

Social Inclusion as a Mechanism and an Outcome in Sport for Good: Football United
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Abstract

Sport for Social Change (S4SC) organizations are an increasingly effective vehicle towards addressing the 17 essential elements of social inclusion outlined in the 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This chapter explores the role of social inclusion within the S4SC Football United Australia program. The program is a complex health promotion initiative that uses football for good mechanisms to promote social cohesion, racial harmony, and community engagement among culturally and linguistically diverse youth in Greater Western Sydney, Australia. The authors employ a critical realist approach and frame the program within the Context-Mechanism-Outcome (CMO) framework. This is an applicable framework to illustrate that social inclusion is not just the inherent good or outcome of S4SC activity, but an integral component which frames all three key components of program development and delivery – the context, mechanisms and outcomes of the program. We encourage application of the CMO in future program design, implementation, and future research in S4SC programs and to explore the value of social inclusion programs more broadly.

Keywords: social inclusion, sport for social change, critical realism, health promotion, positive youth development, social well-being

1. Introduction

In 2015, the United Nations modified the scope of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to include focus on marginalized populations across all global contexts, rather than just those in low-income countries. Re-baptized the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the seventeen broad areas of focus represent the “essential elements of social inclusion” (United Nations Report, 2016, p. 2). Sport for Social Change (S4SC) is considered an increasingly effective vehicle towards addressing these goals. S4SC is the umbrella term for a globally diverse field of over 900+ intentionally designed sports-based programs which address key areas of structural and behavioral change towards meeting the SDGs (Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe, 2016; InFocus Enterprises, 2015; sportanddev.org). The intentionally broad targets to achieve the SDG’s reflect what we know of social inclusion: that it is multidimensional, experienced differently across different contexts of life, and shaped by the economic, social, political and cultural dimensions which shape our lives (Koller, Pouseard, and Rummens, 2018; Gardner, Filia, Killackey, and Cotton, 2019). Social inclusion refers to the extent individuals and societies may be excluded from accessibility to basic resources, rights, goods and services, activities, or engagement that others have opportunity to accumulate (Filia, Jackson, Cotton, Gardner, and Killackey, 2018).

This chapter provides insight into how Sport for Social Change (S4SC) programs are framed by and promote social inclusion. We apply a critical realist perspective to illuminate the ways that social inclusion manifests in the context, mechanisms, and outcomes (CMO) of the Football United S4SC program. Critical realists believe the world is constantly changing, and that due to this, individuals and communities are constantly adapting to new social environments (de Souza, 2013; Pawson and Manzano-Santaella, 2012). The CMO framework (See Figure 1) was first introduced to understand how social programs adapted and addressed the social situations of specific individuals and communities (De Souza, 2013; Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Stebbins, 2011). The CMO frames S4SC through a lens of positive social change, and particularly the role of social inclusion in this change process. It examines the interaction amongst three core concepts of social programs – the context of the program, the mechanisms applied, and the outcomes achieved - to offer a “perspective on how social change and social reproduction take place in society” (de Souza, 2014, p. 143).

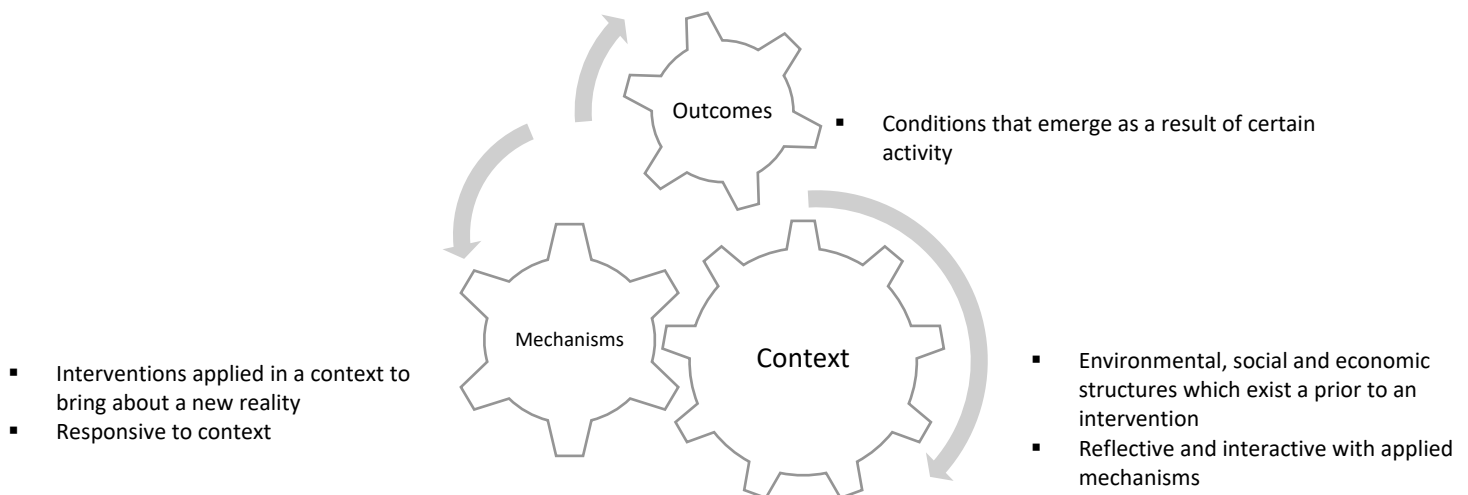


Figure 1: The CMO Framework, as adapted from Kemp and Harris (2012)

