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Native Artists Helping Our People Endure (HOPE): A Social Capital Analysis of a Grassroots Art Initiative to Address Youth Suicide in an Indigenous Community

Nathania Tsosie

Nathania Tsosie
Candidate

Community and Regional Planning
Department

This thesis is approved, and it is acceptable in quality
and form for publication:

Approved by the Thesis Committee:

Ted Jojola, PhD , Chairperson

Claudia Isaac, PhD

Tassy Parker, PhD, RN

NATIVE ARTISTS HELPING OUR PEOPLE ENDURE (HOPE): A SOCIAL CAPITAL ANALYSIS OF A GRASSROOTS ART INITIATIVE TO ADDRESS YOUTH SUICIDE IN AN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

BY

NATHANIA TSOSIE

MASTER OF COMMUNITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING, UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, 2011

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THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
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DEDICATION

Dii naaltsoos' dóó naanish ííshlaa'igí éí shimasani dóó shicheii bináh'ji' bénááshnii'do. Haala' shimasani dóó shicheii bizaad dóó bitsoodizin bináhji dóó bik'éh'gó i'ííshła. Nihináhji' shii óólta' bidziilígí ndiishłaa'do.

This paper is dedicated to the loving memory of my grandparents, Denny and Mary Joe Nez, without whom this thesis would not be possible. It is their words of wisdom and endless prayer that have taught me to see the beauty and art of the Creator from sunrise to sunset, beneath me, above me, and all around.

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Nathania T. Tsosie

B.S., Anthropology, University of New Mexico, 2002

ABSTRACT

This study identifies and examines the components of social capital related to a grassroots initiative to address Indigenous youth suicide through art. The Native Artists for HOPE's Thoreau Youth Art Project was organized by a small group of professional Native American artists in response to a sudden increase of youth suicide in a community on the Navajo Nation. Built on cultural core values identified by the artists themselves, the day long workshop encourages self-expression and creativity as an alternative to risky behaviors believed by community members to be related to suicide.

A brief literature review of social capital including its application to population health models, Indigenous communities, and youth suicide is also included. I argue that social capital is a suitable community-level determinant of health that is consistent with Indigenous health models and the place-based Indigenous worldview. Thus, using my personal experience in organizing the Thoreau Youth Art Project as a narrative frame and selected quotes from Artist Facilitators, this study will identify related components of

social capital. I summarize my findings from this research by reflecting on the process of

organizing Native Artists for HOPE and the Thoreau Youth Art Project by drawing upon

the tenets of Indigenous Planning.

CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.
-Pablo Picasso

Artists have always been important members of vibrant communities the world over. They not only decorate our walls and help us to build visually appealing skylines but they challenge us to think creatively and "outside the box." Artists are no less important in Indigenous communities where they have long been valued for their skill and ability to engage and teach thereby preserving Indigenous culture through our objects, song, and dance. As a result, artists make an enormous contribution to the well-being of our Indigenous communities.

This exploratory study is an analysis of one such contribution—a grassroots initiative by a small artist collaborative to address Indigenous youth suicide called Native Artists for Helping Our People Endure[1] (Native Artists for HOPE). In Indigenous communities, youth suicide is perceived as not only a loss of life but as a loss of culture and "when culture is disrupted, we lose a lot of practical wisdom passed down from generation to generation" (J. Begay, 2010). Despite the significant risk, Indigenous communities have argued that the resources to alleviate youth suicide lay not in clinical evidence-based interventions but in practice-based programs built on our traditional knowledge and the unique cultural core values of each community. Zuni educator, Hayes Lewis, argues that the process for addressing youth suicide in tribal communities "must be rooted in local tribal definitions of cultural autonomy, collective action and the use of

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[1] No relation to the evidence-based intervention by a similar name, Native HOPE.

communal-cultural strengths" (Lewis, November 10, 2010). Likewise, others have

argued that successful suicide prevention approaches must be community-driven (First

Nations Centre des Premieres Nations, 2005), culturally and spiritually grounded

(Goodkind et al.), and as Navajo Nation President-elect Ben Shelly poignantly stated

"we're tired of being told all the things that are wrong with us—we want something that

works!"(Shelly, 2010).

Native Artists for HOPE builds upon what Indigenous communities and

researchers have identified as their ideal approach to suicide prevention by calling upon

cultural core values identified by the artists themselves. These core values are an

obligation to give back to our communities, teaching through experience, building trust,

supporting one another, leading by example, and challenging others to do the same.

Although it was not the intention of the group to create a theory-driven approach, the core

values they identified are closely related to constructs of social capital specifically trust,

reciprocity, sharing, and support. Furthermore, our planning approach is aligned with the

tenants of Indigenous Planning because Native Artists for HOPE relies on the wisdom of

community members to drive our initiative through self-reflection and an understanding

of the Indigenous worldview (Jojola, 2000).

Given this relationship, the purpose of this paper will be to: (1) describe Native

Artists for HOPE's "Thoreau Youth Art Project", a response to a youth suicide outbreak

in a small Indigenous community; (2) set the groundwork for analysis by providing a

brief theoretical overview of social capital; (3) identify the related components of social

capital in the Thoreau Youth Art Project using Javier Mignone's "Social Capital and

Suicide Prevention Factors Pathways Model"; and (4) make recommendations based on

lessons learned from the Thoreau Youth Art Project for ways in which social capital

theory can inform similar Indigenous community projects.

With these goals in mind, this paper aspires to answer the following three research

questions:

1. What is social capital?

2. How is social capital relevant to Indigenous community health and
   youth suicide prevention?

3. What are the dimensions of social capital in the Thoreau Youth Art
   project as defined by Javier Mignone's "Social Capital and Suicide
   Prevention Factors Pathway Model"?

Helping Our People Endure

In the early summer of 2010, I attended an American Indian Health Advisory

Committee (AIHAC) meeting and was surprised by an announcement made by the New

Mexico State Secretary of Indian Affairs, Alvin Warren. Secretary Warren, a special

advisor to the Governor of New Mexico, approached the committee of representatives

from the Pueblos, the Apaches and Navajo Nations, and the off-reservation communities

with a request from the Chapter President of a small community on the fringes of the

Navajo Nation called Thoreau. It seemed that Thoreau had gained recent state-wide and

national attention for an outbreak of suicides among the youth in their community

(Anonymous, 2010; J. Begay, 2010; Landry, 2010a, 2010b; Nakano, April 28, 2010).

Secretary Warren described the outbreak as a "suicide cluster" which was believed (by

community members) to be related to increased gang activity. Secretary Warren read the

Chapter President's letter to the committee, which included a request for AIHAC to refer

programs and individuals from their respective communities to Thoreau to provide additional summer youth programs. Secretary Warren followed up by stating that concern was increasing due to the approaching summer vacation which would leave Thoreau's youth without activities to occupy their time and therefore at increased risk for engaging in what they considered to be "risky activity" such as gang involvement.

As a Diné[2] away from my homeland, I found the news of the suicide outbreak troubling and even more disturbing because it was occurring among the young. Many of these young people were growing up in the same exact conditions I grew up in myself and yet, for whatever reasons, they were succumbing to the challenges of reservation life. Having studied and researched Native American health for a number of years, I know that the challenges of being Native American are overwhelming and disproportionately skewed against our favor. In fact, American Indians born today "have a life expectancy that is 5.2 years less than U.S. all races population (72.6 years to 77.8 years, respectively; 2003-2005 rates)" (Indian Health Service, 2011). In the case of suicide, it has been shown by the Indian Health Service that suicide rates for American Indians (19.8%) are nearly twice that of All Races combined in the U.S. (10.9%). One need only consider the tremendous disparities in health, education, income, and infrastructure to glimpse what life might have been like for the youth of Thoreau (Indian Health Service, 2011).

Despite the discouraging image these statistics portray of our communities the fact remains that Indigenous peoples continue to evolve and adapt despite adversity. A major part of that adaptation is due to the prominence of creativity reinforced in our traditional knowledge, values, and practices. As a descendant of a long line of traditional silversmiths, weavers, and healers, art and creativity was always a part of my life. My

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[2] "Diné" means "The People" in Navajo and is the name we prefer to call ourselves.

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grandmother wove intricate rugs in the Ganado Red and Two Grey Hills styles—both of which were taught to Totsohnii[3] women in our family for many years. The rugs she wove were not only beautifully ornate in design and execution but representative and symbolic of the values we are taught as Diné women including a reverence for all life be it human, animal, plant, insect, mineral, or other. All of these realms contribute to the creation of our artwork whether it is from the plant-based dyes we use for our threads, the wool from the sheep we raise, the juniper logs we use to construct our looms, or the Spider Woman we consider our teacher. And while each rug is the result of a similar process, the artistic value is found in craftsmanship and the unique designs of each weaver.

When my grandmother first taught me to weave at the age of 5, she told me the story of Spider Woman and the Hero Twins in our Emergence legends and that it was Spider Woman who helped lead the twins, Monster Slayer and Born-For-Water, to their father, the Sun. The Twins were on a mission to rid the land of Monsters who plagued the land and its people with lice, sloth and laziness. Related to those legends, it was Spider Woman along with her husband, Spider Man, who first constructed the traditional rug loom and taught Diné women how to weave. She taught us that the structure of the loom represented the connection between the earth and the sky and that each part of the loom from the warp to the tools was symbolic of elements in between such as the rays of the sun and lightning. She also taught me that the tools and techniques we used were unique to each weaver; my batten and comb would continue to change shape through use and age until eventually it would be time for me to teach my own granddaughters the art of weaving.

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[3] "Totsohnii" is my matrilineal (dominant) clan group and translates into English as "Big Water."

Although I never took to weaving in the way my ancestors had, I learned that my experience was by no means unique. Many years after my grandmother passed, I continue to hear similar stories of learning and sharing from other Diné of my generation and the consensus remains that when the time comes, we will all be expected to act in the ways of our grandmothers and grandfathers to preserve what we know to be true as Diné. With this obligation firmly in my mind, I received the request from Secretary Warren as a call to action and one that deserved a thoughtful respectful response and what better way to do so then to continue the tradition of learning and sharing through art.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter addresses my first research question by providing a brief overview of the social capital literature and its relevance to Indigenous community health and youth suicide. A review of the literature reveals that social capital is a community-level determinant of health that is consistent with Indigenous health models and the place-based Indigenous worldview (Javier Mignone, 2003; J. Mignone, 2005; J. Mignone & O'Neil, 2005). Thus, it is a fitting framework for understanding American Indian (AI) youth suicide because it brings focus to principles that are complementary if not identical to Indigenous cultural core values of trust, reciprocity, sharing, and support. Given this theoretical structure, this chapter also introduces the work of Javier Mignone and his "Social Capital and Suicide Prevention Factors Pathway Model" that will subsequently guide my analysis of the Thoreau Youth Art Project in the following chapter.

