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## Article

# Harnessing Community Value Co-Creation: Reactivating an External Operant Actor's Sense of Self-Improvement

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**Abstract:** Since COVID-19, there has been an increase in the utilization of food banks owing to a number of factors, including a reduction in household income due to job losses and an increase in the cost of living, which has affected people on low incomes. In this paper, we explain how people that are in need of assistance and have limited knowledge of service provision can be remotivated through regaining their self-esteem. This is achieved through various forms of intervention. By adopting a metaphorical approach, we conceptually explore how intervention provided by a social inclusion community center stimulates recipients to re-ignite their desire for self-improvement. This is achieved through an analogy made, comparing a Formula 1 motor racing team servicing a car during a pit-stop and a person (recipient) in need of food visiting a food bank to collect a food parcel. Based on a conceptual analysis, we propose a framework outlining the interactional process involving the social inclusion community center staff and a recipient, whereby the recipient becomes, through empowerment, an external operant actor and resource integrator for the social inclusion community center. This is achieved through a circular value co-creation process. Through the circular motion of the value co-creation, an external operant actor regains self-confidence due to gaining a sense of belonging and feeling inspired to contribute to the community they are associated with.

**Keywords:** attitude of motivation theory; intervention; sense of self-improvement; value co-creation



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## 1. Introduction

To help solve the problem of food insecurity, volunteers have helped establish and manage food banks, which have proliferated in the UK in recent years. Bearing in mind there are different types of human needs that need to be satisfied, we base our work around the role that a social inclusion community center plays and focus our effort on explaining how the manager of such a center can help provide support by making food parcels and other services available to people in need. This can be considered timely bearing in mind the gap that has emerged between the rich and the poor and the need for people with low self-esteem to regain confidence and raise their self-esteem. The approach we adopt makes clear how value in public service ecosystems can be created through an individual's involvement. This, we assert, is important in terms of complementing the emerging public service logic body of knowledge (Ojasalo & Kauppinen, 2024), which is gaining increased attention due to activist behavior.

The research approach we adopt is conceptual and builds on the work of Osborne and Strokosch (2013), which addresses how public service delivery can be improved through

meaningfulness by focusing on value co-creation. We achieve our objective by placing this research in the context of a social inclusion community center that is active in various forms of intervention. In adopting this approach, we explain the connection between governance and policy (Thomson, 2023), and raise awareness as regards how people in need can be incorporated into the intervention decision-making process. According to Hardyman et al. (2015), engagement with a public service is important as regards planning and providing service provision because it helps to improve well-being (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). This is reflective of the fact that value is created in usage and value co-creation results due to the customer fulfilling the role of co-creator (Grönroos & Voima, 2013). However, there is a dearth of research explaining how a recipient activates/reactivates their motivation for self-improvement and produces value that leads to them becoming an external operant actor and resource integrator, which contributes to a community's wellbeing and helps make the community more resilient. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that creative self-efficacy acts as a motivational mechanism (Gong et al., 2020), which is important for relationship building.

To assist us, we incorporate empowerment theory, as it provides a foundation for understanding how the process of change is related to social work values and how social programs are evaluated (Himmelheber, 2014; Gutiérrez et al., 1995) and contribute to the sustainability of a community. A social inclusion community center is known to provide a range of services to the local community that also include information and advice (Trim & Lee, 2024). In terms of community development and well-being, it is worthwhile to pay attention to the role that a social inclusion community center plays in the context of providing interventions for those that seek help and assistance. This study focuses on how staff based at a social inclusion community center intervene and provide assistance that acts as a steppingstone and helps people make progress in their life. We explore conceptually how intervention (re)activates a receiver's self-esteem, which leads to attitudinal change. Hence, we deploy attitudinal theory in conjunction with the concept of value co-creation from a social marketing perspective, and address the following research question: how can a social inclusion community center provide intervention based on value co-creation to stimulate members of the community to reactivate their motivation? When considering this question, a number of additional questions emerge that are related to how staff associated with a social inclusion community center undertake their activities in support of those in need, and how staff influence the policy decision-making process in terms of identifying and making available the resources that vulnerable people require. By understanding and helping to organize and make available necessary resources, staff contribute to the wider process of helping people in the community to overcome the various problems they face. Reflecting on these points allows us to devise a number of sub-questions that are linked to the main research question. They are as follows:

- What do social inclusion community center staff need to reflect on in terms of resource provision?
- How can staff based at a social inclusion community center identify operant resources to improve the sustainability of the community?
- How can the policy objectives of the social inclusion community center align with the needs of the local community?

