and art education for marginalized individuals. The field of art education has not yet unbound itself from its history so deeply steeped in the politics of wealthy, white men. Counter-narratives, such as an understanding of the existence of the SSCAC, start to complicate the linear master narrative that has built up as “the” history of art education. Black artists did not start creating art during the Civil Rights movement, and black art educators should not be first brought up when we discuss multiculturalism. By complicating the master narrative, we break apart the linear history that we know, and begin to recognize gaps in the narrative of our history. We begin to see that these spaces are filled by women, people of color, disabled individuals, LGBT populations, and those of lower socio-economic status. As this happens, a vast range of people and their voices and actions are reflected in the history of art education, and we begin to create a richer narrative of what our history is, without silencing the voices of those who worked in dedicated fashion in the margins.

CONCLUSION

What began as a serendipitous finding of a six paragraph description on a Chicago art center in Mavigliano and Lawson’s (1990) *The Federal Art Project in Illinois* turned into a project that transformed how I understand the entire field of art education and my own place within it. When I first started my investigation, I realized how little information was available about this historic institution. I recognized I had to make a change in the field of art education to include voices of those outside the standard

understanding of history, and I now understand that this will be a life-long goal for myself and for the field.

Despite the field of art education's sore lack of change in the master narrative over its lengthy history, change is happening, slowly yet surely. This thesis is a part of that change, helping create a narrative surrounding art education that encourages and assists everyone who works towards helping to make art accessible see themselves reflected in its history. By creating a space to discuss a fraction of the history of the South Side Community Art Center, we begin to create a space for other much needed counter-narratives in history.

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