2. Sport for Social Change (S4SC)

S4SC is the umbrella term to refer to the field of practice applying the intentional use of sport to address the public health and well-being of a community. Lyras and Welty-Peachey (2011, p. 311) define this field as those programs that use sport as a “transformative tool” to yield “positive influence on [the] public health” of society, contributing to outcomes such as building self-confidence, community capacity, and social capital. Since the start of the millennium, S4SC programs have effectively used sport-based engagement programs as an engine to tackle global development challenges such as: fostering gender equality; promoting peace and reconciliation in war-torn regions; educating and delivering preventive measures to the HIV/AIDS epidemic; and fostering social inclusion of marginalized communities (Morgan and Parker, 2017; Kauffman and Wolff, 2010; Hayhurst, 2013; Sherry and O’May, 2013; Hansell, Giacobbi, and Voelker, 2020). At the core of S4SC, specifically designed programs use sport as a vehicle to engage and enable socially excluded individuals’ opportunities to develop and engage in cultural, social, and institutional freedoms which may have been denied to them before (Kauffmann and Wolff, 2010; Coalter, 2010; Massey, 2015).

As an example, we will refer to the case of Football United Australia here. Football United Australia is a complex health promotion initiative that uses football for good mechanisms to promote social cohesion, racial harmony, and community engagement among culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD, the common term used in Australia) youth in Greater Western Sydney, Australia. Auspiced by the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), Football United has been operating since 2006 to promote social connectedness amongst CALD youth in Australia (Bunde-Birouste, Byrne and Kemp, 2019; Nathan, Kemp, Bunde-Birouste, Mackenzie, Evers and Shwe, 2013). The program offers weekly sessions that are specially structured to engage, motivate and empower Australian youth to increase their self-esteem and confidence and develop notable leadership skills which translate to broader society. The program works within a socioecological framework (Nathan et al., 2013). In this context, the facets of program delivery are underpinned by the “cultural, social, physical and institutional structures” (Nathan et al., 2013, p. 2) of the wider community.

The program aims to be informed by and contribute to these structures. To do so, Football United works in collaboration with community organizations and schools particularly situated in locations with a high migrant population, and partners with others to expand their reach and delivery of the program. In addition to weekly program participation, Football United provides further opportunities for youth to connect and engage such as youth camps, special excursions, international development, and exchange opportunities. Recipient of numerous awards, Football United programs have engaged more than 5000 youth participants across three states in dozens of communities since its simple beginnings in 2006. The programs are inclusive of 70+ nationalities and cultures of origin, fostering connection and engagement among newly arrived, first, second and third generation Australians and indigenous young people. More than 500 youth have gone on to receive certified football and community engagement training, and to date more than 60 of these youth have been employed in the program. More details about the program can be found at <http://www.footballunited.org.au/>.

Football United, provides a unique platform to explore the role of social inclusion across the S4SC field. It enables examination of the interplay of conditions which inform how a program develops, is implemented, and the outcomes it achieves. We argue that social inclusion is more than the ‘inherent good’ achieved by S4SC programs but that it is a driver across the three key components to the program – the context of the program, the process and practices it uses, and the outcomes it achieves. The first element we will review is context.

3. Social Inclusion as a Context of Football United

Feathers (2018) suggests that the context of a program underpins its complexities, such as the mechanisms applied and the outcomes it promotes. Context are those things that exist a-priori to a program’s start (de Souza, 2014) or the “the prior set of social rules, norms, values, and interrelationships...which sets limits on the efficacy of program mechanisms” (Pawson and Tilley, 2013, p. 44). These include the social and cultural structures, economic environment, individual and community values, and relationships amongst key stakeholders (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). According to Whitley, Massey, Camiré, Blom, Chawansky, Forde and Darnell (2018), S4SC programs operate across a “diverse cultural, social, political, developmental, and historical landscape” (p. 182). These conditions underpin or influence how social inclusion may influence the need for a program’s development. This is the context in which programs, and in this case, Football United operate.

At the start of the millennium, there were over 22 million refugees¹ displaced across the world (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2000). Studies suggest that refugees face potential isolation as they balance the need to “maintain [their] distinctive identities” while assimilating into new cultural, social, and political systems (Strang and Ager, 2010, p. 592). Barriers such as learning a new language, racism, religious barriers towards cultural norms, and emotional loss potentially exclude refugees from participating in and accessing opportunities appreciated across mainstream society (Booth, Cusimano, Aston-Calabria, and Kuhn, 2010; Spaaij, 2015).