Overview of Social Capital

The discussion that follows is an overview of the development of social capital theory in the contemporary literature with a particular focus on the contributions of Pierre Bourdieu, Glenn Loury, James Coleman, and Robert Putnam. This review is not intended to be exhaustive and is focused on providing a working knowledge of social capital that is relevant to the analytic framework for this study.

Social capital has a wide variety of definitions and thus has been applied and studied in various disciplines. Although much more complex, a simple definition of social capital emphasizes the value of social relationships as the "glue that holds societies together" (Edwards, 1997). More specifically social capital is understood as the "ability

of actors to secure benefits by virtue of membership in social networks or social structures" (Portes, 1998). One of the earliest contributors to this modern understanding of social capital came from French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu who believed that the "outcomes of possession of social or cultural capital are reducible to economic capital" (Portes, 1998). His "key insight was that forms of capital are fungible" and that "they can be traded for each other and actually require such trades for their development" (Portes, 2000, p. 2). Bourdieu furthered this idea by suggesting that "people intentionally built their relations for the benefits that they would bring later" (Bourdieu, 1985; Portes, 2000, p. 2) such as access to jobs, market tips, or loans.

Parallel to Bourdieu's approach was the work of economist Glen Loury in the late 1970s and then by James Coleman in the 1980s. Loury argued that prior economic theories of social capital were "too individualistic, focusing exclusively on individual human capital and on the creation of a level field for competition based on such skills" (Portes, 1998, p. 4). Loury based his anti-individualist arguments on his analysis of racial income inequality and argued that "legal prohibitions against employers' racial tastes and implementation of equal opportunity programs would not reduce racial inequalities" (Portes, 1998) because of inherited racial poverty in the form of lower material resources, educational opportunities, and a lack of information. He wrote that "the merit notion that, in a free society, each individual will rise to the level justified by his or her competence conflicts with the observation that no one travels that road entirely alone" (Loury, 1977, p. 176). Loury's concept "captured the differential access to opportunities through social connections for minority and nonminority youth" (Portes, 1998, p. 5) and recognized that "the social context within which individual maturation occurs strongly conditions what

otherwise equally competent individuals can achieve. This implies that absolute equality of opportunity,...is an ideal that cannot be achieved" (Loury, 1977, p. 176).

While Loury succeeded at recognizing differences in access to opportunities based on race, a second scholar, James Coleman, expanded on Loury's ideas by providing a more refined analysis of the role of social capital in the creation of human capital. Coleman defined social capital by its function and stated that it was "not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors…within the structure" (Coleman, 1988, p. 98). Furthermore "social capital inheres in the structure or relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production" thus "social capital is not the private property of any of the persons who benefit from it" (J. Mignone, 2009). Coleman also recognized some of the mechanisms that generate social capital such as reciprocity expectations and group enforcement of norms. To Coleman, "community ties were important for the benefits they yielded to individuals. Old people could walk the streets at night without fear and children could be sent to play outside because tight community controls guaranteed their personal safety" (Coleman, 1988; Portes, 2000, p. 3).

The central idea of both Coleman and Bourdieu's approach was their shared belief in the need to "integrate sociological and economic thinking to account for the structure and function of the social world" (J. Mignone, 2009). Following their analysis, a shift occurred in the literature as social capital was increasingly applied in other disciplines transforming it into a macro-level attribute of not only towns and cities but entire nations (Portes, 2000), thereby shedding its individualistic roots pioneered by Bourdieu. Leading

this conceptual shift was Robert Putnam who conceived of social capital as "features of social organization, such as trust, norms and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions" (Putnam, 1993). As a collective attribute, social capital was represented in a wide variety of community-level characteristics such as "reduced crime rates, lower official corruption, and better governance" (Portes, 2000, p. 3) represented by indicators such as "newspaper reading, expressions of trust in survey questionnaires, and participation in nonpolitical associations" (Portes, 2000, p. 5; Putnam, 1996). Putnam's definition suggested that in effect "working together is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital" (Putnam, 1993, p. 36) and infers that communities can work well or poorly based on the ways that people interact thus social capital is "both a public good and an ecological characteristic" (Baum & Ziersch, 2003, p. 320). Critiques of this approach have noted "the elitist stance of [Putnam's] argument, where responsibility…is put squarely on the leisure behavior of the masses, rather than on economic and political changes wrought by the corporate and government establishment" (Portes, 1998). Furthermore, they point out the tautological nature of his argument that social capital is both a cause and an effect—"it leads to positive outcomes, such as economic development and less crime, and its existence is inferred from the same outcomes" (Portes, 1998).

While a number of different scholars contributed to the theoretical development of social capital following the seminal work of Bourdieu, Loury, Coleman and Putnam, an extensive review of those contributions is outside the scope of this study. Therefore, for the remainder of this analysis, social capital is understood as a "resource composed of a variety of elements, most notably social networks, social norms and values, trust, and

shared resources" (J. Mignone, 2005) as constituted by three dimensions—bonding, bridging, and linkage. This definition has been adapted from research conducted by a Canadian scholar, Javier Mignone, whose work with First Nations communities is central to this thesis. Mignone's study was conducted in 3 First Nations communities and included conducting 89 in-depth interviews and surveying 462 randomly selected adults from the three communities (J. Mignone, Elias, & Hall, 2011). Some of the methods employed by the research team included thematic analysis of the qualitative data and factor and validation analysis of quantitative data. The results of Mignone's research found that social capital is a "dynamic way of characterizing communities, allowing for comparison on both internal and external social relationships" and also "captures social elements that are relevant from a First Nations community perspective".

In his work, Mignone uses a popular framework for social capital that divides social capital into three dimensions: (1) bonding, (2) bridging, and (3) linkage which he believed "captures the reality that communities do not exist in isolation, but in relationship with other communities, as well as institutions" (Javier Mignone, 2003, p. 4). Mignone refers to the following definitions and potential uses for each dimension in terms of First Nations communities:

1. Bonding refers to the relations within a First Nations community;

2. Bridging refers to ties with other First Nations communities or other communities;

3. Linkage refers to the connections between a First Nations community and institutions (e.g. federal/provincial government departments, or public/private corporations such as power utilities or banks) (Javier Mignone, 2003).

Mignone further identifies that each dimension of social capital includes three components:

1. Socially Invested Resources (SIR) refers to the resources used for the benefit of the community as a whole. Resources can be physical, symbolic, financial, natural, or human;

2. Culture refers to the relations within the community—and between communities and institutions—that are characterized by norms of reciprocity, levels of trust, collective action, and participation. Used in this context, "culture" is informed by the popular social sciences understanding that refers to "shared values, norms, and beliefs". In Mignone's study, "values related to aspects of First Nations culture such as spirituality are not included in this definition" (J. Mignone, 2005).

3. Networks refers to the degree to which networks within the community, and between communities and institutions, are inclusive, flexible, and diverse (Javier Mignone, 2003, p. 5).

Derived from this study, Mignone formulated that "social capital characterizes a First Nation community based on the degree that its resources are socially invested, that it presents a culture of trust, norms of reciprocity, collective action, and participation, and that it possesses inclusive, flexible and diverse networks" (J. Mignone & O'Neil, 2005, p. S51). While Mignone generally follows Putnam's orientation to social capital, his specific contribution is his explicit "caveat that the community of which it is a feature must be clearly delimited" and for First Nations, community is defined as "the political unity of a reserve, but including all inhabitants, both band members and non-band

members" and also includes those members living off-reserve and considers them "part of the community through their connections with on-reserve community members" (J. Mignone, 2005, p. 13). Mignone states that "in this sense they (First Nations communities) can be considered communities of identity and place" (J. Mignone, 2005).

Social Capital as a Determinant of Health

Social determinants of health are "the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age" and are "mostly responsible for health inequities - the unfair and avoidable differences in health status" (World Health Organization, 2011). Models of population health refer to a "conceptual framework for thinking about why some people are healthier than others and urges health research agendas to consider dimensions beyond healthcare such as education, employment, and social support" (Richmond & Ross, 2009). Some determinants of health such as income, gender, and education are characteristics of individuals while others such as water quality, levels of pollution, and crime are ecological and relate to the characteristics of place (J. Mignone & J. O'Neil, 2005). Social capital has been suggested as an important ecological determinant of health and the "expectation is that the more social capital there is in a community, the better that community is for everyone's health" (J. Mignone & O'Neil, 2005).

Mignone's research on social capital in First Nations communities came at the urging of a committee of the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs who wanted to "look at health beyond the individual" (Javier Mignone, 2003, p. 1) in order to understand the variability in health status among First Nations communities. Furthermore, First Nations health planners had indicated that "analytical frameworks that attempt to associate factors such

as poverty with health outcomes are insensitive to the complex socio-economic conditions that exist in First Nations communities" (O'Neil et al., 1999).

Social Capital and Indigenous Youth Suicide

One of the research initiatives that grew from Mignone's work with social capital in First Nations communities was an analysis of youth suicide risk factors (J. Mignone & O'Neil, 2005). As previously discussed, Mignone postulates that communities with more social capital should have better health (e.g. lower rates of youth suicide) as well as having "a culture of trust, participation, collective action and norms of reciprocity" (Javier Mignone, 2003, p. 4). This suggests that some of the factors influencing suicide risk lay outside standard mental health risk assessments and supports community requests for holistic inclusive programs for the prevention of youth suicide.

In 2007, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported that suicide was the number one cause of fatality among American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN) between the ages of 10 and 14 in New Mexico (CDC, p. 4). Also in 2007, the New Mexico Youth Risk and Resiliency Survey showed that Native youth in grades 9 through 12 who participated in the survey (self) reported a rate of suicide attempt (20.1%) that was significantly higher than all New Mexico youth (14.3%) (NMDOH, 2007). The youth who participated in that same study also reported a higher rate of suicide attempt resulting in injury (7.3 vs. 4.8) requiring medical treatment by a nurse or doctor (NMDOH, 2007).

Nationally, rates of suicide among AIAN youth reflect a similar pattern. The CDC reported in 2007 that suicide was the second leading cause of fatality among AIAN youth across the United States, second only to accidental injury (CDC). Similarly a 2001 study

of AIAN high school students nationally reported that 16% of youth attending Bureau of Indian Affairs schools had attempted suicide in the preceding 12 months (Shaughnessy, Doshi, & Jones, 2004).

