

Building Recovery Capital:
The Role of Cooperative Behavior in a Community Support Institution

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Abstract

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Contemporary scholars and addiction professionals agree that person- and community-centered approaches to recovery from substance misuse are most effective in establishing sustainable change. Recovery Capital is one concept that helps us understand the conglomeration of individual, family, and community resources that contribute to a person's successful path toward recovery. The purpose of this study is to understand how the Friendship Cafe functions as a community support institution for recovery. More specifically, it focuses on one essential aspect of a recovering individual's social reintegration process: the need to become cooperative members of a community (Best and Laudet, 2010). This study considers if cooperative behavior is intentionally promoted within the Friendship Cafe, and what it looks like in this setting. More specifically, this paper seeks to understand how rules and norms of cooperation were communicated through the Cafe's formal structures and activities and informal interactions among members and staff. During a three month ethnographic study, I conducted observations and volunteered at a unique community support institution to learn more about cooperative behaviors within this community. My findings determined that acts of cooperation are manifested and enforced both by formal structures, informed by the formal and physical framework of the community support institution; and by informal interactions between community members, relying on modeling, prosocial acts of enforcement, and verbal acts of enforcement, to promote and perpetuate a culture of cooperation within this recovery community.

Introduction

I started visiting the Friendship Cafe¹ in 2017, after passing the building on my bus route every day. I had heard the cafe, located in a west coast city, was a place for people who were looking for a community to support them through their path to recovery, whether it be from substance abuse, homelessness, abuse or mental illness. I'd recently made acquaintance with a man who volunteered at the Cafe and invited me to come along. I accepted, curious about what it would be like to be a "guest" at a center for people (called 'members') in recovery. I prepared for awkward shallow conversations and standing uncomfortably at the edge of the community. Instead, I was thrust into bustle of everyday life in the Cafe. Soon I was a regular volunteer, visiting weekly on Thursday evenings to experience rich personal conversations, boisterous card games, and shared meals. I learned that many were referred to the Cafe by physicians, mental health specialists, and friends to assist in their recovery process. Most importantly, I heard many stories from members and staff about how the Cafe had changed their lives for the better.

Traditionally, substance abuse and addiction were considered isolated, behavioral challenges primarily addressed through treatment programs focused on the physical dependence on the substance and the individual's behavior. As addiction professionals develop a deeper understanding of substance abuse and addictive behavior, there has been a shift toward a broader perspective that promotes both a person- and community-centered approach to healing and recovery. White and Cloud (2008) use the concept of Recovery Capital to describe the

¹ The name of this center and the names of its members have been changed to protect the privacy of those who participated in this study.

conglomeration of personal, family and community resources necessary to initiate and sustain recovery from addiction and other substance misuse issues. The Friendship Cafe is an example of a successful community support institution whose mission is to assist in the social reintegration phase of a person's recovery from addiction or abuse.

The purpose of this study is to understand how the Friendship Cafe functions as a community support institution for recovery. More specifically, it focuses on one essential aspect of a recovering individual's social reintegration process: the need to become cooperative members of a community (Best and Laudet, 2010). I wanted to learn if cooperative behavior is intentionally promoted within the Friendship Cafe. And, if so, what does that look like? More specifically, I wanted to understand how rules and norms of cooperation were communicated through the Cafe's formal structures and activities and informal interactions among members and staff. Ultimately, I believe this information might help other community support institutions.

Theoretical Framework

Recovery Capital, Social Capital and Cooperative Behavior

As mentioned above, Recovery Capital refers to the conglomeration of personal, family and community resources necessary to initiate and sustain recovery from addiction and other substance misuse issues (White and Cloud, 2008). Personal resources include individual capabilities such as educational skills, personal values, and self-efficacy. Family resources refer to a smaller support network directly engaged in recovery efforts. Typically, this means a person's family or close friends. Community resources refer to external groups or institutions that facilitate recovery. These might include recovery centers, ministries or churches, or

industries that promote recovery. According to Cloud and Granfield (2008), an important role of recovery centers is to provide a setting for recovering addicts to re-develop and strengthen social skills for building social capital. They are places where recovering addicts can learn to function effectively as members of a social network.

While social capital theory is widely criticized for its myriad definitions and conceptualizations, the general consensus is that social capital refers to social relationships that have productive benefits (Putnam, 1995). Both addiction professionals and scholars argue that social capital is a key component of Recovery Capital in two key ways.

First, the lack of support is a significant barrier to recovery. It is not uncommon for addicts to enter recovery without personal support resources such as family or financial support. Individuals deprived of these assets must rely more heavily on the kind of social capital provided by community support institutions such as recovery centers (Adler and Kwon, 2002). Social support networks have been linked to better physical and mental health, an improved ability to cope with stress or illness, fewer instances of violent crimes, and a higher likelihood of recovery from addiction (Best and Laudet, 2010; Yates, 2015). In other words, addicts working toward recovery without the support of the kinds of social networks -- such as those provided by community supports institutions such as recovery centers -- are at a significant disadvantage.