In 2006, Football United was created to face this challenge in the context of Australia, where over 13,000 refugees arrived each year (Nathan et al., 2013). In 2003, over two-thirds of all newly arrived migrants settled in Australia’s two most populous cities – Melbourne and Sydney (Schech, 2014). Findings from a 2018 Refugee Council study revealed Sydney still holds the highest net-migration gain of refugees, with a significant proportion of the population settling in Western Sydney (Refugee Council, 2018). Integration requires mixing of cultures such that the overall Australian population would benefit from a diversity of cultural values and norms shared amongst people of all backgrounds (Pittaway, Muli and Shteir, 2009). Following a 2018 Census, the NSW Department of Education recognized over 8,000 students in NSW are of refugee background, with an estimated average of 1,500 entering the school system every year (Refugee Council, 2018). Refugee youth are particularly vulnerable to health, social and well-being issues as they navigate the barriers to refugee integration alongside those ‘normal’ challenges associated with youth development. There is heightened potential for negative social situations such as gang violence, as youth use this behavior as a pathway towards belonging and generating social and cultural capital (Refugee Council, 2018). Similarly, Correa-Velez (2010)

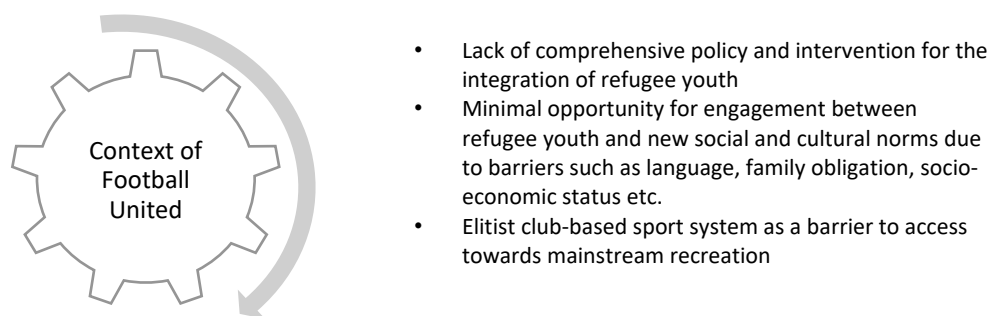
¹ A refugee refers to those “persons who are outside their country of origin for reasons of feared persecution, conflict, generalized violence, or other circumstances that have seriously disturbed public order and, as a result, require international protection” (UNHCR, 1951).

suggests that refugee youth require a sense of belonging to their “family, and to their community, and to their country of resettlement is essential for their wellbeing.” These contextual elements are drivers of marginalization and require coordinated, specifically designed interventions to provide a multidimensional approach to address youth integration (Correa-Velez, 2010; Booth, Cusimano, Aston-Calabria, and Kuhn, 2010).

Sport – and physical activity – can create a space that opens dialogue concerning the barriers to integration and form a unique approach to overcome them (Coalter, 2000; Crabbe, 2000; Oliff, 2012). It is this premise which initiated and underpins the delivery of the Football United program. There were, in 2006, and still remain today, significant barriers to young people’s participation in clubs or representative sport, despite their desire to play. These barriers included financial costs including player’s uniform kit and registration, lack of transportation, and cultural and language differences. Barriers were most apparent for girls whose lower participation rates were also a result of the greater expectation on girls from some backgrounds to perform domestic work, such as cleaning, cooking and taking care of younger relatives (Football United Report, 2013). Football United was designed and begun to address these barriers by offering avenues for youth to engage in the sport they love, promoting social inclusion.

The early years of Football United were unique periods of learning, adapting and gaining more nuanced understanding on the social, cultural and economic barriers facing refugee youth integration into institutional structures such as school, extracurriculars, the workforce and renegotiating their role in the family. The Joint Standing Committee on Refugee Integration (2017) acknowledges that there is continued need for auxiliary services to deliver opportunity for refugee youth integration, and sport and recreation sites are unique locations for youth to engage their community. The program continues to address the following contextual (situational) factors reflective of the context discussed here:

Figure 2: The Context of Football United programs



4. Social Inclusion as the Mechanisms of Football United

For a program to be effective, we need to consider: what brings about a new potential for that context? (de Souza, 2014). Collier (1994) suggests that these are objects, structures, conditions and inputs which can be put upon the context to generate an outcome. Social inclusion as a mechanism means a program gives voice to the marginalized through design and implementation

of activities that enable participation in diverse cultural, social, and economic situations while at the same time valuing the differences amongst all participants (Toronto Public Health and Wellesley Institute, 2019). Social inclusion underpins the delivery of four key focal areas of the FUn program. In Figure 3, we have extracted examples reflective of each area of focus to narrate the interplay of context and mechanism, and the role of social inclusion in this.

Football Activities	Capacity Building	Building Linkages	Creating Awareness
Football United delivers regular Saturday and after school programs, specially designed gala days and school holiday camps. In all activities, mentorship between coaches and players, between older and younger players and between volunteers and participants is a key focus.	Young people and their families in local communities can participate in courses and workshops and apply their learning in coaching and refereeing, mentoring and life-skills, leadership, first aid, project management and volunteering as part of Football United's operations	Football United builds linkages between schools and the community football system and between partner agencies, including migrant support services, community organizations, councils, government agencies, and the corporate sector.	Football United creates awareness through advocacy, high profile partnerships, ambassadors and research to influence changes to government policy and public perceptions.