While numerous evidence-based and practice-based youth suicide prevention interventions exist (New Mexico Department of Health Office of School and Adolescent Health, 2009) Indigenous communities and our leaders have stressed many times over that each community must be considered in its own context, which is to say that a successful intervention may not work in all communities. Such interventions for youth suicide must take into account the unique ecological factors of each community including (but not limited to) social capital.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in order to understand the dimensions of social capital found in the Thoreau Youth Art Project by re-creating Javier Mignone's "Social Capital and Suicide Prevention Factors Pathway" (SCSPFP) model. In order to address this research goal, data were collected from 7 individuals using two major sources— autoethnographic narrative and a review of media. Qualitative data was hand-coded and analyzed using pre-established themes from the SCSPFP model. This methodology is aligned with an indigenous planning approach of reflection and introspection in order to understand "native self" (Jojola, 2000).

Research Design

An autoethnographic approach was used for this study. Autoethnography is a "form of ethnography that uses the self as a lens to understand a wider culture and in turn uses the experiences of others to better understand the self" (Balaam, 2011, p. 1). This approach is appropriate for this paper because the selected intervention, the Thoreau Youth Art Project, arose from personal introspection.

Aligned with this approach, a narrative autoethnography in the following chapter will detail the process of organizing Native Artists for HOPE and planning for and holding the Thoreau Youth Art Project. The narrative is written in the first person demonstrating complete member status and is presented as a story recounting my personal experience from initial conception, developing partnerships with the Artists and the community, and planning for and holding the Youth Art Project.

Participants

A total of 7 participants contributed to the results of this study including myself and 6 Artist Facilitators who participated in the video recorded interviews. The Artist Facilitators were selected and recruited by the Lead Artist for the project, Ryan Singer. Mr. Singer selected and recruited artists affiliated with the Southwestern Association for American Indian Arts (SWAIA) who had a professional reputation for innovation and had a perceived ability to connect to youth through their artwork or personal history. All of the Artist Facilitators were interviewed on location at the Thoreau Youth Art Project.

Instruments

No primary data collection was required for this thesis project. However, data was collected through a review of uncut video footage of one-on-one interviews with the 6 Artist Facilitators. I viewed the footage multiple times listening for quotes related to categories established in the SCSPFP model or reflections of community-artist interactions. Data included extensive notes and transcribed excerpts from the interviews which were then compiled into one document and arranged according to theme. Qualitative analysis methods were integrated into this approach in the form of hand-coding the unedited video footage. The footage was collected by a Diné independent film maker who was developing a short documentary film about the Youth Art Project. She was assisted by a Diné film student and together they collected video documentary data of the interviews as well as the Youth Art Project itself. Production of the video has stalled since the initial filming, due to software and hardware incompatibilities, and it is unknown if the film will be completed. The uncut footage was shared with me by the film

maker herself and was analyzed to supplement my personal narrative in re-creating the

SCSPFP model.

The recorded interviews followed a semi-structured interview guide, which was

developed by the film maker and her assistant. The questions in the interview focused on

the process of organizing the Thoreau Youth Art Project, the artists' rationale for

becoming involved in the project, and an overall assessment of the importance of

creativity and art in community healing.

Data Analysis

Data for this study included transcribed direct quotes collected from the recorded

interviews and my personal experience as documented in my autoethnographic narrative.

Data were hand-coded based on themes established by the SCSPFP (see Table 1)

including: Socially Invested Resources (Physical, Symbolic, Financial, Human, and

Natural); Culture (Trust, Norms of Reciprocity, Collective Action, and Participation); and

Networks (Inclusive, Flexible, and Diverse).

Table 1 Bridging Social Capital

Bridging Social Capital		
Socially Invested Resources	*Culture*	*Networks*
Physical	Trust	Inclusive
Symbolic	Norms of Reciprocity	Flexible
Financial	Collective Action	Diverse
Human	Participation	
Natural		

Particular attention was focused on these items as related to the inter-community

ties or connections between communities—what Mignone refers to as bridging social

capital. The communities in this study are defined as the place-based community of

Thoreau and the identity-based community of professional Native American artists.

18

Ethical Considerations

Research for this paper did not include primary data collection therefore Human Research Protections approval was not sought or obtained. However, certain ethical considerations were made in order to maintain the confidentiality of individuals and the community involved in the Thoreau Youth Art project. Individuals named have given verbal or written approval for disclosure of their involvement with the Project. Also, given the sensitive nature of the conditions that inspired the Project, specific data regarding the youth suicide outbreak in Thoreau has been omitted. Any information regarding the suicides themselves has been limited to information made available in print media. Additionally, this research focuses on specific events and actions by Artists which, although inspired by the suicide outbreak, were focused on building and encouraging creativity among youth to enhance coping skills and improve overall community spirit and togetherness and not explicitly on developing an evidence-based intervention for suicide or suicide prevention—that was left to mental and behavioral health professionals.

Additionally, the Thoreau Youth Art Project was not intended to be research; it was a community based event. Had I intended this project to grow into research, approval from the Eastern Agency Council, the Navajo Nation Human Research Review Board and the UNM Human Research Protections Office would have been required before any contact with community members could have occurred, especially with youth who are considered "vulnerable populations". And while the training I gained as a student and employee at the University of New Mexico provided me with the preparation I needed to pursue this project, my academic or professional affiliation with UNM had no influence

on my desire to become involved with these activities. Thus, my personal involvement

with this project was from the role of a concerned community and tribal member.

This chapter provides the narrative framework aligned with the autoethnographic approach for analysis. What follows is a storyline highlighting the sequence of events leading up to the Thoreau Youth Art Project. My goal in this narrative is to document our organizing process, our challenges as a grassroots group, and also to highlight my dual perspectives as a budding health planner and as an engaged community member.

Organizing Native Artists for HOPE

Following the AIHAC meeting in which Secretary Warren had alerted me to the events in Thoreau, I came home and recalled the meeting to my significant other, Ryan Singer (Diné, Tódích'íi'nii /Kinyaa'32nii[4]), a professional artist (painter), who grew up,

like me, on the Navajo reservation. Believing strongly in community service and art education, he often gives presentations and facilitates workshops for youth (Native and non-Native alike). A major theme of Mr. Singer's work is the intertwining of popular American culture he experiences through music and film and his own traditional Navajo culture. His artwork includes images inspired by
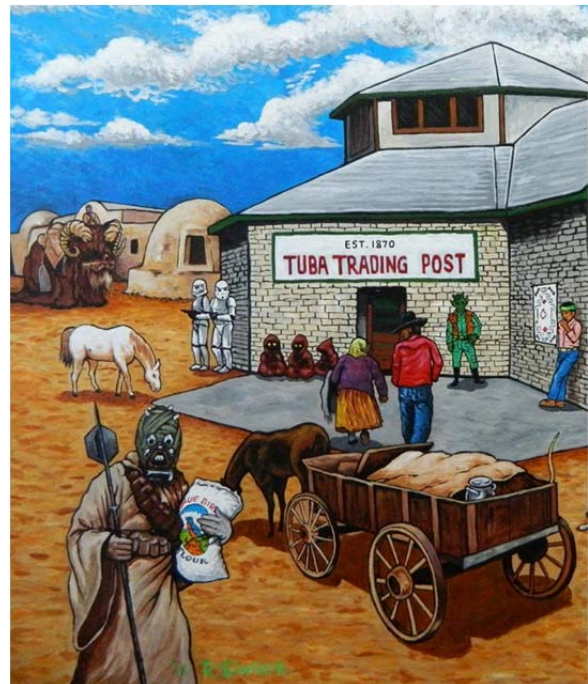
Figure 1 A selection from "Tuba City Spaceport" by Ryan Singer

[4] Traditional Diné custom requires each person to introduce themselves with their mother and father's clans.

Star Wars, Andy Warhol, cultural stereotypes, and popular music. He is also known for his colorful portraits of traditional Navajos and iconic pop art such as the "Wagonburner" and "Mutton Stew" images he successfully developed into a line of merchandise. There is always a youthful element to Mr. Singer's artwork whether it is the subject matter (i.e., robots and aliens) or in the manner it is executed such as his use of bright and vivid colors. I knew that if anyone could connect to young Navajos, it was Ryan.

It did not take long for us to decide that we both wanted to help and offer our support to the community. After some discussion, we decided that we would do the best we could with what we had. Of considerable importance is that what we had was access to a network of successful Native American artists and our own personal stories of growing up on the Rez and how that experience inspired other parts of our lives. Over the next week, Mr. Singer began contacting some of his (artist) colleagues to bring attention to the suicides in Thoreau and also to brainstorm ideas about how artists might be able to help. He selected artists he knew personally to be parents, active in their communities, or created art or had stories that would be of interest to Navajo youth and who were from Thoreau or lived within driving range of Thoreau. He also wanted artists who were known by their colleagues and art enthusiasts to be innovators in their field and who had challenged the standard conventions of Native American art either in their subject matter or in their methods. By the end of the week Ryan had received support from four artists who were interested in helping—Darryl Dean Begay, Rebecca Begay, Marla Allison, and Monty Singer.

Figure 2 Husband and wife team of Diné jewelers Darryl Dean and Rebecca Begay

Darryl Dean (Diné, Yé'ii dine'é Táchii'nii/Ta'néésdzahnii) and Rebecca Begay (Diné, Tódích'íi'nii/Deeshchii'nii) are a husband and wife team of jewelers and online gallery owners, and parents to three young boys. They have been active in the Native American art community for many years and are recent winners of the coveted "Best in Show" award at the 2009 SWAIA Santa Fe Indian Market for a narrative concho belt cast in tufa called "The Return from the Long Walk." When discussing the winning piece, Darryl Dean has said "the Long Walk was a very traumatic experience and (Diné) people are still suffering today" but the theme of the belt is that "we (Diné) are still here. We still have our culture, our language. And that means anything is possible" (Shebala, 2009).

Resiliency is a running theme in the work represented in Darryl Dean's carved modern and historical figures in silver as well as in Rebecca's ultra-feminine miniature seed pots and jewelry (D. Begay & Begay, 2009). Rebecca, unlike her husband, considers herself, first and foremost, a 2-dimensional artist having had her start in drawing and painting before working with silver under her husband's tutelage. Rebecca is in a unique field as tufa casting in silver has always been considered "men's work" by traditional Diné. Her experience as a female jeweler was already an important addition to the collective wisdom of the group

Figure 3 "The Long Walk" concho belt by Darryl Dean and Rebecca Begay.

but it was her added experience as an art teacher and mother that made her invaluable to our effort.