Second, in order to reintegrate successfully into a broader community, a recovering addict needs the skills to develop and sustain social relationships -- skills that may have been lost during the downward spiral of addiction. Community support institutions can provide a setting for recovering addicts to re-learn, develop and practice social skills for building social capital. In this context, "social capital" does not just refer to building social resources; it involves

developing the social skills needed to establish a position in community life through involvement in community resources and programs (Cloud and Granfield, 2008; White and Cloud, 2008).

In summary, community support institutions contribute to Recovery Capital by addressing a number of problems that have served as barriers to recovery, such as a lack of motivation to address substance abuse or unhealthy habits, emotional distress, and isolation (Moore and Coyhis 2010; White and Cloud, 2008). In fact, addiction professionals recommend that people without individual or family resources be engaged with “aggressive programs of community outreach” to combat the absence of hope, connectedness, and lack of personal fulfillment (White and Cloud, 2008). Addressing these behavioral and psychological issues through the support of community resources, combined with the building of social skills, leads to a stronger likelihood of successful and sustained recovery.

Cooperative Behaviors

One of these social skills, particularly relevant to the building of social capital is *cooperative behavior*. In fact, Woolcock (2001) argued that social capital is manifested through cooperative social relations and behaviors that lead to mutual benefit. Cooperation allows groups to achieve goals and maintain internal cohesion (Coleman, 1994; Ellickson, 1991). One way to assess the presence of social capital is by observing and identifying the shared rules and norms that promote cooperation in a social group. Rules and norms are generally defined as value-based expectations that are socially enforced within a community or group -- both explicitly and implicitly. The presence of shared rules and norms is a defining feature of a community; they are an essential component that makes a group “more than just the sum of its

individual members” (Horne, 2003). They manifest themselves as formal and informal patterns of communication and social behavior.

How does one learn the rules and norms of a new group, and integrate successfully into the community? Some expectations and behaviors are explicitly stated, either through the general structure of the community or through written or verbalized rules and instructions. Others are modeled informally through behaviors among staff and community members, and therefore observed by newcomers. A study on social capital in the workplace showed that new employees were most successfully integrated into their new professional community when coworkers and their managers shared the responsibility of teaching both the formal expectations and the unwritten rules and norms of the culture (Korte and Lin, 2012).

More specifically, how is the expectation of cooperation communicated with members of a community? Promoting cooperation is a communication process, involving both nonverbal and verbal cues. Some scholars, for example, characterize cooperative behaviors as those related to virtues like honesty, the keeping of commitments, reliable performance of duties, and reciprocity within the group (Fukuyama, 2001; Coleman, 1994; Kandori, 1992). Drawing on the literature, I have identified three distinct approaches to the promotion of cooperative behavior particularly relevant to a community or group setting like the Friendship Cafe.

Formal Structures. One way that rules associated with cooperation are communicated is through the *formal structures*. In particular, this refers to the fixed sets of rules and procedures that effectively communicate the expectations of the organization and promote certain interactions between members (Social Capital Research and Training, 2018). This may include the physical features and layout of the community space, a group website and signs displaying

rules, staff training, new member orientations, meeting formats, or regular events during which expectations for cooperative behavior are formally, officially, and explicitly presented.

Acts of Cooperation. A second way that rules and norms of cooperation are communicated within a community is through prosocial behavior; that is, manifest *acts of cooperation* among members. Focusing more specifically on a community support institution like the Friendship Cafe, the literature offers four relevant types of prosocial, cooperative behavior: 1) the performance of, or dedication to, a duty; 2) acts of altruism; 3) working together toward a common or mutual goal; and 4) acts of sharing (Bowles and Gintis, 2002; Coleman, 2001; White and Cloud 2008). When these behaviors are modeled by members of the community, norms of cooperation are also being communicated.

Acts of Enforcement. Norms are also communicated through acts of enforcement (Bouma, Bulte, and van Soest, 2008; Coleman, 1994). Within this category, one might observe both positive and negative reinforcement behaviors. Positive reinforcement acts to solidify or strengthen an individual's connection to the community by praising cooperative behavior (Fukuyama, 2001). For example, at the Cafe, members might applaud when someone helps another member with a task or duty. In contrast, if someone is engaging in behavior that does not promote cooperation or reflect the values of the community, they might be punished or called out verbally or non-verbally (frowning, head shaking) for violating a group norm. However, some studies have shown that negative enforcement designed to enforce positive norms (such as those that promote cooperation) can produce the opposite of the desired effect – that is, either alienate or drive away group members, or promote the negative enforcement of social norms more than the norms themselves (Chudek and Henrich, 2011; Leahy and Anderson, 2010). Therefore, we

could posit that a community with elements of strong social capital and with social norms that promote cooperation should not rely heavily on acts of negative enforcement.