Figure 3: The Key Focus Areas of Football United Australia (Nathan et al., 2013)

4.1 Focus Area 1: Football Activities

The Football United program delivers weekly football activities after school and on some evenings and weekends. The football activities are designed to include processes which engage core elements of social inclusion. First, every program activity, including weekly sessions, special holiday camps, and inter-school gala days, is based on intergroup contact theory. This assumes that bringing together groups of ethnically diverse youths in a safe, inclusive environment, creates new opportunity to address the opportunities and pathways towards social inclusion.

Early program delivery explicitly engaged this assumption. In 2006, the program attempted to break the barriers of exclusion by inviting youth from diverse backgrounds to participate in activities and access resources typically denied to them due to their cultural and socioeconomic environments. FUn programs were delivered in local community parks which were considered ‘safe’ sites upon which youth could harness this opportunity for inclusion. However, two key learnings emerged: 1. being diverse was not necessarily the same as being inclusive, and 2. in order to address the elements of inclusion, the program needed to be delivered at a site where a high degree of exclusion was felt most by youth. Many Football United participants live in geographically distant neighborhoods where they may not experience what academics define as positive ‘other group orientation’. Other group orientation refers to the extent of willingness to interact with those of a different ethnic background (Long, Zhu, Quan, Yang and Zheng, 2019, 2019). Research suggests that migrant youth experience a high degree of negative other group orientation from their peers, especially within the education environment (Nathan et al., 2013).

Football United program activities are specifically designed to not only bring youth from significantly diverse backgrounds together, but to foster positive engagement across groups through the various activities. Football United's research indicates this successfully fostered feelings of positive other group orientation: "*So when I came here and I started playing Football United, I met people from other countries, Iraq, Congo, Cambodia, and if it wasn't for soccer ... I wouldn't know these people. So that's a good thing about Football United*" (Nathan et al., 2013, p. 10). Research findings of a 3-year longitudinal study of the Football United program found that there are extreme gaps in equity of participation in community sport, and that these gaps were experienced within the public education sector, where disengagement from schools could lead to a higher risk of social exclusion. One Football United participant explained: "*They say when Football United haven't start [school named] there's always a fight between IEC [Intensive English Centre] students and the high school students but then when the Football United program started everyone started playing and started talking and try and make a friend, which is good stuff*" (Nathan et al., 2013, p. 11). Further findings suggested that these gaps in participation translate to gaps in opportunity, and when left unaddressed, will lead to issues of disaffection in society – perpetuating the cyclical nature of exclusion.

In 2019, 1440 school-aged young people participated in the Football United program across three high schools and three community centers in government localities of high CALD youth population. The school environment "is a critical social field for young people in general and for early settlement" (Nathan et al., 2013, p. 13). For the program to be inclusive, activities needed to engage participants specifically across their ethnic differences. An example of this purposeful mixing is random allocation of participants into training groups and teams within competitions rather than having them self-select into groups with people they were already or usually connected with. Some students participating in Football United programs said they remained in school so they could participate in the Football United program.

The second assumption which underpins program delivery is the notion that football is a vehicle for belongingness (Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe., 2016). Football is known as the 'world's game' (Darby, 2002; Morris, 2004; Alegi and Bosman, 2013), suggesting it is a 'language' spoken across cultural boundaries, engages both genders, and has a relatively low-cost delivery (Nathan et al., 2013). The impact, familiarity and comfort of football can support young people's well-being on their journey to settle in Australia (Football United Report, 2013). Parnell, Pringle, Widdop, and Zwolinsky (2015) propose that football has social welfare underpinnings because it has a large reach and captive audience. Participation in football is referenced as a moment of belonging which is intrinsically linked towards participation in mainstream society (Stone, 2018).

This assumption reflects the early, almost evangelical, belief in sport's capacity to promote social good (Eckholm and Dahlstedt, 2018; Coalter, 2010; Morgan, 2013). However, if the Football United program relied just on the sport, rather than the associated mechanisms designed to specifically foster social inclusion, it could have reinforced barriers of exclusion witnessed in discussions regarding gender equality, racism, and economic status (Coalter, 2015). We suggest that it is the mechanism of applying other core activities alongside the sport that make it a "suitable" vehicle "for achieving welfare objectives" such as social inclusion (Eckholm, 2018, p. 3). One such mechanism is fairplay football, a key facet of the Football United program curriculum. Fairplay football gives governance of the activity to the youth

participants such that they have control over their participation and how it manifests. Fairplay football breaks the football game into three ‘halves’ rather than the established two halves of a traditional match. Program participants play during the middle ‘half’ and are governed by fairplay rules collectively imagined and agreed to by the participants in the first ‘half.’ In the final ‘half’ the participants review their participation and identify areas of strengths and weaknesses, agreeing to the final outcome of the game wherein points are awarded for fair play in addition to goals scored. This manner of match structure fosters agency within participating youth, that is often manifested in their participation outside of the field. One program facilitator commented: *"They changed their focus from winning to being kind, inclusive and encouraging."*

The following quote illustrates a participant’s reflection on how social inclusion develops on the field:

I learnt that winning isn't everything, that I need to play with respect and be fair during sport. I also need to help others who aren't as good at sport to make them be included.