While Rebecca served a distinctive role in the group, she was not the only female artist who agreed to contribute her efforts. Along with Rebecca was Marla Allison, a young but quickly rising star in Native art. Of mixed Hopi, Laguna, and Anglo heritage, Marla is a graduate of the 3-dimensional art program at the Institute of American Indian Art and has quickly gained acclaim for her paintings which are inspired by her deep connections with her family, traditions, and "being close to her community"

Figure 4 Painter Marla Allison at the School for Advanced Research in 2010

(Allison, 2010). Like all the artists in the group, Marla is an innovator and known for her unique painting style which is heavily influenced "by the cubism of Pablo Picasso and squares of Paul Klee" to create a style that is reminiscent of traditional (Pueblo) pottery designs. When asked about her work, Marla says she paints so "I remember where I came from. I paint so others can remember where I come from. I paint to be remembered" (Allison, 2010). It is Marla's spirit and connection with her cultural traditions that not only makes her a successful artist but also a driven and truly compassionate community member and collaborator.

The final member of the collective was pastel artist and painter, Monty Singer (Diné, Ta'néészahnii/Naakaii Dine'é)—Ryan's cousin and son of the renowned Diné painter, Ed Singer. Although Monty was somewhat new to the Native art scene, he had already amassed an almost cult-like following for his provocative subject matter which

Figure 5 "The Long Walk" by Monty Singer (2009).

ran the gamut from classical nudes and (the popular American actress) Betty Page to intricately detailed landscapes and portraits. Monty's vast talent is indisputable as many of his peers will attest but what made his involvement all the more

valuable was the significance he placed on the process of making art. He has said that what he finds most fascinating about art is "the nature of paint and surface" and that "the subject is the least important aspect. What I love is how the problems of the lie (the lie of painting) are solved with paint" (Singer).

While Mr. Singer[5] had succeeded at gaining initial support from the Artist Facilitators[6], we soon realized that gaining their full commitment would require a collaborative planning approach. The Lead Artist and I spent much of the next week meeting with each Artist Facilitator individually and sharing what we had learned about the suicide outbreak in Thoreau and also discussing our preliminary plans for a community event that would bring area youth together with Artist Facilitators.

One of the challenges we recognized early in the process was that the Artist Facilitators felt incapable in influencing the attitudes and behaviors of youth, particularly when related to decisions about suicide. When we asked them what would help ease their anxiety, the Artist Facilitators identified solutions which included (1) gaining the support of the community and asking that the community demonstrate their support by funding

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[5] From this point forward, Ryan Singer will be referred to as the Lead Artist.
[6] From this point forward, the artists will be referred to as Artist Facilitators.

the event; (2) having clinical support staff, parents, and family members present at the

event to intervene and provide counseling if needed; (3) training from a mental health

clinician on Indigenous youth suicide; and, in their presentations and interactions with

youth (4) focusing on experiential knowledge rather than empirical evidence. The Artist

Facilitators also felt that they would be most effective at encouraging art and creativity as

a way to deal with boredom and stress and also to build self-esteem and make friends

(build networks). They would share stories of growing up in their communities and how

their talent for art set them apart from their peers but also helped them to feel connected

to their families and communities. They also wanted to talk about the practical lessons

learned by making art such as problem solving and setting and achieving goals.

From these initial discussions we were able to draw out the key concepts that

would drive the remainder of our project. The concepts were:

1. Artist Facilitators felt that they, as Native people, had an obligation to

   contribute to youth suicide prevention for the overall well-being of their

   communities;

2. As skilled and experienced professionals, it is important to share their

   experience with others and to serve as mentors and role models;

3. The process of making art can be a useful tool for building trust among

   groups, particularly when art is made together;

4. Working as a group allows the Artist Facilitators, collaborating partners, and

   participants to create a supportive environment for artistic creation; and

5. This project would be first-and-foremost, a grassroots effort by concerned

   community members—the fact that they are artists and *not* health

professionals will influence other community members to also take action[7].

With our core values defined, we began contacting potential collaborators and funders including Dr. John Torres-Nez from the Southwestern Association for American Indian Art (SWAIA), Mr. Lamont Yazzie from the Navajo Nation Boys and Girls Clubs, and Mr. Sherrick Roanhorse, (then) Executive Staff Assistant to Vice-President of the Navajo Nation, Ben Shelley. Our preliminary goal was to present our idea to a community leader or other key official to gauge the level of interest in our project and to eventually secure a funding source.

Our first contact with the Navajo Nation began with an informal meeting in early May 2010 with (then) Vice President Ben Shelly who was also a resident of the Thoreau community. We shared our ideas to host a community art event with the Vice President who felt that what was needed in Thoreau was a holistic approach to suicide prevention that was inclusive of all community members and leaders with less emphasis on clinical data and interventions. In our conversation, he eluded to a community-wide frustration around the quickly growing stigma of youth suicide in their town and the detrimental effects it had not only on area youth and community members but on all Diné as well. He was quick to voice support for our project stating the urgency for summer youth programs.

With Mr. Roanhorse's continued assistance, we learned that a suicide-surveillance system created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention had been implemented in Thoreau, which established a Regional Incident Command Center and a designated Response Team. The Response Team was made up of representatives from the three governmental entities that provided services to the Thoreau area—the Navajo Nation

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[7] I will refer to these key concepts through the remainder of this paper as core values.

(NN), Indian Health Service (IHS), and the State of New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH). The Response Team included Program Managers, Community Health Representatives, Health Educators, Behavioral Health Technicians, Emergency Response Personnel (police officers and emergency medical technicians), Therapists and Psychiatrists, as well as key community leaders such as pastors from local churches, Chapter officials, and traditional healers. The Response Team was funded equally by the three governmental entities involved. The collective funding would allow for the proliferation of a building which served as home base for emergency and medical personnel. The pooling of funds was also intended to expedite access to funds for community programs and activities by allowing consulting individuals and organizations to bypass the lengthy tribal contracts process. Although temporary, the change in funding procedures helped to create a supportive infrastructure for community programs and activities designed to address what the community considered to be a major contributing factor for youth suicides—boredom. Community members we spoke with about the outbreak regularly mentioned the lack of youth-focused activities and programs outside of school. They felt that area youth did not have enough activities to keep them engaged and that the unoccupied time led to risky activity such as gang involvement, substance abuse, and crime. While no data was made available regarding the source of the additional free time, some community members suggested changing family dynamics and economic stress (e.g. parents having to travel away from their homes to find work, etc.) as potential sources.

We approached the Command Team in mid-May and learned that community activities such as sports leagues and field trips were already being planned. This proved

Figure 6 Douglas Miles (Photo Credit: Brendan Moore)

to be beneficial as we quickly received support for our project from the Command Team. The Team assigned the Crownpoint Behavioral Health Office to be our primary contact and coordinate logistics locally and would also be responsible for funding our project out of their portion of the pooled funds.

With the expressed support of the Command Team, we began creating a formal proposal outlining our plans for a Youth Art Project. To accomplish this, we began working more closely with the Artist Facilitators in order to outline our goals, objectives, scope of work, and budget. Throughout our discussions, the Artist Facilitators continued to voice their reluctance about being considered a "suicide prevention" project—to them, the *prevention* of suicide was overwhelming, clinical, and something they felt they could not directly affect. When I challenged the Artists to strategize ways in which they might overcome their anxiety, they identified the need for an Artist with extensive community experience and the person they recommended was Akimel O'odham/Apache graphic artist, Douglas Miles.

Mr. Miles is a father, painter, printmaker, and owner of a skateboarding company called Apache Skateboards. He travels extensively along with his skateboarding team (which includes some of his own children) to Native American communities throughout the U.S. organizing youth-oriented events such as concerts, art shows, skateboarding contests and

Figure 7 Skateboards by Douglas Miles.

demonstrations. He is also a respected motivational speaker and is often involved with a number of different community-based projects for youth including suicide prevention. In addition to his community work, Mr. Miles is a celebrated artist and painter and has been a major force in contemporary Native American art for a number of years. Like all our Artist Facilitators, Mr. Miles is frequently credited for seamlessly combining his Native American identity with popular American culture and fine art. His involvement provided the experience, motivation, and support the Artist Facilitators needed and proved to be the "missing ingredient" in our project.

After a face-to-face meeting in Laguna Pueblo, NM in late May, we developed an agenda for the event and submitted our final proposal and budget to the Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral Health in Crownpoint. Our agenda included a morning of presentations by each Artist Facilitator in which they would tell their stories of growing up on the Reservation, how they became artists, how art helped them to overcome a particular life challenge, their sources of inspiration, and show examples of their artwork. The presentations would be followed by lunch and a screening of Douglas Miles' short film about Apache Skateboards. The major activity of the afternoon was the painting of a group mural which would be created by the artists and the participants. The participants would be encouraged to draw or paint whatever they desired without limitation—this was an approach encouraged by Mr. Miles who believes that all products of human creativity is Art regardless of skill or training. To conclude the days' events, we planned to distribute door prizes donated by the Artist Facilitators and art supplies to each youth participant.

We knew that funding would be limited and planned our agenda in order to keep

our total costs under $1,500.00 so it would be affordable not only for Thoreau but for any Reservation community anywhere! Our budget included compensation to the Artists for time and travel expenses, snacks and lunch for the participants, mural supplies, and art supplies for each participant. The total budget of $1,550.00 included a $600.00 in-kind contribution for incentives, supplies, and coordination services.

Although our proposal had been formally approved by the Command Team and the Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral Health-Crownpoint Office, we experienced a number of setbacks in implementing our project as proposed. First, the suicides continued to occur at a similar rate. This meant that many of the Command Team members were repeatedly responding to emergency situations, which left little resources for planning prevention work and community activities. The major challenge we experienced as a result was a complete loss of communication and lack of follow-up or feedback from our community partner. Because of this, we were forced to take on many of the community organizing efforts ourselves, including locating and reserving space at the Chapter House, recruitment and advertising, arranging for catering, and making travel arrangements. Much of this preparatory work was funded out-of-pocket because we were unsure if funds had indeed been secured as promised.