To summarize, Recovery Capital is the sum of resources necessary to the process of recovery to addiction. One component of Recovery Capital is social capital: the development of social networks that aid in the reintegration phase of recovery. Community support institutions can provide a setting for recovering addicts to re-learn and practice social skills relevant to building social capital. One of these critical skills is cooperative behavior. This study seeks to learn more about how community support institutions, like the Friendship Cafe, successfully promote cooperation. It is hoped that the insights gained will contribute to our knowledge and understanding of Recovery Capital. So, with that in mind, I specifically looked at patterns of communication and behavior at the Friendship Cafe that indicate or encourage cooperative behavior. This study sought to answer the following questions:

- 1) What does the promotion of cooperative behaviors look like in the Friendship Cafe? More specifically, how are these behavioral rules and norms communicated through formal structures, through acts of cooperation, and through acts of enforcement within the community?
- 2) Ultimately, what can other community support institutions learn from the Friendship Cafe?

Methodology

To answer the research questions posed above, I engaged in three months of field observation at a community support institution in a large west coast city.

Site of Study

The Friendship Cafe is a center on the west coast of the United States that provides a safe and encouraging community for men and women who are working toward recovery from homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health problems. Its mission is to ground its members in their recovery journey while offering healthy meals, step programs, support groups, job training, and myriad other valuable resources that nurture human beings and create strong relationships and healthy, vibrant lifestyles. The center prides itself on concentrating not only on “survival” or “skeleton” needs, but in all of the needs that make us human. They have social programs and art programs - poetry readings, karaoke and open mic nights, pottery and painting classes - as well as fitness and health clubs - like “Sole Train,” their Brooks-sponsored running and walking clubs.

Established in 1985, the founders of the Friendship Cafe hoped to design a community support center for individuals who were not receiving the resources they needed to begin paths to recovery or sustain healthy and fulfilling lives. The Cafe’s founders still work at the cafe today as counselors and support staff, and their continued engagement with this community shows their commitment to the mission of the organization. The Friendship Cafe was selected for this study because of its longevity and success as a community support institution. According to a Cafe survey from 2014, 84% of members reported that the Friendship Cafe increased the amount of hope in their lives, and 75% reported that since being at the Cafe, they have become better advocates for themselves. Additionally, 70% of members participating in the survey reported that the Cafe has helped prevent relapse into a lifestyle with substance abuse (Friendship Cafe, 2018).

Data Collection Procedures

The field observations for this study took place over a 12-week period in 2017. I conducted observations weekly at the Friendship Cafe on Thursday evenings from 4:30pm to 6:30pm, and occasionally during an activity called Running Club on weekends. Ultimately, I conducted 30 hours of observations as a part of this study.

Since this was a casual setting, I was able to use my phone to collect most of my data. I spent my time interacting with and observing members, staff, and other volunteers throughout the entire Cafe. I took brief notes on my phone during conversations with members and if I observed an interaction or activity that seemed poignant. While this presented some challenges in capturing direct quotes from members of the Cafe, I found this to be the best note-taking strategy, as it was the less invasive than using a notepad or computer to record my data.

After each observation session, I would go home and expand upon the notes I'd written down during my time at the Cafe, adding explanations and descriptions before I forgot these details. Along with these raw observations, my field notes also included asides and commentary formed as I reread my notes and reflected on my experiences each day and drawn from my understanding of the circumstances and my knowledge of the Cafe (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007).

Data Analysis

Once my observation period was complete, I organized my field notes in Google Docs, separated by date. Taking a grounded theory approach to analyzing my data I began an open coding process to begin to organize and categorize my notes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). On the first pass of my notes I looked for anything that might be relevant to the idea of

cooperative behavior. Then, through an iterative process, using support from existing literature on cooperative behavior, I began to make more passes through my notes, ultimately coding my observations into the three general categories of cooperative behavior described in the Theoretical Framework above: observational evidence of cooperation promoted through *formal structures*; cooperation promoted through pro-social *acts of cooperative behavior*; and cooperation promoted through *acts of enforcement*. The data for these three categories were then separated into three distinct Google Docs for further analysis, leading to the identification of the sub-categories also described in the prior section. More specifically, as a result of this process, under Formal Structures I coded both physical layout of the Cafe and the official rules and policies. Under Acts of Cooperation I coded for performance of a duty, working together toward a common goal, altruism, or sharing. And, under Acts of Enforcement, I coded the presence of both positive and negative enforcement behaviors.

While many of these categories overlap in some ways, I was deliberate in remaining consistent in how I categorized my observations.