4.2 Focus Area 2: Capacity Building

Football United program offerings go far beyond weekly football training to give stakeholders power, and youth a right to exercise their voice. Football United Gala Days, festivals and program workshops provide a good foundation to illustrate how Football United builds community capacity amongst CALD youth and their wider community. The youth are encouraged to take the governance mechanisms applied and learned via fairplay football beyond the field. In 2019, Football United brought together 12 female youth participants from different program sites to participate in the Boundless Camp. They were asked to identify what an ideal women’s sport program would look like and how it could be implemented under their leadership. By identifying the barriers to participation and mapping a subsequent program model, these youth were facing and redefining the barriers of exclusion.

These opportunities are present throughout the annual delivery of the Football United ‘Be Legendary’ program which invites program participants to upskill themselves via FIFA-accredited coaching workshops. Participants complete a two-day workshop which includes interactive activities that train them on the Football United protocols for safeguarding children and how to use sport’s intrinsic values to foster inclusion amongst the participants. This program promotes employability skills for future income-earning opportunity, empowering youth to face this challenge. The following quote expresses the potential of this program to promote skill development among migrant youth to influence their lives outside of the school and football environment:

The most powerful experience I've ever had in my life is that leadership program, you know, that changed my life, that changed my thinking ... you know, make good decisions...they give you a good opportunity for you to be a good leader in the community (Nathan et al., 2013, p. 12).

Furthermore, academics suggest that exclusion affects the quality of life and potential for a cohesive society (Gill, Liamputtong and Hoban, 2013). Gala Days are hosted quarterly to bring together the participants from all Football United partner schools, their coaches, and Football United facilitators and volunteers. Admittedly, the football tournament is one key facet of Gala

Day activities. Additional activities provide mechanisms to further engage participants. Participants are mixed randomly during warm-up activities, further breaking social barriers, as students unknown to one another have to work together to learn a new game and facilitate teamwork amongst each other. Scoring is based on fairplay points earned by each team as a means towards teaching life-lessons and encouraging social inclusion at the forefront of play. Gala Days also bring together external participants such as community volunteers. The structured engagement between community volunteers and program beneficiaries presents opportunities to break the cycle of exclusion by increasing the accessibility for the engagement among diverse individuals (Bruening, Peachey, Lyras, Cohen and Cunningham, 2015).

4.3 Focus Area 3: Linkage with the Community

No one program has the capacity to address all structural factors that create barriers and promote equal opportunity for all members of society (Nathan et al., 2013). In order to bridge the different domains of exclusion such as school to the home and community, Football United programs engage across and with different community groups, councils, and governments to build pathways for youth out of exclusion. A notable example of this achievement is the Miniroos program, a collaboration between Football United and the Punchbowl United community football association to deliver football training to youth aged between 4-10 years. The Miniroos program is a state-wide program endorsed by the national Football Federation to promote inclusive play and skill development for youth entering the game of Football. Access to these programs may present similar contextual barriers to inclusion that have been noted previously. By working together, the two programs open new activities and resources to CALD children.

4.4 Focus Area 4: Creating Awareness

The Football United program intervenes at multiple levels, including the formal and informal social, cultural, physical and institutional relationships which influence the experience of migrant youth integration into Australia (Nathan et al., 2013). Working with influential partners, universities, and ambassadors, Football United can address elements of exclusion across these domains.

One notable mechanism to achieve this lies in the fact that Football United is auspiced by the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of New South Wales. The program operates at the nexus of research, teaching and learning and practice, conducting robust research and evaluation on the efficacy and impact of the S4SC field, gaining unique

- Football Activities promote shared experiences to enhance the inclusion across youth of different background and gives them the governance of the game
- Diverse capacity building elements
- Opportunity for governance and autonomy facilitated through workshops
- Community volunteer network facilitates more cohesive society and builds community capacity
- Community partnerships promote inclusion for migrant youth outside of the education environment
- Football United works to inform policy and practice by intervening at the multiple levels in which exclusion exists

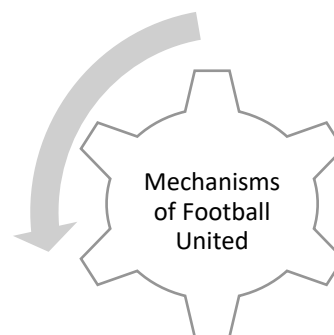


Figure 4: Mechanisms of the Football United Program

insight from the Football United program. This learning is applied to further revision and development of Football United program activities providing ongoing attention to promoting effective mechanism of social inclusion. It provides opportunities to inform current policy, processes and actions advocating for a more inclusive and welcoming society. Furthermore, this situation represents a unique opportunity to use sport and the principles of play to engage community stakeholders on all levels – from University to Community - facilitating strategic levels of social capital and inclusion. There are few universities globally that have these multiple foci; most engage in research only.

