Ubuntu Impact Consulting

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Ubuntu in Evaluation Practice: Bridging Traditional African Ways of Knowing with Contemporary Program Evaluation

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Making Space, Valuing Place: Traditional and New Ways

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Larrakia Country
Garramilla

Humanity-driven Solutions • Evidence-based Impact

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONUNTRY

● Mindil Beach, Garramilla



Ubuntu Impact Consulting acknowledges the Larrakia people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we meet today, Larrakia Country in Garramilla. We pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

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INTRODUCTION

1 Evaluation Gap

Dominant Western approaches are often inappropriate, inefficient, and ineffective for evaluating programs and initiatives involving culturally diverse or multicultural communities.

2 Evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program

The Culturally Responsive Evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program was conducted to address the Evaluation Gap.

3 Black Rhinos Basketball Program

Black Rhinos Basketball Program is a grassroots community crime prevention initiative supporting young African Australians in metropolitan Melbourne.

4 Ubuntu Impact Consulting

Ubuntu Impact Consulting was founded, *inter alia*, to bridge this Evaluation Gap, particularly for African Australian communities.

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UBUNTU CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

- In the Culturally Responsive Evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program, the African Philosophy of Ubuntu shifted the evaluation from individual focus to holistic relational focus guided by the Ubuntu Framework of Support.

- Fortitude Valley; Kangaroo Point, Meanjin



- Culturally responsive evaluations involve culturally grounded relational approaches that reveal forms of processes and social impact often overlooked by conventional Western evaluation frameworks.

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UBUNTU CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1 Culturally Responsive Evaluations

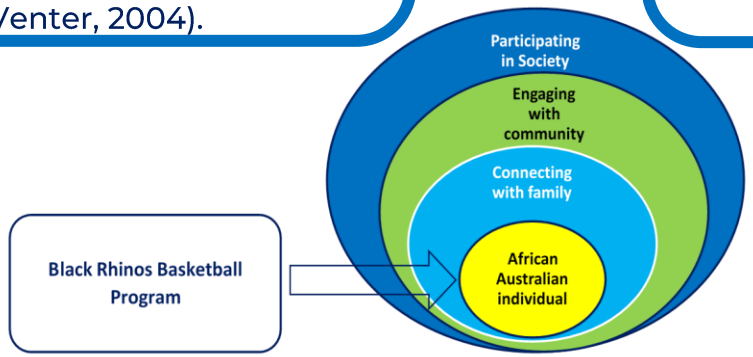
- challenge the universality of "culture-free" Western methods by advancing community values, worldviews, and empowerment (Dinh et al., 2025; Hood et al., 2015)
- from an African-centred perspective, CRE should be culturally relevant and grounded in African worldviews and paradigms (Chilisa et al., 2016).

2 African Philosophy of Ubuntu

- often articulated by the maxim "I am, because we are; and since we are, therefore I am" (Mbiti, 1969, p. 214)
- personhood is understood through humanity and ethical relationships with others (Chisale, 2018; Cornell & Muvangua, 2012; Venter, 2004).

3 Ubuntu Framework of Support

- a set of culturally responsive relational mechanisms drawn from Ubuntu philosophy emphasising personal wellbeing, family connectedness, community engagement, and social inclusion (Onsando et al., 2020).



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UBUNTU TRANSFORMATIVE METHODOLOGY

- Ubuntu Transformative Methodology enabled a culturally responsive evaluation of the Black Rhinos Basketball Program by assessing “pre-implementation”, “implementation”, and “social impact” of the program.

- Zillmere, Meanjin



- By using Ubuntu Transformative Methodology, evaluators gain meaningful cultural and relational insights of a program’s “appropriateness”, “efficiency”, and “effectiveness”.

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UBUNTU TRANSFORMATIVE METHODOLOGY

Transformative Approaches

Transformative approaches to conducting scientific inquiries involve using social justice belief systems to engage culturally diverse as well as marginalised members of society (Mertens, 2009, 2010).

Ubuntu Methodologies

Ubuntu methodologies are rooted in Ubuntu epistemologies and practices that involve processes of being and becoming human (Seehawer, 2018).

Recruitment Process

Facilitated by Afri-Aus Care; grassroots organisation managing the Black Rhinos Basketball Program.

Data Collection and Analysis

31 participants; semi-structured interviews and a focus group session; thematic qualitative analysis.

COVID-19 Pandemic

Data collection disrupted by lockdown; use of Zoom video platform.

Internal Stakeholders (13 participants)

- 3 program administrators
- 5 program staff
- basketball coach
- program counsellor
- 2 program lawyers
- COVID-19 food coordinator.

Target Cohort (13 participants)

- 13 young African Australian program participants.

External Stakeholders (5 participants)

- 2 family members
- 2 community/religious leaders
- society representative (program supporter).