Researcher Positionality

It was generally understood by the Cafe staff and members that I was observing interactions and collecting data within the cafe. I had begun actively volunteering with the Friendship Cafe six months before I began collecting data for this study, so I was already somewhat integrated into the community. This benefited me in a number of ways: I was already familiar with many members and staff at the Cafe and my presence was familiar and unquestioned. During this time, I learned the general culture of the Cafe, developed relationships

with members and staff, and made friends. My previous integration into this space allowed me to take on a participant-observer role as a researcher as I began documenting my observations and taking field notes to launch this study. I had taken the volunteer orientation, where I learned about the Cafe and my role as a volunteer in this space, so first and foremost, I was a part of the Friendship Cafe community as a volunteer. When I arrived on Thursday afternoons, I greeted staff, played cards with members, helped decorate or prepare for parties, and participate in chores. When I had an opportunity that would not interfere with my duties as a volunteer, I'd conduct informal interviews or engage new members in conversation to learn more and add to my observations about this community.

To launch the study, I met with the Director of the Café to ask permission to conduct a study. Having developed a closer social proximity to many of the members and a solid understanding of group culture, I was able to better identify, and be more sensitive to, vulnerable aspects of the community (Lassiter 2005). There were also some drawbacks; I had to be careful to get a perspective more representative of all members and not just my “regulars.” Additionally, my personal affection for the Cafe and its members and staff have the potential for introducing bias into my observations. That said, I tried to remain mindful of this in note-taking and drawing conclusions.

Findings

Below I present my findings organized by the three general categories of cooperative behavior identified above -- Formal Structures, Acts of Cooperation, and Acts of Enforcement -- and within each section by sub-category.

Formal Structures

My data yielded a number of normative expectations related to cooperation integrated into the formal structure of the Cafe. This formal structure ranged from signage and website presence, to official programming and activities, to the physical layout of space. To start, visiting the Friendship Cafe website provides the viewer with the Cafe's mission statement, as well as requirements and expectations for members, many of which indicate an expectation of cooperative behavior, such as giving, participating, and community service (Friendship Cafe, 2018). Figure 1, below, is located on the Cafe's webpage for those who are interested in becoming members of the center. The site clearly lays out the requirements for becoming, and remaining, a Cafe member and also introduces the principles of the Cafe, which members should be prepared to uphold. The language is inclusive – note that individuals are “invited” to be a part of the community, setting a positive and inclusive tone. As is readily apparent, people who participate in the Friendship Cafe are called “members.” This label communicates not only a sense of welcoming and inclusion, but responsibility to others in the group. In other words, being a “member” of a group connotes an expectation of cooperative behavior.

We Invite You to Be Part of a Healing Community

invites men and women who want to be part of a healing recovery community to become members.

To be a member, you need to be drug and alcohol free for 24-hours, contribute to running the Cafe and to the healing of others, AND attend a **Recovery Circle**.

Membership requirements are simple:

1. Be drug and alcohol free the past 24 hours
2. Participate in a weekly **Recovery Circle** or let staff know when you must be absent
3. Participate in community service at the Café
4. Practice the guiding principles of the community

's Guiding Principles are:

1. Live Prayerfully
2. Show Respect
3. Practice Compassion
4. Give and Forgive
5. Encourage Growth

Figure 1: The Friendship Cafe Website².

Upon entering the Cafe, posters and placards on the tables and buffet inform members of community policies such as volunteering for group chores, allowing those with early Recovery Circles to get in line for food first, and composting leftover dinner. These visuals act as reminders; members are required to attend a new members' orientation, during which these normative expectations are verbally communicated by a seasoned member or staff person, and shared in a new members' orientation packet. Finally, if one requires a more direct method of communication in order to absorb and adhere to the Cafe's rules, members and staff will provide explicit statements. The following excerpt illustrates how members take on the responsibility of sharing formal rules with those who are not aware:

The gong rings out; Vanessa is ringing it standing in front of the coffee bar. Most of the members quiet down; a few of the newer looking people keep playing a board game and talking amongst themselves. A young man with a short mohawk and a Seahawks hoodie stands and waves his arm out, touching one of the talking guys on the shoulder. He says clearly

² The name of the Cafe has been omitted to protect anonymity of the center.

and at a personable volume (just for his neighbors), “hey man, just quiet for a minute, it’s announcements before dinner.” (October 12)

Orientation packets, visuals around the Cafe, and verbal reminders range from enforcing daily tasks to encouraging general expected behaviors: “Be kind and compassionate,” “Please clear your tray after dinner!” However, these formal additions have one thing in common: they all display “Do’s” rather than “Don’ts;” that is, the Cafe encouraged expected or accepted behaviors rather than warning against unacceptable behaviors, the importance of which I’ll discuss below.