5. Social Inclusion as the Outcome of Football United

Outcomes, the final construct of the CMO, emerge due to certain activities, or the mechanisms, that occur within, or as a result of, the context (De Souza, 2012). We have described these activities above to illustrate the ways Football United empowers youth to face and reshape the way they interact with the underpinning characteristics of exclusion. The youth gain agency to build an inclusive society which respects the diversity of each other's backgrounds while working together to gain access to broader domains of life across Australian society. Reflecting upon our learnings, we suggest that the provision of new resources and activities by Football United enhances the connectedness youth feel to school and society, which reflect the domains of exclusion experienced most prominently by the youth (Nathan et al., 2013). This in turn, brings about a new experience for youth to feel included. Participants share what they feel they have acquired from participating in Football United programs:

To me, the people, and you need to respect each other, countries, and where you're from, no matter where, who you are. You need to respect each other's cultures and take that responsibility on yourself. Ensure you're not trying to change other people.

... has taught the whole group how to interact with each other in a more respectful manner which is helpful for the school as a whole.

Program evaluators have noted that elements of prosocial behavior, peer relationships, other group orientation and emotional feelings of inclusion are indicators of social inclusion and are how the CALD youth experience is shaped through participation in Football United (Nathan et al., 2013). Football United program participants have reported that they began feeling better about school attendance after regular engagement in Football United. This is potentially linked to an increase in other group orientation, such that participants felt they had more peer engagement during school hours among ethnically and culturally diverse groups, rather than just their own. Participants claimed this in turn helped them be more comfortable with their own culture and language. Youth could retain their own cultural significance while developing more significant peer relationships. This contributed to youth reporting a reduction in peer problems such as bullying (Nathan et al., 2013).

Youth also felt better equipped and willing to support their peers, help and teach others. This was a direct reflection from the Football United student coaches who felt empowered to have a voice and make decisions. A participant reflected on their role as a coach stating: *“It feels amazing. I look after people, then the people listen to me in the game and stuff.”*

The program equipped the students with a degree of autonomy which is often constrained within the CALD youth, and particularly the migrant experience. Participants have claimed the programs have given them the capacity to rely on themselves and be proactive in achieving things they now see as beneficial towards their future. Participants have also noted that their experience on the field translates to their life outside of the education environment. For example, a head coach reported on the significant change of a male participant, which illustrates a participant gaining autonomy. The participant felt transformed in that he felt an increase in control of his life and gained a positive attitude towards helping others over the course of the program. He was asked to explain this transformation and concluded that the Football United program taught him to *“rely on himself”* and be proactive in getting things done, even before others ask him to do them. He reported the program helped him navigate a challenging relationship with his father. He said he never used to have a good relationship with his father but now he understands the value of doing what his father tells him and suggested that: *“the program is important because it will help me in life”*. He now knows to lead others by example.

Like cogs on a wheel, as the program context evolved to reflect growing insight into the experience of CALD youth and particularly refugee youth exclusion, the mechanisms of delivery were altered accordingly, modifying how social inclusion was experienced by the program’s youth. Football United promotes the social inclusion of CALD youth because it interacts with and reflects the continually changing environment of youth integration. Fostering peer interactions, autonomy, participation, and cross-cultural interaction through football is undoubtedly important. This increases the social connectedness of youth from CALD backgrounds and is a precursor towards promoting further inclusion of youth across the domains of everyday life (Nathan et al., 2013; FUn General Report, 2013).



- Youth develop more proactive practices towards developing peer relationships across cultural and ethnic boundaries
- Youth are empowered to support others and work together to contribute to an inclusive society
- Heightened degrees of autonomy encourage youth to feel more control over their life both within and outside of the education environment

Figure 5: The Outcomes of the Football United Program

6. Applying CMO to S4SC: A Broader Look

As the application of the Football United CMO portrays (Figure 6), CMO provides an appropriate framework to explain and unpack the elements of social inclusion as they exist in a S4SC program (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). S4SC programs account for their context, and as such, engage with that context, and the inherent elements of social inclusion within it (United Nations, 2016). Green (2009) suggests that S4SC programs are provided to specific populations for specific reasons such as those who are at-risk, underserved or disengaged. Academics have catalogued these reasons as key thematic areas of focus which are prominently addressed by S4SC programs (Shulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe, 2016). Examples include using sport to address factors such as unemployment, criminal justice and the justice system, health and wellbeing, gender equality, and educational opportunity. Youth experiencing these elements have increased potential to be excluded from accessing basic goods, service, and opportunities perpetuated throughout mainstream society (United Nations, 2016). Within the framework of the CMO, these thematic areas become the contextual drivers for social inclusion programs.

The literature suggests that it is the role of S4SC programs to engender social inclusion in their participants (Peachy and Lyras-Welty, 2011; Whitley, Massey, Camire Blom, Chawansky, Forde and Darnell, 2018; Morgan and Parker, 2016). Our experience with Football United sheds new light on the role of social inclusion in S4SC, suggesting these programs not only promote social inclusion but are framed by it. We can explain this by suggesting that context is not a variable which complex interventions, such as S4SC, can control; rather context needs to be analyzed and engaged with (Kemp and Harris, 2012).