Because we were all located in different off-Reservation communities, we chose to advertise for our event using internet, print, and radio announcements. First, we recruited a Diné student from the UNM Architecture program, Nick Nelson, to develop online graphics and a print flyer. We also purchased a domain name (www.NativeArtistsforHOPE.org) and web hosting space and created a small website with basic information about the artists, links to their personal websites, and information

Figure 8 Flyer for the Thoreau Youth Art Project

about the project. The website also had contact information including an email address, phone number (created through Google Voice), and links to download posters and flyers. We also created accounts on the three major social networking sites—Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace—and began advertising through event postings, status updates, and email blasts. While our online organizing helped attract a number of supporters and well-wishers, our contact lists revealed that we were not reaching our target population. As a result, we began more community advertising by posting flyers in and around Thoreau such as at the post office, convenience stores, and the Chapter House. We also submitted a flyer to the Navajo Times for posting in their "Community Notes" section as well as the Gallup Independent and KTNN radio station. We also made extra copies of the flyer in several sizes and colors for the Incident Command Center to distribute. They, in turn, mailed flyers to all of the clients and families in their case load.

As the event drew nearer, we began to feel more disconnected from our community partner as they were forced to manage a plethora of other projects. One week before the event was scheduled to occur we were faced with a major decision of whether

or not our event could even proceed. We had been informed suddenly by our partners that although funding had been approved, the process of requesting a check had not been initiated and our funding would be delayed, which meant that we could either postpone the event until funding could be secured or we could continue without any funding and hope that reimbursement would be approved later. After informing our Artist Facilitators of the development, they decided to donate their travel expenses toward the project and encouraged us to continue. We funded the remainder of the project with our personal funds and donations from the Artist Facilitators. SWAIA donated shopping bags, magazines, and merchandise for door prizes, supplied a laptop and a projector for the Artist presentations and also donated the time of two staff members to assist in the day's activities. They also agreed to act as our fiscal agent in future efforts and would maintain an account for the project so that we could receive tax-deductible donations from individuals and businesses.

Some of the challenges we endured during the final planning of the event were primarily logistical such as locating and purchasing supplies and transporting them to Thoreau. One of our major challenges was in transporting lunches and snacks for participants as we realized that there was no community kitchen located in the Chapter House—thus there was nowhere to store or prepare food and drinks. It is my personal opinion that these challenges would not have been as big an issue if we had a reliable community contact to help us identify resources and solutions for such logistical problems.

Thoreau Youth Art Project

On July 19, the Artist Facilitators, SWAIA staff, and volunteers arrived early to

prepare for the day's activities that included tasks such as setting up the projector and screen, chairs, and preparing a space outside for the mural. As participants began to arrive, we directed each participant to sign-in with their name, age, and home community. We found that a large portion of the participants were members of the local Boys and Girls Club and normally spent their days at the Chapter House anyway. Others had received our announcements in the mail and others had wandered in to inquire about the activities. In total we had 31 participants (including parents) with youth ranging in age from 3 to 22. A majority of participants were from Thoreau and surrounding communities but a few had heard about the event either online or from the Navajo Times and traveled to Thoreau to attend the event. Many youth participants arrived with their parents and some with grandparents—all of whom stayed at the event with their children.

Figure 9 Lead Artist, Ryan Singer, discussing his early artistic influences.

Our Lead Artist facilitated the day's events by introducing each presenter, guiding the agenda, and also made the opening presentation. In his presentation, he discussed his childhood and the development of his artwork in relation to his life growing up on the Reservation. He discussed his musical influences including rock and punk music as well as the role of pop culture in his work specifically from comic books like The Incredible Hulk and movies such as Star Wars and classic horror. Additionally, Mr. Singer highlighted his experience of becoming a professional artist such as acknowledging his calling to make art and then finding successful ways of making a living. He described in detail his path of graduating

high school and then entering a forestry program in college which later led to a full-time job with the U.S. Forest Service. It wasn't until a major injury and related period of depression that he would return to making art. Mr. Singer describes art as being more than a skill but a way of looking at the world so that it "makes sense."

Following the Lead Artist's presentation were Rebecca and Darryl Dean Begay. Mrs. Begay focused her presentation on her role as a mother and art teacher. She discussed drawing and making jewelry as a way to bond with her sons and also to pass on skills that she learned in her trade. Mr. Begay followed with a discussion about the importance of spirituality in his artwork and the ways he draws both inspiration and strength from his involvement with sweat lodges and the Native American Church. Like Mr. Singer before them Mr. and Mrs. Begay discussed the ability to transform a problem into a source of creative inspiration.

The third presenter of the day was Monty Singer who described his experiences as the son of an established artist and his personal struggle with depression. He provided examples of his artwork in pastel and talked at length about the challenge of starting a new painting on a blank canvas which he related to overcoming day-to-day challenges such as interpersonal conflict. Mr. Singer's presentation was by far the most personal and is omitted here in the interest of maintaining his privacy.

Ms. Allison's presentation completed the morning's activities and highlighted the significance of family and Laguna history in her artwork. Ms. Allison described her experience of growing up as a bi-racial woman in Laguna and her educational path from high school to earning her Associates of Art degree from the Institute of American Indian Art (IAIA). She also discussed paying tribute to her family and ancestors through her work such as the multi-media portraits of her family members to paintings based on photos of renowned Laguna photographer Lee Marmon. She describes her work as a combination of Laguna history and place with contemporary cubist styles.

By the time Ms. Allison had completed her presentation, a much needed break was in order as our participants (particularly the younger ones) had started to exhibit visible signs of fatigue. We served a brown bag lunch and watched Mr. Miles' film on the creation of Apache Skateboards. During this time, we noticed that many more participants had arrived and we had in fact, doubled our numbers since the early morning. Many families had also arrived in large groups as well as elders from the nearby Senior Center and local artists who had heard about our project. The lunch break also gave the Artist Facilitators time to talk to the participants which proved to be beneficial for both parties. I observed young girls approaching Ms. Allison and telling her about their interest in art and

Figure 10 "Long Day" by Marla Allison.

others approaching Mr. Singer about his detailed landscapes.

Following our break, our Lead Artist welcomed our new arrivals and explained the purpose of the Project. He introduced Mr. Miles who proved to be an engaging speaker and provided the perfect conclusion to the morning's events. He asked all the youth participants to sit in the front of the room and addressed them directly. He spoke eloquently about the beauty of creativity, the importance of family, friends, and community, but most importantly, he was the only speaker to directly address the events in Thoreau. He described the tragedy of suicide and the dire impacts it had on family, communities, and all Indigenous peoples and discussed the difference between positive and negative self-expression. He stated that everyone is and can be creative without limits but the difference lies in the direction of that creativity. He described gang activity, violence, substance abuse, and suicide as negative forms of self-expression and without

reward. He concluded by challenging participants and their families to express themselves in ways that were respectful, innovative, and fearless. The message Mr. Miles so lucidly delivered that day was that creativity becomes meaningful Art when it is channeled through an individual regardless of judgment and critique—a message that the Artist Facilitators and parents all visibly supported.

With our Artist presentations concluded, our Lead Artist escorted all the participants outdoors where a custom canvas had been setup

Figure 11 Douglas Miles speaking about the creative process

37

for the group mural project. The canvas was 4-feet tall by 8-feet wide and was custom made by Ms. Allison to fold to half its size on piano hinges. Each of the participants (youth and adult) received a Styrofoam plate with acrylic paint in three colors (red, yellow, and blue) and a foam paint brush. The Lead Artist invited participants to paint in groups and asked each participant to paint whatever they chose but to be sure that enough blank canvas remained for everyone to paint. Each of the Artist Facilitators answered

questions, painted, and observed during this process. Some of the questions from the youth participants included how to make other colors such as pink and purple and what the Artists learned while in Art School. We also found that some of the older participants had desires to attend Art School or major in Art-related programs but had chosen otherwise because they believed they would not be able to support their families as artists. Along with this we heard stories from the younger children

Figure 12 Painting the mural

about wanting to make art but not having the tools such as drawing pencils or sketchbooks.

One of the more surprising outcomes of this activity was the level of participation. While we knew that the youth participants would enjoy painting, we did not expect the same level of involvement from the adults. However, we found that all the

parents and even community members who just happened to be passing by found the

mural activity engaging. We also witnessed Tribal employees from the Division of

Behavioral Health and Thoreau Chapter staff painting and socializing around the mural.

In many ways, the mural activity was one of the most rewarding experiences I have

personally witnessed and been a part of.

Figure 13 The completed mural

Once the mural was completed, our Lead Artist gave a short concluding statement

by thanking all of our participants, our partners at the Division of Behavioral Health, and

Thoreau community members. We concluded the events by distributing the SWAIA gift

bags to each of our participants as well as door prizes including t-shirts, art-related toys

and games, coffee mugs, and water bottles. One lucky participant received a skateboard

deck from Apache Skateboards signed by Mr. Miles. Each gift bag included a

sketchbook, colored pencils, crayons, an official SWAIA Indian Market magazine

featuring our Artist Facilitators, "Wagonburner" buttons, "Robot" stickers, art show

postcards featuring the work of the Artist Facilitators, and a photo collage of artwork by each of the Facilitators. Once the gift bags were distributed, a closing prayer was delivered and our participants and Artist Facilitators returned to their homes.

Figure 14 Billboard with mural from Thoreau Youth Art Project in Crownpoint

Days after the event, our funding still had not been secured which was the case for a number of community events like ours. Despite the delay, we continued to work with our partners at the Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral Health Services (DBHS) and submitted our final invoice and receipts in hopes that our original agreement with them would take precedent. Some months afterward, we were finally reimbursed for our expenses although the final amount was well below what we were promised. In the end, the Artist Facilitators decided to donate all their time and travel to the project to demonstrate their commitment to our shared cause.

Epilogue

In January of 2010, a billboard was erected in the community of Crownpoint about 30 miles from Thoreau. The billboard was sponsored by the Navajo Nation Division of Behavioral Health Services (DBHS) and was plastered with an enlarged image of the mural that was created by youth and community members during the Thoreau Youth Art Project six months earlier. The mural itself is displayed in the communal conference room in the Crownpoint DBHS office and stands as a reminder of youth and resilience for all their clients and staff.

Over a year has passed since the Thoreau Youth Art Project and our work with Native communities continues. At the end of June 2011, the Lead Artist and I were allowed to present our project at the Native Research Conference in Niagara Falls, NY and received an enthusiastic response from conference participants. In July 2011, we were invited into another community on the Navajo Nation to participate in a Life Preservation Summit where we would once again engage artists, youth, and community members in a day of art. Using the same model pioneered by the Thoreau Youth Art Project, our Lead Artist selected three professional Artists who he believed exhibited the core values our founding Artist Facilitators had identified. Unlike our first project, the 2011 Youth Art Project was initiated by the community at the Chapter level and was supported extensively by the Navajo Area Indian Health Service.