The Cafe’s focus on cohesion and cooperation manifests in the physical space of the center, as well. The building’s layout was intentionally designed to represent the values of the Cafe, and to promote an inclusive and transparent environment. The front desk, buffet area, coffee station, computer station, and main floor are all intentionally designed for social connection. Upon walking through the front door, one is greeted by a full view of the entire space. The coffee bar is a full 360 degrees, so those working behind the counter can easily interact with members on all sides, which often results in special coffee requests, casual conversation as someone walks by. Members working at the computers or lounging on the couches by the bookshelves face directly into the room, with a view of the Cafe tables, the coffee bar, and beyond. Even the meeting rooms and the staff offices are included: these rooms, though they have doors to define their boundaries, still have large windows facing into the common area. Many weeks during observation, while members were in meeting rooms for their Recovery Circles or engaging with staff, I’d see someone waving to a fellow member or volunteer through the window. My meeting with the Director of the center confirmed that these windows were intended to provide a sense of transparency and openness at the Cafe. The Director stated:

“We wanted to make sure that nobody felt closed off, everything felt accessible, like as a member you have a right to the entire community.” (October 3)

This intentional physical design encourages many activities relevant to cooperation: the open and transparent layout allows for people to easily interact, share information, and directly cooperate on tasks. It also encourages social interaction, as members can always turn to make eye contact or interact with someone regardless of where they are located in the café. This provides opportunity for learning and practicing social skills. Additionally, instilling a sense of transparency and providing opportunities to socialize can build relationships and trust necessary to establish a cooperative community.

Likewise, the Cafe’s myriad and unusual schedule of activities and resources promoted cooperative behaviors and a sense of social cohesion. More traditional offerings such as job training and housing assistance are still provided in groups, or as an integral component to the Cafe’s daily activities (like barista training, or kitchen training by cooking dinner and tray running). Beyond meeting groups such as Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous, members attend and facilitate their own Recovery Circles, bringing a component of value and community to the activity. These types of meeting groups are frequently found in recovery centers, but the Friendship Cafe also is home to myriad other programs and classes: open mic nights, pottery classes, storytelling workshops, running and yoga clubs, holiday parties, poetry readings, and many more. These, a member explains, are the things beyond just survival, the things that make us human beings:

“I’m not artistic but it’s really nice to get to try to [write stories] or go to yoga. I’m doing something more than just eating and working. And I get to talk to people, catch up with them. It makes my day feel complete and it makes me feel human, to get that something extra.” (October 5)

Not only are these formal programs extremely popular, but the planning and successful implementation these activities require participation and collaboration from staff and members. Many of these programs are overseen by staff members, but ultimately run by the members who, working together, decide such details as whether to host a gallery of their finished art products, enter local races, which holidays to celebrate, how to decorate for parties, and more. Many of the more intimate activities such as Recovery Circles, or clubs that promote vulnerability and openness like poetry club or storytelling, require substantial trust and effective communication between participants to be successful.

In sum, the Formal Structures that make up the Friendship Café, ranging from physical layout, to orienting people as ‘members,’ to formal communication and signage all contribute to encourage and enhance members’ skills of cooperation. Most notably, this is done using positive framing to establish expectations and through an open physical layout that greatly facilitates the types of social interaction where members can engage in cooperative behaviors.

Acts of Cooperation

My data indicated a wealth of prosocial cooperative behaviors between community members, as well. As mentioned above, I organized these acts of cooperation into four sub-categories: performance of a duty, or dedication to a duty, within the cafe; working together toward a common or mutual goal; altruism (acting for someone else’s benefit); and acts of sharing (food, information, or resources). Each of these sub-categories accrued a number of examples, with “performance of a duty” being the most frequently occurring behavior observed; there were multiple instances of this type of cooperation recorded within each observation

period. In contrast, behaviors indicating “sharing resources, food, and information” were observed routinely, but may not have been observed or recorded during each observation session.

Performance of a duty within the café

The most commonly observed category of cooperative behaviors was the performance of a duty within the café. The space, while staffed with employees, is designed to be owned and maintained by its members, and this responsibility is readily accepted by the members I observed. Duties range from completing one’s barista training with gusto and dedication, to taking on the leadership role in one’s Recovery Circle and committing earnestly. For example, seasoned Café member Chris showed an enthusiastic commitment to his role as a barista when it was his turn to train, adding a personal flair:

Chris, a longtime member, stands behind the bar, holding up two to-go cups up above his head. “I got two lattes up here! Don’t remember who I made them for... but hurry up and get em before the foam blends together!” (October 12)

Jobs and chores within the Café were almost revered by its members. It’s important to note that members are not all required to do chores, but many avidly volunteer to take on a chore alone, or to help others complete their chores. I noticed a culture of role-modeling when it came to volunteering for, and completing, chores: seasoned members often took the lead, raising their hands quickly when it was time to volunteer, and jumping in to begin their task as soon as dinner was over, showing a commitment to the responsibility they had taken on. Throughout the evening, people would discuss which chores they hoped to sign up for that evening or mention that they had signed up for an opportunity to make coffee or snacks that week. The chore list was always completed in its entirety every time I visited the Café. If someone performing a task had to leave early, someone else always stepped in to complete the job. The performance of these

duties is particularly meaningful because being able to contribute to the maintenance of the Cafe can make members feel valued and useful in their community.