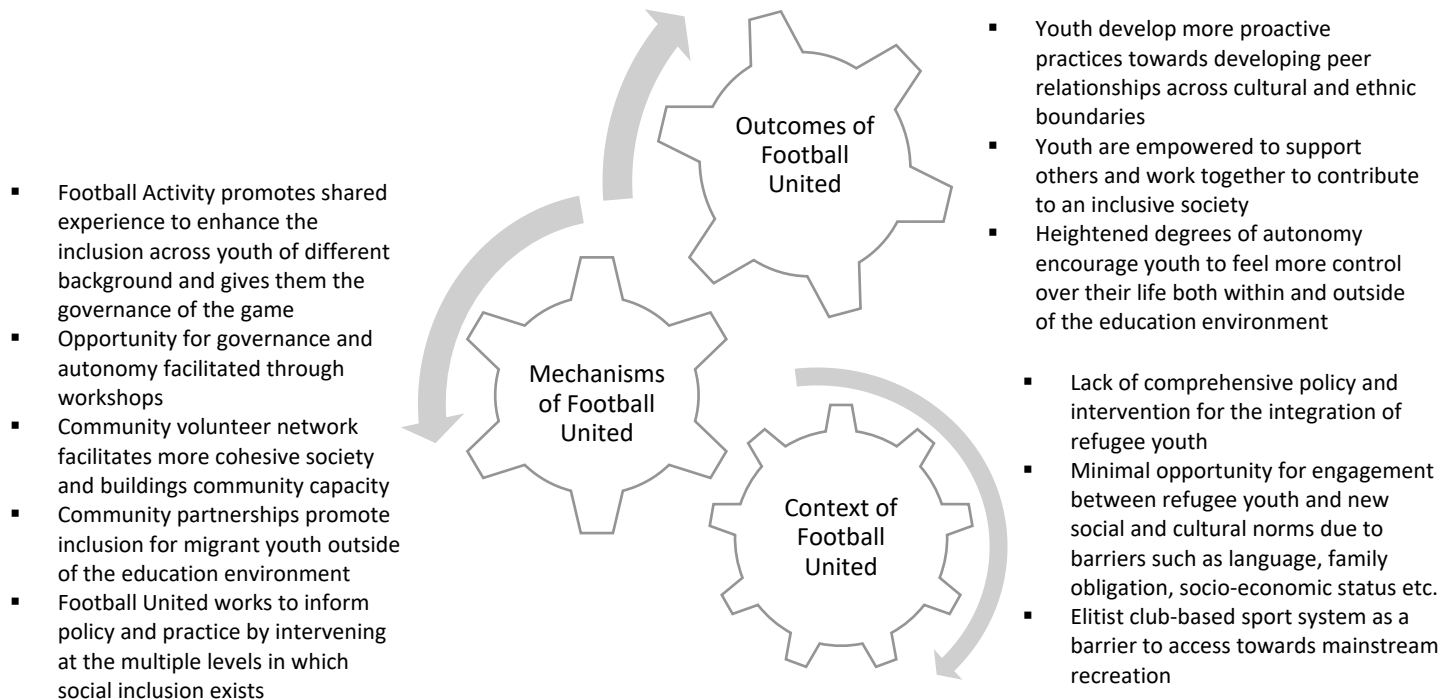


Figure 6: The CMO of the Football United Program

As Football United continued to develop, context remained critically important. For example, in 2015, Football United expanded internationally to address the peace and reconciliation efforts amongst ethnically diverse youth in Myanmar. Dr. Tun Shwe, Co-Director of Football United in Australia, saw an opportunity to expand the Football United program logic to his home country to support the peacebuilding process following more than half a century of armed conflict (Shwe, 2018). Our experience tells us that social inclusion translates differently across different contexts. For example, as you have read, we widely refer to social inclusion in Football United Australia to suggest social connectedness amongst CALD youth and mainstream society. However, this does not reflect our experience in Myanmar, where the dimensions of social inclusion are informed by social, political and ecological environment of the peace and reconciliation efforts of the country.

Others have considered the importance of context in their framing of social inclusion within S4SC programs, albeit without explicit discussion of how it informs program design. For example, whilst Hills, Valasquez and Walker (2018) acknowledge context in their review of the program *Seedbeds for Peace* in Medellin, Colombia, they did not draw a clear purposeful link between this context and the way the program mechanisms were context-informed. Context is

explained to introduce the program's existence, rather than a driver of the associated mechanisms. As such, we learned that the development of the *Seedbeds for Peace* program followed years of social, cultural and economic turmoil amidst the illegal drug trade in the 1980s and 1990s. During this time, youth engaged in drug-trafficking to escape situations of poverty or fear, while at the same time societal values were in question with the 'de-legitimization' of the state (p. 30). While the country has since taken steps to heal, youth still engage in a lifestyle inspired by the drug trade. The *Seedbeds for Peace* program aims to address the complexity of exclusion by supporting both the individual and the community which influences the way youth engage in social networks, civic values and reconcile the violence which still exists.