To date, Native Artists for HOPE has engaged over 50 youth members of the Navajo Nation and their families in two communities and forged partnerships with several tribal and federal programs and institutions. Although we have no way of knowing if our programs indeed inspire youth to make changes in their own lives, what we can be sure of is that we have shared our knowledge extensively, built trust among ourselves and our host communities, supported each other and our participants, and have also set an example for others to do the same, which the proceeding chapter will illustrate.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTEGRATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter explores the dimensions of social capital of the Thoreau Youth Art Project using Javier Mignone's model of social capital that will point to "particular strengths and weaknesses in community relationships" (Javier Mignone, 2003, p. 4). As Mignone's model is fairly dense, I have chosen to focus on bridging capital for several reasons. First, social isolation or anti-social behavior is a common predictor of suicide among American Indian youth as is a sense of hopelessness (Novins, Beals, Roberts, & Manson, 1999). Bridging social capital can help to instill a sense of hope and belonging by introducing "alternative models of problem solving in a respectful community-based manner". Second, bridging capital is essentially "a horizontal metaphor, implying connections between communities" (J. Mignone, 2005). The Thoreau Youth Art Project is the result of a successful connection between two distinct communities—the place-based community of Thoreau and the identity-based community of professional Native American artists. Third, a more extensive analysis of social capital (including bonding and linkage capital) would require additional data collected at the individual level as well as an examination of the formal linkages between the community and institutions beyond the community both of which are well outside the scope of this thesis.

Identifying the components of bridging social capital

Mignone's model of bridging social capital includes the following components: Socially Invested Resources (SIR), Culture, and Networks which are further subdivided as illustrated in the following table:

Table 2: Social Capital Framework

Bridging Social Capital		
Socially Invested Resources	*Culture*	*Networks*
Physical	Trust	Inclusive
Symbolic	Norms of Reciprocity	Flexible
Financial	Collective Action	Diverse
Human	Participation	
Natural		

The remainder of this chapter will identify the related components of each dimension of bridging social capital as supported by the autoethnographic narrative and quotes from artist facilitators.

Socially Invested Resources (SIR)

Socially Invested Resources are understood as resources that can be "potentially accessed by, or of potential future benefit to, any member of the specific community" (J. Mignone, 2005). An example of socially invested bridging resources includes collaborative community support for the building of roads and collaboration between communities on grant and funding resources. Of the 5 types of bridging SIRs identified in Mignone's model, Natural bridging resources were unaffected by the Thoreau Youth Art Project. However, a brief explanation will be provided along with possible examples. I also expand Mignone's model by including the component of Spirituality, which is and can be a socially invested resource in Indigenous communities.

Physical

Socially invested bridging physical resources are tangible resources produced by human beings as the result of interactions between the two communities. One physical resource developed by the Thoreau Youth Art project is the collaborative mural which was created by community members in partnership with the Artist Facilitators. The mural itself is a prototype for similar efforts while the experience of creating the mural builds

the capacity of participants to engage in and create art. Our hope was that this experience might inspire the community to participate in the arts in other ways, such as developing public art which has been used by many communities to beautify public spaces, build solidarity among community members, and enhance community pride.

Another potential arts-related bridging physical SIR is the designation of physical space in the community devoted specifically to creating and displaying art. Some possibilities are an art room or a community gallery in the Chapter House where community members can create and practice their art. The bridging would occur when these spaces are supported by the Artist Facilitators and SWAIA in fund raising, drawing awareness, and in the sharing of knowledge. A possible strategy for this might be to develop a partnership with the local Boys and Girls Club, which already maintains a permanent space in the Chapter and has been involved with a large portion of youth organizing activities in the area. An advantage to this partnership is that the Thoreau Boys and Girls Club maintain their own funding source outside of the Tribal Government through their formal affiliation with the National non-profit organization.

Symbolic

In addition to serving as a physical resource, the mural completed during our project also serves as a symbolic SIR in the sense that it pertains to the identity and strengths of the community. To the community of Thoreau, it serves as a reminder of the creative potential and resilience of their community members. The mural has also been used by the funders of our project as a symbol of the possibilities of community-engaged programs. To some of our project partners, art can serve a therapeutic purpose especially with children. While we did not incorporate art therapy into our activities, community-

based anecdotal evidence suggested that our project was perceived as a possible healing technique for youth.

The collaboration between the community and Native Artists for HOPE to encourage and empower area youth to create and make art to cope with and overcome personal difficulty is another example of a symbolic socially invested resource. The challenges Diné youth face on a day to day basis can vary in scope from broad social problems such as poverty to family issues including domestic violence. One Artist Facilitator shared his approach to art as a way to cope with his problems.

> "I used to drink and other things that were self-destructive. I eventually got to the point where that wasn't working for me anymore and I thought about suicide, too….but my art helped me find a way through it—it helped me to find meaning."

Youth also face added pressure of transitioning from their childhood to responsible young adults. And sadly, this is the time of their lives where many Native youth become exposed to risky activities such as gang involvement, crime, and substance use. Thus, finding positive ways for youth to occupy their free time is a major focus for many adult community members in Thoreau. Our Artist Facilitators provided youth participants with healthy alternatives by encouraging youth to draw, paint, weave, make music, movies or pottery, and to engage in other arts-related activities. One artist encouraged youth to draw what they saw and liked and commented that he started by drawing album covers, comic books, and movie characters.

Financial SIR is monetary and an institutionalized form of cooperation among communities in the form of a financial partnership. An example of bridging financial SIR is access to credit guaranteed by a partnership between two communities. Like all other SIRs, a financial resource may change into another type of resource. For example, a "financial resource becomes a physical resource when money is used to build houses" (J. Mignone, 2005). In the case of the Thoreau Youth Art Project, the financial SIR was the reimbursement we received from the NNDBHS for purchasing supplies, refreshments, and gift bag items. The investment made by NNDBHS in our project was also a bonding financial resource because it demonstrated the community's commitment to investing in their own activities and events. In their sponsorship of our project, one partner said "we want to work on the healing techniques of our youth—we want them to be able to take care of themselves. They complain that they are bored and we're trying to show them that there are a lot of things they can do if they are creative." And although we encountered a number of bureaucratic barriers, the successful staging of the project is another example of the value of bridging financial resources in this project.

Another possible bridging financial resource is the potential income youth artists could make from selling their artwork. All of the Artist Facilitators are self-employed and making a living by selling their artwork independently or through consignment agreements with galleries. One artist said that he began making art because he was disappointed in what he saw and said that he wanted to tell the youth that "artwork doesn't have to be that way—you can make art your way and still make a living at it!" Some of the Artist Facilitators and our partners from SWAIA had the opportunity to discuss financial resources informally when they were approached by adult participants

with questions about applying for the Indian Market and how to work with galleries. Other community members also requested additional community programming to support adult artists interested in art as a career.

Human

Human SIR refers to human capacity as a product of formal and informal education. In this project, bridging human socially invested resources was the knowledge shared by each of the Artist Facilitators about their individual mediums, sources of their inspiration, and their personal roadmaps for becoming professional artists. Each Artist Facilitator provided information about the arts training they received from the cultural learning they experienced through family and community to formal arts training in colleges and university. One artist commented that "everyone has someone in their family who makes art from weaving and jewelry-making to street art and music." Another artist commented on the importance of having role models and said that "when I was a kid, I never had any Native artists come to me and tell me about art." His comment points to a fundamental gap in arts learning and hints at an opportunity for professional Artists to contribute to youth art education. The artists also recognized that "there isn't a lot of focus on art anymore and it's usually the first program that gets cut from schools" which made the community-based sharing of arts knowledge all the more relevant. Furthermore, this project helped identify and engage with an underutilized local resource—the artist community in and around Thoreau.

Natural

Natural resources are "those provided by nature, shaped with or without human intervention" such as the repatriation of ancestral lands and the preservation of land,

forest, water, and wildlife. As is the case for most Indigenous peoples, place, landscape, and environment is an important part of the cultural identity of each artist. Ms. Allison, for example, shared images of paintings she created depicting the landscape in and around Laguna Pueblo including plants, animals, landmarks, and symbols such as the Santa Fe Railroad train passing through the village replete with adobe homes and corn fields. Likewise, Mrs. Begay draws much of her inspiration for her silver jewelry and seed pots from flowers, insects, and plant life, which she described, in the Diné cultural context, as symbols of birth and womanhood. Our Lead Artist also discussed the connection he maintains with the natural environment on the Navajo Nation by painting the unique landscapes found in and around Tuba City. To him, a landscape of steep red bluffs, juniper trees, and a multi-colored sky evoke a deep emotional connection to the environment he interacted with in his youth. These examples symbolize the "balanced and symmetrical interrelationship between humankind and the natural environment" (Jojola, 2000, p. 5) indicative of the Indigenous worldview. When shared with youth and other individuals, they become an important natural bridging resource by supporting and reinforcing long held Indigenous cultural core values of land stewardship.

Spiritual

Spirituality was not considered in Javier Mignone's model of social capital. However, spirituality is important in many Indigenous communities and was also reflected in our project. I argue that spirituality is a socially invested resource because it can be potentially accessed by, or of potential future benefit to, any member of the community. This was demonstrated in Thoreau in a number of different ways—first, key clergy and medicine people were invited to be a part of the Incident Command Team and

have been active organizers in the community since the suicides began. They regularly counsel youth and their parents, hold church services, and host ceremonies for individuals, affected families, and for the community as a whole. And as healers and medicine people, they hold positions of utmost respect in our communities.

Spirituality also plays a major role in the lives of our Artist Facilitators. One Artist Facilitator described creativity as an external energy and that his role as an artist was to act as a vessel for that energy. He described the act of creating as a spiritual experience not unlike prayer or meditation. Another artist spoke of his participation in the Native American Church and in traditional Diné ceremonies as a major source of inspiration for his artwork. He described creating as a healing journey and a metaphor for overcoming problems in life.

Another perspective of the importance of spirituality in art is found in cultural teachings. One of the lessons I learned from my grandparents was to value and treasure objects and items such as jewelry, pottery, and artwork. I was told that they were another form of currency and could be gifted to medicine people for healing ceremonies—this is common in our Blessing Way ceremony which calls for a hand-woven basket to be given to the medicine person as part of their payment. Another lesson I learned was to adorn myself and my home with beautiful objects in order to attract blessings from the Holy People to myself and my home. Unlike modern cultures where artwork is considered a symbol of wealth, in Indigenous cultures artwork is an expression of the potential blessings attainable by all those who are receptive of it.