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UBUNTU PROGRAM PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

- Ubuntu shaped the Black Rhinos Program's pre-implementation planning by incorporating community cultural needs and perspectives.

- South Bank, Meanjin



- Ubuntu provides a culturally grounded community-driven basis for evaluators to assess a program's community appropriateness and relevance before implementation.

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UBUNTU PROGRAM PRE-IMPLEMENTATION

Community Need for the Program

Program Administrator A

"So, young people when they have trauma, to unpack that trauma it requires people from different professions. So, it requires a counsellor, it requires a psychologist, it requires a GP, it requires a mental health clinician".



Program Administrator B

"I think what we wanted to do was ensure that some of these young people who are were disconnected from society or facing a number of complex social challenges would be able to, sort of, brought back into the mainstream fold and give them an opportunity to thrive and identify some of their goals, aspirations and needs".

Program Administrator C

"The Ubuntu is really an overarching community perception that they are a community. ... Ubuntu is about engaging your community in things that benefit the community as a whole. ... it is a gelling together of this sense of community, sense of communal identity in combination with something that suits young people".

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UBUNTU PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

● Ubuntu Processes of the Program ● Delivering the Program

Program Staff E

When we bring a new client to the centre, it's always like, this is home, feel welcome, feel free. … You get to connect with individuals … And that's the process – that's the character and the way we carry ourselves even when conducting the interviews, which is why I would say that there is the Ubuntu in it.

Program Staff A

So, from the Ubuntu perspective, we help understand a person as a person, and it helps us to separate the problem from the person and see the person as a person and see a problem as a problem.



Program Lawyer A

So, that's really how I bring Ubuntu into my legal practice making sure that organisations and families and communities alike know that it is not just a one-man fight. It really needs to be the plurality of it all. Everyone needs to work together to make sure that this person is set on the right track.

Basketball Coach

But what that [Ubuntu] directly translates to for me is just that community support, that community involvement. But also, that community accountability … That we are all growing together. You know, that's that strength of community. That is irrespective of whether it is on the court, off the court.

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UBUNTU SOCIAL IMPACT

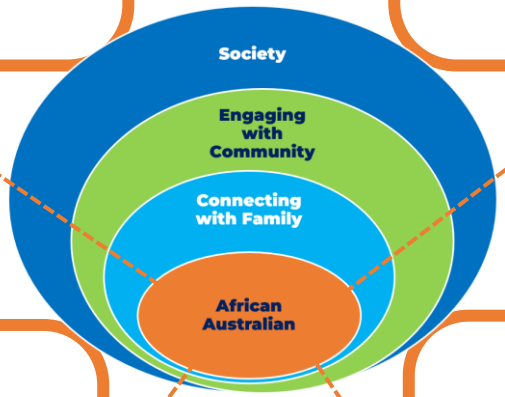
● Young African Australians Personal Wellbeing

Program Participant A

I love basketball, good brothers being there for each other. The basketball makes me feel happy. ... Yes, because I love to hang out with friends, brothers and this makes me smile and happy connecting with each other's, share experience, advice from each other.

Program Participant B

As soon as you come in, no-one looks at you differently. Everyone just welcomes you in here. And they were like, you have a past, but we are here to work on making you a better person, or a different person ... you don't have to worry about the same things bothering you again or you going back to being the same.



Program Participant E

There is going to be support [at the Program] and that you are not alone, and you get to meet a lot of people who are in there, as well, that are going through the same thing as you; therefore, it kind of eases your mind.

Program Participant H

And with Black Rhinos being really easy, really accessible to young people, it goes to a lot of young people, and it teaches them good values about hard work and, yeah, just if you want it, go and get it basically.

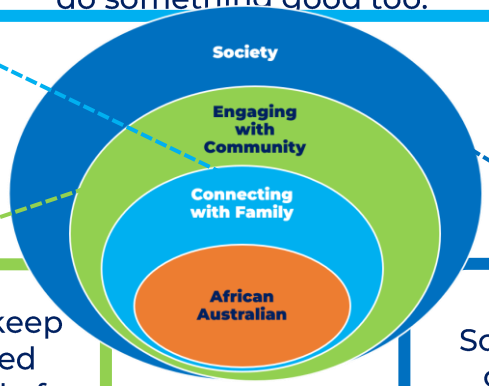
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UBUNTU SOCIAL IMPACT

● Family Connectedness ● Community Engagement ● Participation in Society

Family Member B

But if our kids [are] doing silly things, [and] they are not doing good things, it is not good. Even us, as a mum, we can't be happy, [even] to the community and to the government, also. ... I register him also to come to that Black Rhinos, because Black Rhinos is good in the future, and they are a team... it has given them chance also to do something good too.



Community Leader A

They have this basketball engaging them, so keep them from all this trouble. And I think we need similar thing, or we need to increase this kind of these ideas forming more basketballs, more soccer, more sport. This will keep them away from trouble. I saw the fruit of it, and I think some of them now focusing on doing something better for themselves.