Aside from cleaning and working on the structural aspects of the Cafe, members also often led their recovery meetings and contributed to designing the meeting plan for the day. I observed a number of instances in which the designated leaders of these meetings would arrive early to prepare, taking their responsibility as a leader very personally, as demonstrated in this statement by member Eugene:

Eugene: I led my recovery circle today at 2pm. So I got here about half an hour beforehand, to prepare, you know? It's important to be prepared, everyone's counting on you. (October 20)

To the same effect, members also would consult their friends or staff when preparing their Recovery Circle agenda. I took note of one woman who had a notebook of Recovery Circle theme ideas, discussion topics, and engaging questions to ask. Before dinner, she would tag the pages with the ideas she felt were best for the next Circle she facilitated. Her behavior indicated to me a level of dedication and responsibility to being prepared for her role.

Pursuit of common or mutual goal

There were many observed instances or indications that members work together to achieve a common goal or outcome; this type of cooperative behavior was also frequently observed within the cafe. One notable example involved three Cafe members, who joined together to find and care for a former Cafe member, Big, who was missing. Their concern, and cooperative effort to find Big, is reflected in their conversation below.

“We actually have to go. Patrick and I are going to look for Big.” I don’t know Big personally, but I know who she’s talking about (don’t know his real name though) - a large guy who I recognize as a member of the cafe.

“What do you mean? Where is he?”

“We aren’t sure.” Ginger lowers her voice, looking to Patrick and Taylor, who also nod and look serious. They say he’s not a member anymore - indicating that he started using substances of some kind again and tried to enter the cafe while on those substances - and they hadn’t seen him in four days. They called all the hospitals in the city and today they were going to try to visit two shelters before they closed. Taylor tells Ginger he’s texted her a few descriptions of people who might be at the shelter, who they should ask about Big, if they see those people. (October 20)

The given example is particularly poignant, because it reveals that Cafe members will take the time and energy to assist or participate in a larger task, even if they don’t know the recipient of the effort well or at all. This type of prosocial behavior was routinely observed throughout my time at the Café. My observations also included instances where members worked cooperatively to decorate the Cafe for an event, taking care to equally distribute the duties of carrying the supplies, hanging the decorations, or re-routing other members to maintain a clear workspace.

Altruism (Acting for someone else’s benefit)

My observations also revealed a strong pattern of altruistic behavior within the Cafe community. Members would offer assistance to another member by getting them a bus pass or carrying their trays. There were many instances where more internet-savvy members would pull out their phones to check bus schedules, call to make a doctor’s appointment, or look up information for another member. One member recounted to me an experience when he had broken his tailbone, and another member brought in a “donut” pillow for him to use while he recovered. A great example of altruism performed at the Cafe occurred when one man learned that another member is training to be a barista, and was actively looking for work:

The other man (a balding younger guy with glasses, jeans, and a button down) is basically telling the coffee guy about two people he knows who work in the downtown Starbucks. He’s

showing coffee guy their facebook. He tells coffee guy he'll text him their names... it's job-related because he uses phrases like "hook you up" and that when there are openings "they" (Starbucks?) always fill them before they actually post them, with people referred to them by current employees. (November 2)

An even more frequent occurrence of altruism came at dinner time when members who had to leave early for Recovery Circle were given routinely given space at the front of the buffet line to ensure they wouldn't be late to their meeting.

These seemingly mundane acts are important *because* they are daily small acts woven into the fabric of everyday life at the Cafe. It is through this daily exposure to prosocial behavior that norms of cooperation are built.

Sharing (food, resources, information)

Sharing is undoubtedly a solid indicator of the presence of cooperation within a community. This category could slip easily into a number of others, as it could be argued that the scenarios depicted earlier are examples of sharing information or resources, but as noted in the Methodology section above I stayed consistent in my categorizations. One of the most frequent and clear examples of this type of cooperation is the sharing of food. Because of the population that frequents the Cafe, food is an important and sensitive commodity. Not all members are experiencing homelessness or poverty, but there is acute awareness of the prevalence of these circumstances. One way members accommodate their fellow members is by saving and sorting food when cleaning up after dinner. For example, often members will volunteer to clean up the buffet, and take the opportunity to save and distribute leftovers for others who may need it as reflected in my field note, and subsequent reflection, below:

Sheldon and some of the newer cafe members are cleaning up the buffet - I offer to help and everyone cheerfully turns me down.