Culture

In Mignone's model of social capital, culture "encompasses notions of trust, norms of reciprocity, collective action, and participation" (J. Mignone, 2005) and does *not* refer to the widely held Indigenous understanding of culture which refers to shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices. Values related to aspects of Indigenous spirituality are not included in Mignone's definition nor does it "refer to the idea that there are many [Indigenous] 'cultures' that have unique traditions and practices" (J. Mignone, 2005). However, in order to develop an understanding of Indigenous communities, culture and spirituality must be considered. Thus, I argue that a Diné model of social capital must integrate our cultural and spiritual values because they directly inform our notions of trust, norms of reciprocity, collective action, and participation.

One of the principal ways in which Diné culture and spirituality can affect our interactions with others is through kinship (or *k'é* in our language). As young Diné we are taught to introduce ourselves—not with our names but with our clans. Every Diné has four clans which are inherited from the women in our families. We are said to belong to the clan of our mothers, grandmothers, and great-grandmothers and are "born for" the clan of our paternal grandmothers, great-grandmothers and so on. Our two additional clans come from the mothers of our maternal and paternal grandfathers. In this way, ad hoc families can be created even far from our homelands. This system also dictates the nature of our relationships with others and the expectations that may be ascribed to individuals based on our clan system. In general, Diné are taught to help and assist others because they may be relatives and also because we may need their help again in the future. We are also taught to work together to solve problems; an example of this is the communal nature of many of our ceremonies. Ceremonies like the Blessing Way or

Enemy Way require whole communities and clan groups to become involved and have

specific tasks for each family depending on their relationship to the patient—even in-laws

play a significant role in these ceremonies. Based on our cultural knowledge, Native

Artists for HOPE developed core principles that not only integrated these and similar

Indigenous core values, but unintentionally included features of social capital as defined

in Mignone's model.

Trust

Trust means that "community trust one another as well as community leaders" (J.

Mignone, 2005) and is expressed in this project by the openness of the Artist Facilitators

in sharing their knowledge and experience with community members. In some cases, the

knowledge and experience shared by the Artist Facilitators was extremely personal. The

following comment from an Artist Facilitator represents the level of trust expressed by

that Artist in sharing with the community.

"I wouldn't presume to know what they feel and can only share what I

went through but when I grew up, I had a lot of hardship too with

domestic violence and

alcoholism…I used to drink and

other things that were self-

destructive."

Another way in which the Thoreau

Youth Art Project helped to build trust was

through community art and the co-creation

Figure 15 Artist Facilitator Marla Allison and a youth participant and aspiring artist.

51

of the mural. Community art is a "form of public art that is characterized by its experiential and inclusive nature" (Lowe, 2000). One form of community art is collective art; collective art is shared and "it permits man to feel one with others in a meaningful, rich, productive way" (Fromm, 1955) where the primary role of the Artist Facilitators is to "set the stage for informal, cooperative, and enriching group experiences" (Lowe, 2000). Statements by the Artist Facilitators like "an elemental part of the human condition is being creative—it's all around us in all our Indian communities" demonstrates the encouragement youth received from the Artist Facilitators. They were encouraged to create in a non-threatening environment thereby building trust between participants and the Artist Facilitators. This was evident in the interactions I observed following the day's activities where youth approached the Artist Facilitators individually to ask questions and to tell them how much they enjoyed their work.

Norms of Reciprocity

Norms of Reciprocity in the bridging dimension relates to people outside the community and "conveys for this framework the idea that reciprocity is of a positive nature" with "reciprocal norms of collaboration between communities" (J. Mignone, 2005). Reciprocity is also reinforced by Diné cultural values which require us to assist those in need because they may be family.

An expression of reciprocity is the experience and capacity gained by the Artist Facilitators in working with youth and community-based events. One Artist stated that they were "happy to have an opportunity to give back because that's not something I get to do all the time because I live so far from the Reservation." Another artist said "I've normally spoken in front of adults who are highly educated but speaking in front of

children is a whole other experience—which is really freeing for me."

Another illustration of norms of reciprocity is the capacity I gained as a planner and organizer. This project was the first time I actively engaged in organizing a group and event at the grassroots level. It allowed me to learn about the institutional relationships between tribal communities and the Navajo Nation, State of New Mexico, and Indian Health Service. I also gained experience in proposal writing, budget and finance, and program development as well as improving my event planning and community coordination skills. Additionally, this project introduced me to a community of creative professionals and Artists who have continued to enrich my experiences as a researcher and community planner.

Collective Action

Bridging collective action is when "two communities work together to confront certain common issues" (J. Mignone, 2005). In our case, a community of Artists and the community of Thoreau worked together to confront the issue of youth suicide. The following statement about one Artist's experience exemplifies bridging collective action.

"When I was going to school on the Rez, the community I lived in had a

high poverty rate…a lot of social ills—a high rate of everything! When I

was living there, there was no serious outlet so I feel for these kids

because I remember I was always thinking 'what is there to do here?!' If

we had an event like this back then, things might have been different."

The "act of communication between communities around common issues" can also be an aspect of collective action such as the letter sent to Secretary Alvin Warren from the Thoreau Chapter President and the subsequent discussion I witnessed at the

AIHAC meeting. Our discussions with Artist Facilitators and our community partners are also features of collective action.

Collective action has been a feature of Indigenous communities for centuries as exemplified in sophisticated networks of trading, communal construction of homes and ceremonial spaces and community interactions in ceremony. In Diné communities, collective action is a requirement of many of our ceremonies which often call for interaction between families and clan groups. For example, the Enemy Way ceremony calls for collaboration between two different communities, families, and clans. An understanding of the kinship system is required in order to determine where we donate goods and even where we can eat. These same values were integrated into our project through our sharing of meals and the gifts we provided to our participants.

Participation

Our presence in Thoreau during the Art Project and also at community and Chapter meetings is an example of bridging participation because it implies "the willingness of community members to be involved with others in common activities" (J. Mignone, 2005). Furthermore, additional activities were planned for community members including sports leagues, field trips, marathons, and other sports-based competitions. Frequently, these events involved members of communities outside of Thoreau and demonstrates their level of bridging participation.

Participation is different from collective action because it has no explicit purpose of a collective good and can be both negative and positive. An example of negative bridging participation was the lack of involvement that we experienced from our community partners both near the end of our planning phase and in follow-up. While our

combined intention was to host a similar event in the surrounding communities, those

plans never came to fruition due to a change in the funding priorities at DBHS.

Figure 16 A community member and jeweler speaking with Darryl Dean and Rebecca Begay

A positive expression of bridging participation was the way in which the Artist Facilitators were able to interact not only with the youth participants but also with their families and other community members who attended the event. Participation was observed in different

forms including listening to the Artist Facilitators, asking questions, interacting with

other participants, participation in the creation of the mural, and being actively engaged

in the day's events. An example of the level of participation we observed was one youth

participant who traveled over 50 miles from another community in Arizona to be a part of

the event. His mother was a regular reader of the Navajo Times and read our

announcement and suggested her son attend. She then drove him the 50 miles to Thoreau

well before sunrise and stayed through the day's events. We also had a participant from

the neighboring Senior Center who attended the event alone and without children. Other

adult community members also attended alone; many of whom were aspiring artists

themselves and saw our event as an opportunity to get career advice from the Artist

Facilitators and our partners from SWAIA.

Network

Networks are understood as "structures of recurrent transactions and are described

according to their diversity, inclusiveness, and flexibility" (J. Mignone, 2005). Networks

55

in Diné communities are largely pre-determined based on our kinship system but that is not to say that they are static. In fact, many non-Diné groups have been integrated into this system through a history of adoption and marriage and we have clan groups that are historically from other tribes and ethnicities such as the Mexican clan and the Zuni clan. This is a demonstration of the adaptability of our social networks which has also been translated into our project with the inclusion of two non-Diné Artist Facilitators—one of Apache heritage and the other from Laguna Pueblo. We felt that while these individuals may not possess Diné specific cultural knowledge, their knowledge of their own tribal groups was similar enough that they would still be able to relate to our participants. Also, we recognize that the degree to which our youth are knowledgeable of and practice our own Diné culture and spirituality can be extremely limited. Thus, it was important to the Lead Artist to recruit artists who also reflected varying acculturation levels in order to create meaningful bonds with the youth and to demonstrate alternative, yet equally valuable, ways of expressing their Diné identities.

In addition to the networks created by our tribal and cultural affiliations, a major network involved in this project was the network of professional Native American artists. As members of SWAIA, each of our Artist Facilitators is connected not only to each other but also to a larger ethnically diverse community of creative professionals. The convergence of these two networks in the Thoreau Youth Art Project was what made our project so unique.

<u>Inclusive</u>

Inclusive networks refer to the notion that "these structures of interactions are relatively open to the possibility of newcomers and to the exchange of information with

newcomers" (J. Mignone, 2005). Like participation, the inclusiveness of bridging networks can either be positive or negative. The collaboration with surrounding Chapters and communities is an example of an inclusive bridging network. Although each of the Chapters functions as an autonomous unit similar to a township, the suicide outbreak was not limited to any geographic area. However, our impression, based on a presentation we delivered during a Chapter meeting outside of Thoreau, was that community members felt that much of the resources and programming was focused only on Thoreau rather than all the chapters equally. Thus the bridging networks in Thoreau were underdeveloped.

Our project recognized this as an opportunity and sought to engage the neighboring communities by easing our participation criteria. Rather than requiring that participants be from Thoreau, we extended the opportunities to surrounding communities by advertising in those communities, speaking in their Chapter meetings, and visiting with Chapter officials and key community members involved with the Command Team. As a result of these efforts, we were able to attract participants from 5 additional communities outside of Thoreau including Prewitt, Haystack, Red Rock, Gallup, and Sawmill.

In order to facilitate the building of relationships and inclusive networks, we employed Diné cultural practices by asking our Artist Facilitators to introduce themselves with their clans—even those who were not Diné. One Artist Facilitator always addressed his colleagues with kinship terms, which helped to build solidarity among the Artist Facilitators. Even after the project, these artists continue to maintain their relationships through their collective identity as Native Artists for HOPE.

Flexible

The Thoreau Youth Art Project demonstrated the creation of a flexible bridging network because it demonstrated the capability of the community to "adapt to a new, different, or changing requirement" and create "new potential networks quite different from more traditional ones" for youth (J. Mignone, 2005). Thoreau had never hosted a community art event before our project and our community partners were unfamiliar with the artists or the type of work they created. To them, art was in the periphery of their day-to-day work in behavioral health and tribal government. However, following our project, they were quick to recognize that artists make up a large part of our communities where many people make and sell jewelry, pottery, and other art work as a source of income. They also recognized that many of the skills required to make art professionally could be used in solving life problems. Some of those skills include an ability to communicate well with others, discipline, the capacity to work unsupervised, and a strong personal desire to succeed. The following quote represents the importance of healthy flexible bridging networks for Thoreau youth.