To connect the individual context and mechanism cogs and convey their relationship, we must examine how the program's mechanisms themselves apply key elements of social inclusion such as participatory decision-making, access to an activity previously denied to them, and creation of a shared value in social and cultural norms (Fillia, Jackson, Cotton, Gardner, and Killackey, 2018). Once more, we can reflect upon our experience with the Football United S4SC program. In Australia, there remains a lack of comprehensive policy and intervention for the integration of refugee youth, a context which Football United aims to address through its inclusive mechanisms (Refugee Council of Australia, 2018). The program, in partnership with the University of New South Wales, contributes to a growing evidence base on intervention techniques and outcomes which can be used to inform policy and practice. Another example of connecting the context and mechanism cogs is Eckholm's (2017) research on *Sport Programme (SP)*, a Swedish midnight football program working towards the inclusion of youth in areas of high exclusion and crime. The author states the program activities such as football coaching, education and guidance steer program participants away from exclusion. At the core of the program, youth are granted participation in programs which were previously inaccessible to them. Through active participation in a sport program which program participants did not have access to due to their context, participants increased their self-esteem and confidence which equipped them with "powers" (p. 74) to face exclusion. *Sport Programme* increased access to football amongst low-income populations in Sweden (Eckholm, 2018). Other examples of programs with clear context-mechanisms relationships include the *Grassroots Soccer* health education program for adolescent female youth in South Africa (Hershow, Gannett, Merrill, Kaufman, Barkley, DeCelles, and Harrison, 2015), and the *IMAGE* (Indian Mixed Ability Group Events) program in India to build the confidence and self-esteem amongst youth with physical and intellectual disability (Gupta and Vahid, 2017). We will continue drawing on these examples of social inclusion in S4SC throughout this section.

The next relationship is between the mechanisms and context. As we previously described, the S4SC program mechanisms must be participatory in their nature rather than directive, if we are to suggest that social inclusion is a contextual underpinning of the design and delivery of a program. Elements such as empowerment, capacity building, and governance should therefore be witnessed in the program deliverables (Gardner, Filia, Killackey, and Cotton, 2019; Fillia, Jackson, Cotton, Gardner, and Killackey, 2018). The Football United program goes beyond just offering football as a shared experience amongst refugee and other youth. The program methodology ensures that the youth have governance of their play, asking them to collectively identify the rules of the game, build capacity as football coaches, and ultimately, share the experience with those across different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. These aspects of participation which had been previously denied to the youth through the migrant experience in

turn lead to an increase in youth autonomy such that they have greater control over their life inside and outside of the education environment.

There is a very different illustration of socially inclusive mechanisms in exploring the notion of ‘participation’ in the *IMAGE* S4SC program. Gupta and Vahid (2017) first suggest that those with intellectual or physical disability in India “may never have received a full education” (p. 191) and are consistently excluded from mainstream sport. *IMAGE* encourages their participation in an activity which they previously could not experience. The research suggests that by offering this new opportunity, the program can force “disabled and non-disabled young people to move out of their comfort zone and into a contact one” – which did not previously exist (p. 192). The program promotes inclusion by creating this safe space for contact.

The final relationship we will discuss is that between the program context and the program outcomes. Prior to youth engagement in the Football United program, participants had minimal opportunity to engage with the new social and cultural norms. Football United moved to remove associated barriers and empower youth to support others and work together to build an inclusive society. The case of *Grassroots Soccer* further illustrates this phenomenon. In South Africa, there is negative stigma placed on female youth who access HIV testing, whereby society may exclude those members of the population who choose to engage with local testing centers (World Health Organization, 2013). By providing health education via an alternative route, such as football, to these youth, the S4SC program promotes an inclusive and open society. Hershov, Gannett, Merrill, Kaufman, Barkley, DeCelles, and Harrison (2015) suggest that one notable aspect of the program is that girls are having conversations about health which may not be accessible to them in other dimensions of life. The context-outcome relationship is also conveyed in the study conducted by Morgan and Parker (2016) across two UK-based S4SC programs. The authors note that in that context a lack of education and employment opportunities limits youth access and assimilation into mainstream society. S4SC programs act as incubators for society, creating a site of inclusion in which youth access elements of pro-social behavior, trust, and self-worth.

7. Conclusion and Future Directions

Through our analysis of Football United using the critical realist context-mechanisms-outcomes (CMO) lens, we conclude that social inclusion is not only an outcome of S4SC programs. Social inclusion begins with the context of the program, frames how the program intervenes and is an outcome S4SC programs seek to achieve, which in itself reflects the multidimensional factors of social inclusion in that context. The CMO provides a good framework for design, implementation and research into S4SC programs to ensure that social inclusion is more than just an outcome of a program but is an integral component which frames all three key components of program development and delivery – the context, mechanisms and outcomes of the program. We encourage its application in future program design, implementation, and future research in S4SC programs, and exploration of its value in social inclusion programs more broadly.

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