I never press too hard about helping with buffet; often, it's the members who really push to be the ones to clean up the food, not the MoPs or staff... tonight, I see some of those on buffet duty eat some more of the food, and pack tupperware with the leftovers. The tupperware is left for other members who may want to bring some out of the Cafe with them; some of the clean-up volunteers carried containers of food to the door to hand to members who were leaving for the bus. (October 20)

Other valued resources were also regularly shared in the Cafe. Members would let other members use their cell phones to call family members and ask for rides or use their computers to type cover letters for job applications. Some members even split the cost of a guitar between many of them, and shared the guitar, handing it off at regular intervals at the Cafe for the next person to bring home. One of the most commonly observed type of sharing was that of information, which I considered conversations during which one member would provide another with information that would specifically benefit them. For example, someone would advise an injured acquaintance where to find affordable medication, which bus route was most convenient, or which areas downtown were unsafe to spend the night. Before dinner, members would make an announcement about which shelters were still open or offering extra resources that week. Ultimately, it was clear that this is a space where community members value, and are dedicated to, acts of sharing.

Acts of Enforcement

Along with promotion comes enforcement of cooperative norms. I witnessed both positive and negative reinforcement behaviors associated with cooperative norms.

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement behaviors were direct, solidifying a member's connection to the community with praise and appreciation when they engage in a cooperative behavior. For

example, each of my observation sessions included at least one scenario where someone would volunteer to complete a chore for the cafe, or offer to help someone already performing a chore, and their behavior was met with an announcement about their contribution, and applause from other cafe members. Some people would even high-five or hug the volunteer in appreciation.

In fact, this behavior was very prominent and actively supported by the staff at the Friendship Cafe. In nearly all instances when someone would step in to perform a duty or provide assistance for someone – or with someone - at the Cafe, an act of positive enforcement would follow. For instance, when members lead a Recovery Circle or finish serving as the Barista for the day, other members or staff would make a public acknowledgement of their contribution and initiate a group verbal affirmation, like a round of “thank you” or “nice job!” Members who held open the door for another member or carried someone’s tray because they needed assistance were met with a verbal recognition of their kind act, by whomever was closest, which often led to a smattering of applause.

Negative Reinforcement

Instances of negative reinforcement also occurred at the Friendship Cafe, although the number of recorded instances of negative reinforcement was much less than the number of examples of positive reinforcement. I witnessed both direct and more passive behavior in response to acts that did not support an environment of cooperation. While my field observations yielded no examples of punishments, verbal recognition that someone violated a social norm was common, and I observed two main approaches to correcting such behavior. Below is an example of the first type of approach; a direct, verbal recognition of a norm

violation. When Brady's behavior was not conducive to a cooperative environment, his fellow members directly and verbally addressed it.

Brady pipes up now that Sheldon's said something: "Well see, what happened is, there's all these new people at OUR tables, and next to those are where the gays and the lesbians are sitting, so we ended up over here." Immediately there's head shaking, interrupting. Bobby and Sheldon talk at once.

"You can't say things like that Brady."

Sheldon is less assertive. He shakes his head and looks at the floor, saying "you shouldn't say that. Don't say that. Nope. Not okay." (October 17)

Sheldon and the other members responded to Brady's behavior directly and verbally, identifying it as something that is not acceptable in this space. I witnessed it one other time, when a member was advertising his dislike of immigrants and called out, "Make America Great Again!" Another member approached, explained that this type of talk made people in the community feel unsafe, and the norm-violating member was told that his behavior was not okay. This first type of negative enforcement behavior resulted in the norm-violating member apologizing, backtracking, or not re-violating the norm in that setting.

The second verbal, but less direct, method used within the Cafe community is the use of language which "suggests" offense or the violation of a social expectation, without actively voicing the issue. For example, during one conversation, a longtime member explained to me the use of the phrase "ouch" in Recovery Circles to call attention to an uncooperative or insensitive behavior, and its effectiveness as a means of enforcing norms of cooperation in that space. She recounted the following episode:

Finally, one day, one of her group members said something horrible and hateful about a trans person while they were sharing a personal experience. Jessica felt off and upset so she said "ouch," which is a term people use in circles to let someone know they've said

something hurtful or insulting. Typically, Jessica said, the Speaker will stop and think about what they say and either re-phrase or at least apologize. (November 9)

This more indirect method of acknowledging a norm violation and enforcing a re-commitment to cooperative behavior is particularly significant to the Cafe's social culture. It indicates that Cafe members are empowered to express when someone has violated an expectation to be cooperative or respectful, but the expression is framed as a way of sharing hurt feelings or personal discomfort as a result of this norm violation, rather than as an attack on the norm violator. Framing a norm violation in this way could reiterate the Cafe's focus on contributing positively to the community.