> "…it's always important to take art and pure raw creativity to any community—especially communities that are underserved—because it allows the people to look at other ways of expressing themselves."

Diverse

Diversity implies contacts with specific people from diverse communities. One example of a diverse bridging network is our partnership with the Southwestern Association for American Indian Arts (SWAIA). SWAIA is a valuable resource for many Native American artists because they provide professional opportunities such as artist

fellowships, community programming, and host the annual Santa Fe Indian Market. Although SWAIA targets American Indians in their membership, they are a part of a diverse community of arts-related organizations.

Native youth are an important focus of SWAIA as exemplified in their adoption of a youth classification and fellowships designated specifically for youth. The recent 2011 Santa Fe Indian Market poster is a further example of this spotlight as the winning poster design was created by Diné siblings ages 10 and 14.

Another example of the diverse bridging networks created during our project was a result of the artist presentations. All the Artist Facilitators discussed their influences and inspiration for making art from punk music and street art to renaissance art and Picasso. This created bonds between the Artists and youth by highlighting common interests and also introduced youth to other forms of creative expression.

Another strong influence was skateboarding due mostly to the influence of Mr. Miles and Apache Skateboards. Some of our youth participants were drawn to him because of their own skateboarding prospects. Their presence inspired our community partners to reconsider Chapter policies regarding their community skate park. The skate park was created within the past two years but has been continually kept under lock and key for fear that it would attract drugs, graffiti, and other crime to the area.

Diverse bridging networks are not new to Indigenous communities. While non-Natives are still minorities in many of our communities, the modern conveniences of satellite television, internet, and social media have helped communities like Thoreau to create diverse networks integrating popular culture with Diné culture and making it their own.

Summary

In creating this model, Javier Mignone's goal was to develop a culturally appropriate framework for exploring Indigenous health that was sensitive to the complex socio-economic conditions of our communities. However, by explicitly removing Indigenous spirituality and culture from his model, he overlooked socially and culturally prescribed rules that dictate our interactions with others thereby negating his original intent.

In this analysis I have focused on identifying the components of bridging social capital as identified in Mignone's model. I have also argued that for such a model to truly be culturally appropriate, it must integrate Indigenous values such as spirituality and kinship. In my analysis, I consider spirituality to be a socially invested resource because it can be accessed by, or of future benefit to, any member of the community. I have also argued that in Diné communities, kinship, dictates the ways in which we interact with individuals that, in turn, reinforce cultural values of trust, reciprocity, collective action, and participation.

The model of bridging social capital presented in this paper can add to the understandings of the community resources, culture, and networks developed and fostered by the Thoreau Youth Art Project. This model helps us to identify community strengths and draws attention to the multifarious ways in which programs influence communities and community health.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

In this paper, I set out to answer three research questions: (1) What is social capital, (2) How is social capital relevant to Indigenous community health and youth suicide prevention, and (3) What are the dimensions of social capital in the Thoreau Youth Art project as defined by Javier Mignone's "Social Capital and Suicide Prevention Factors Pathway Model"? In response to those questions, I argued that social capital is an important ecological determinant of health that is consistent with Indigenous health models. Aligned with the belief that the "essence of indigenous scholarship is native self", I have employed an autoethnographic approach to narrate the planning process for Native Artists for HOPE and the Thoreau Youth Art Project. And I have used a model of bridging social capital developed by Javier Mignone to conduct an analysis of the Thoreau Youth Art Project and have identified opportunities for integrating Indigenous spirituality in a culturally-appropriate manner. This concluding chapter reflects on the Thoreau Youth Art Project by drawing upon the tenets of Indigenous Planning.

The Indigenous Planning paradigm is based on the "reformulation of practices that have been used by 'traditional' communities for millennia" (Jojola, 2000). It is an experiential framework for planning that builds upon the Indigenous worldview of a "balanced and symmetrical interrelationship between humankind and the natural environment" (Jojola, 2000) with five basic principles (Robin, 1995). These principles are:

1. People thrive in community;

2. Ordinary people have all the answers;

3. People have a basic right to determine their own future;

4. Oppression continues to be a force that devastates people; and

5. The people are beautiful already.

Building upon these principles are four tenets "offered as a way to begin deconstructing the past and present towards a future of indigenous planning" (Jojola, 2000). These tenets include:

1. Indigenous people are not minorities;

2. The essence of indigenous scholarship is native self;

3. Indigenous voices need no translation; and

4. The indigenous planning process is informed by the indigenous world-view.

An examination of each of these tenets in relation to the Thoreau Youth Art Project and this thesis demonstrate ways in which the indigenous planning approach was used in order to validate community beliefs about youth suicide in Thoreau.

Indigenous people are not minorities

The Thoreau Youth Art Project and Native Artists for HOPE are just two examples of ways in which Indigenous people exercise self-governance and decision-making on issues that affect their own people. This project was not only planned and implemented by Indigenous community members but was also funded by and hosted in an Indigenous community. And although it was not discussed in this thesis, the model pioneered by the Thoreau Youth Art Project was duplicated in a second Diné community in the summer of 2011. The second project took place in Tsaile, Arizona and was part of the 2nd Annual Life Preservation Summit which was planned by community leaders in

Tsaile and funded by the Navajo Area Indian Health Service (IHS). Native Artists for HOPE were invited to participate in the Summit by members of the planning committee who wanted to draw on community strengths to reinforce and build resiliency to suicide. The willingness of both communities to partner with Native Artists for HOPE in their respective Youth Art Projects is thus a demonstration of continued self-determination and an example of indigenous people exercising self-governance to address the community problem of youth suicide.

The Essence of Indigenous Scholarship is Native Self

Self-reflection and storytelling are major themes in this thesis and both Youth Art Projects which create multiple opportunities for storytelling—artists sharing their life stories with the community and youth sharing their own stories through of images and symbols. The Artist Facilitators draw upon their own experiences of oppression to develop a spirit of camaraderie and to create a supportive space for meaningful dialogue to occur. And because they communicate in images, the Artist Facilitators are able to effectively voice common concerns such as stereotypes and address sensitive social issues such as racism.

The experience of storytelling allows the Artists and youth participants to engage in the "process of deconstruction as characterized by reflection and introspection" and to "adapt their ideas from experience" (Jojola, 2000). Furthermore, the Artist Facilitators and youth are able to draw upon stories informed by their shared Indigenous worldview and experience of popular American culture to develop and build friendships that help to reduce feelings of isolation and disconnection. The overall story of Native Artists for HOPE and the Thoreau Youth Art Project relayed in this thesis creates an additional

dimension of storytelling by sharing my personal experience as a planner and organizer for the project. By injecting my personal story into this process, I become a part of the community research where the "role of the expert is tempered by the collective experience" (Jojola, 2000).

Indigenous Voices Need No Translation

As Indigenous people themselves Artist Facilitators are already "experts" in their own culture and because of their success as artists, they are also experts in their profession. They reflect on their own traditional and western knowledge in their personal stories and share examples of the artwork that transpires from the integration of those traditions. This allows for the empowerment of community members to "take their rightful role as enablers of their own communities" by demonstrating successful ways in which western and indigenous traditions can be integrated. One Artist reflected on this process and said that:

> "Creativity has a lot to do with self-expression. And the way a lot of kids and adults express themselves these days is through anger, smoking, drinking…those are forms of expression but it's (sic) negative expression. And the worst form of that is saying 'I'm scared of life so I think I'll just kill myself.' It's the worst form of self-expression because it doesn't go anywhere. [What you see today]…kids painting, working with markers, drawing with no one telling them what to do, with no criticism—that's the best form of creativity right there."

The extension of Javier Mignone's model of social capital is a further example of the ways in which Indigenous people "empower the collective mind by challenging those

64

who attain their expertise solely through individualism and privilege" (Jojola, 2000). This is accomplished through the integration of spirituality and an understanding of cultural values of kinship as related to community networks and in the development of 'cultures' of trust, norms of reciprocity, collective action, and participation as related to bridging social capital. Validation and support for this approach has been demonstrated through the participation of two indigenous communities in Youth Art Projects and also through local and national dissemination at a peer-reviewed conference (Tsosie et al., 2011).

The Indigenous Planning Process is informed by the Indigenous Worldview

Diné have a saying, "t'aa akoji t'eego" which loosely translates to our belief in our own ability to succeed and supports the indigenous planning principle that people have a basic right to determine their own future. This saying is taught to us as children and is intended to empower young Diné to make informed respectful choices as they will undoubtedly determine their future. We are taught that this is a part of Sa'ah Naagháí Bik'eh Hózhóón which encompasses stages of developmental growth that is "pre-requisite to fulfilling and living a complete life" (Office of Diné Culture Language and Community Service).

As Diné, we recognized that youth suicide was a direct affront to these cultural teachings and that rather than being empowered, youth were feeling disconnected and hopeless enough to end their own lives. Upon speaking with community members we heard comments like "doo hádá'oolníída"—youth lacking resilience and drive—and being listless, unengaged, off-balance, and out of harmony. Our traditional response to this as Diné would be to plan a ceremony to re-engage the individual with their thoughts,

surroundings, and with the spirit world; the challenge Thoreau faced was healing an entire community.

The healing properties of art have been well documented in the literature but even in Diné culture, art can also be healing. Our Blessing Way and Enemy Way ceremonies for example include the community creation of a sand painting with images of deities and sacred symbols. This sand painting would be created by the men of the community and later, would be symbolically destroyed by the patient, thereby drawing the healing properties of all the deities and symbols depicted in the painting within. This ritualistic integration of art in healing is, thus, a demonstration of ordinary people having "all the answers" and is a reflection of our Indigenous Worldview. Drawing upon this model, the Thoreau Youth Art project brings community members and Artist Facilitators together in an experience of community life that is inspired by feelings of belonging and unity.

Summary

Despite time limitations and narrow follow-up possibilities, this study is an example of the ways in which an indigenous planning approach can be utilized by indigenous communities to address complex health problems such as youth suicide. This approach allows for planners and community members to integrate indigenous values, worldview, and culture with western knowledge and theory to create programs and interventions that are respectful and culturally appropriate. This study is significant because it enhances our understanding of indigenous community development and encourages community art as a useful tool to address health problems and to build community resilience. As one Artist Facilitator reminds us "there are a lot of problems in this world, but there's also a lot of beauty…art will show you that."

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