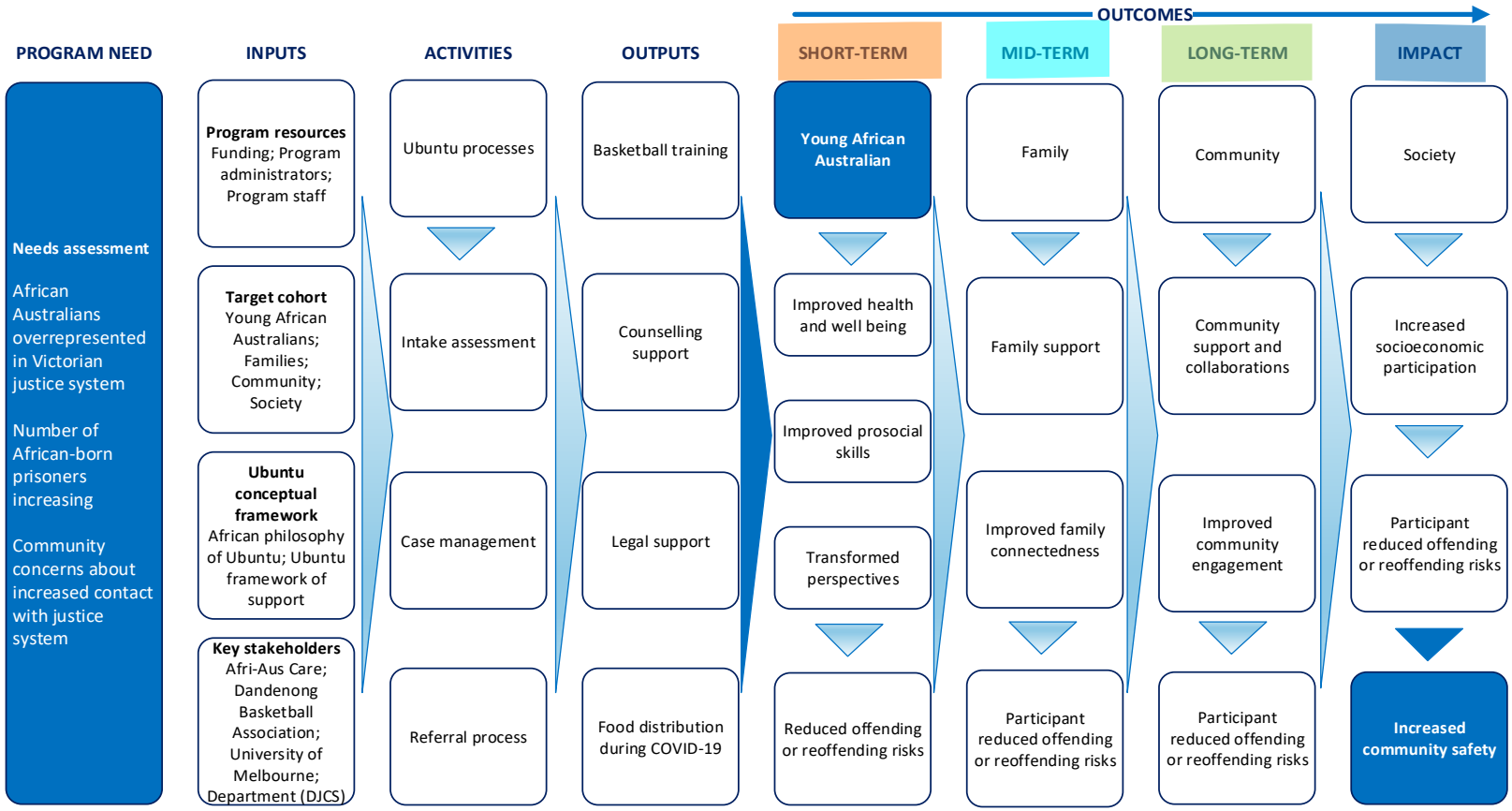
Program Supporter

So, I know anecdotally that getting kids involved or young people involved in positive activities must be having a reduction or must be reducing their likelihood of going and committing crimes or other mischievous activity, purely on the fact that they're there doing something positive for a period of the day.

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EX POST PROGRAM LOGIC MODEL



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CONCLUSION

1 Evaluation Gap

Dominant Western approaches are OFTEN inappropriate, inefficient, and ineffective for evaluating programs and initiatives involving multicultural communities.

2 Commissioning Evaluations

When commissioning evaluations involving multicultural communities, there SHOULD be a requirement for the use of Culturally Responsive Evaluation approaches.

3 Culturally Responsive Evaluations

Programs involving multicultural communities MUST be evaluated for relevance, efficiency, and social impact using Culturally Responsive Evaluation approaches.

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