Implications and Recommendations

Recovery Capital refers to the combination of personal, family, and community resources necessary to initiate and sustain recovery from addiction and other issues. This study confirms that the Friendship Cafe contributes to Recovery Capital in its role as a community support institution. Indeed, based on the evidence from my 12-week observations, the Friendship Cafe is a community rich in social norms which promote cooperation and build social capital, a key component of Recovery Capital. I found that cooperative behavior is intentionally and effectively promoted using all three approaches to cooperation: Formal Structures, Acts of Cooperation, and Acts of Enforcement. Within the environment of the Cafe, members have many opportunities to learn or re-learn this social skill that is critical to their post-addiction reintegration and recovery.

It is clear from this study that the Friendship Cafe contains a strong formal structure, including its open physical layout, reinforcing signs and placards, and an abundance of programs

and resources heavily utilized -- and, in many cases, cooperatively run -- by its members. Furthermore, the observations recorded in this study demonstrated that rules and norms of cooperation are effectively promoted through prosocial acts of cooperation in many forms, most notably through the performance of duties, the pursuit of common goals, acts of altruism, and sharing (Fukuyama, 2011; Coleman, 2001).

Perhaps most important is that observational data found that these cooperative norms are enforced primarily through positive methods of reinforcement and less routinely through negative verbal enforcement. The Friendship Cafe is all about Do's, not Don'ts. In fact, during the observation period reinforcing behaviors relying on punishment were not utilized in this community. Given the role of community support institutions to assist in a recovery process and reintegration into the social and work life of a community, the Friendship Cafe's promotion of social skills and cooperative behaviors using an almost exclusively positive means seems not only an effective strategy for strengthening members' connection to the Cafe -- but potentially toward their functioning in a broader community as well (Coleman, 2001; Bouma, Bulte, and Soest, 2008).

Research indicates that recovery is a process of constantly changing and improving quality of life and a sense of empowerment (Best and Laudet, 2010) and that effective community support institutions act as a positive and supportive force for a recovery community in ways that extend far beyond managing substance abuse. The Cafe relies on positive, clear, and community-based communication methods to both promote and enforce its social rules and norms, contributing to a strong sense of inclusion and empowerment of its members.

For this reason, other community support institutions can learn a great deal from the Friendship Cafe's practices. In fact, the Friendship Cafe is actively looking for ways to share its model with other organizations looking to build a successful healing community; it is my hope that this study can further develop our understanding of the components which make the Cafe so successful as a recovery community so these attributes can be modeled by others.

For example, the Cafe's formal "membership" structure and rules, welcoming feel, and open physical layout are well-designed to foster and promote a cooperative environment. Explicit, positively-framed expectations and membership requirements lead members to engage in Cafe activities with a proper mindset. Requirements of community service and participation in Recovery Circles leave members interdependent and responsible for one another's well-being, providing both the resources and the motivation required to take steps toward recovery. Well-organized programming and activities provides opportunities for members to engage in, and practice, cooperative behavior. They also create a strong sense of belonging and community.

Others can also learn from the Friendship Cafe's pervasive philosophy of positivity. Frequent acknowledgments of member contributions, positive role modeling by staff and longer term members, and even rounds of applause for member actions promote cooperative behaviors and solidify community-oriented values. Even techniques such as the "ouch" enforcement behavior (discussed earlier as a mild form of negative enforcement) show that acknowledging a norm violation can still be framed positively to maintain the culture of cohesion and cooperation within the community.

Regardless of the circumstances surrounding an individual's recovery or the specific focus of a community support institution, members will benefit from a center that prioritizes the expectation of cooperation. Community support institutions can provide an environment where its members can build social capital by communicating its social norms through a clear, cooperation-centered formal structure, through cooperative prosocial behaviors, and through positive or productive acts of enforcement.

Limitations of Study

There are some limitations that constrain the opportunities of this study. One such limitation was in its duration and time frame. This study took place weekly over three months, mostly during the same time period and the same day each week. Much could be learned by observing and considering interactions on other days, during different hours of operation, when the Cafe offers other activities and a different group of members are using the space and interacting. Another factor restricting the opportunities within this study is the physical location of the observations. My fieldwork only includes community members' behaviors within the physical constraints of the Cafe space and did not extend beyond the building.

Finally, in future studies, expanding or adjusting the field site to consider behaviors outside of the physical space of the Cafe could help us better understand this center's role in, and its relationship with, the successful reintegration of its members into a broader community. Perhaps future research could consider the presence or absence of cooperative acts between members and other people external to the Cafe.

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