It is useful, we argue, to understand how an individual's needs are determined by the concept of motivation as well as 'self' in relation to how intervention influences attitudinal change. By reflecting on the work of Maslow (1943), it can be suggested that those providing charitable services need to pay increased attention to how an individual internalizes matters so that they are encouraged to engage in the process of "generating and reporting ideas"; this allows those providing the intervention to "appreciate and trust their

own and others' resources while . . . free to function as a resource in helping to label and organize the output" (O'Connor & Yballe, 2007, p. 744). Regarding an inter-organizational network, characterized by stakeholders with similar but different objectives, it can be suggested that trust is pivotal to relationship building (De Wever et al., 2005). Importantly, the development and sharing of knowledge occurs throughout a network arrangement via a 'selection'-oriented process (Koskinen et al., 2023, p. 110) involving the continuous intervention of staff, who are motivated to cooperate. Various ties exist among those providing intervention, and this both aids and complicates matters.

Different types of ties differently effect a manager's motivation and the degree to which an individual will share information/knowledge with other actors—either within the task boundary that is set or beyond what is within the task description. This is an important observation because networks are used both as a delivery vehicle and as a source of intelligence gathering, which helps managers to "learn from a community and to better serve community needs" (Valente, 2012, p. 49). Furthermore, by exploiting internal and external knowledge sources (Naqshbandi & Jasimuddin, 2022), new opportunities will be identified that increase customer value, which enhances the relationship between the organization and its suppliers and allows managers to combine available resources to optimize performance (Zhang & Watson, 2020).

Sharma and Phookan (2022, p. 461) suggest that individuals are motivated to share knowledge through knowledge governance mechanisms, which are aimed at shaping an individual's "perceptions, attitudes, desires", which directly influence knowledge sharing behavior. Indeed, Valente (2012, p. 49) suggests that network interventions are used to generate "social influence, accelerate behavior change, improve performance, and/or achieve desirable outcomes among individuals, communities, organizations, or populations". Sharing knowledge is related to behavioral standards and "collective and integrated actions exponentially increase the velocity with which knowledge capital grows and knowledge capacity increases" (Garcia-Perez et al., 2019, p. 71). The degree to which actors share information and knowledge does to some extent depend upon their commitment to a cause and their motivation.

We view motivation as being distinguishable at two levels. The first level is the realization that the safety-seeking behavior of an individual is considered a priority. The second level relates to an individual seeking help for their own further development/growth. Bearing these points in mind, we view intervention as a process for making a link between assisting an individual to avoid an immediate danger and planning a specific action to counteract a long-term threat that is likely to have repercussions for them and their family. By foreseeing the benefits that intervention affords, a person in need can avail themselves of an appropriate intervention if they think it worthwhile to do so in terms of their future growth/development. We refer to this as wellbeing achieved through resilience.

We consider the role played by social marketers (e.g., those employed by a social inclusion community center to market their activities and programs and seek donations) to be paramount as regards ensuring that "external adaptation and internal integration" (O'Connor & Yballe, 2007, p. 749) is evident and manifests in behavioral change (Roemer et al., 2021) that benefits the community. To explain how the value co-creation concept can be applied to a social cause, we assimilate a Formula 1 racing car driver making a pit-stop during a race (e.g., for essential service provision) with an individual attending a social inclusion community center, which acts as the intervening body, to collect a parcel of food. We draw on the logic of a Formula 1 racing pit-stop as a form of framework for analogy that explains how marketing theory, value co-creation, is utilized to ensure the recipient of a charitable service has their need(s) satisfied, and can provide resource feedback to improve

the services on offer (Trim & Lee, 2024). This allows the manager of a social inclusion community center to maximize the intervention provided and achieve social impact.

We contribute to social marketing theory development by building on published work (Trim & Lee, 2024) and putting forward a new view of interventionism that increases interaction between the provider of a service (operand) and the beneficiary of the service (recipient), which proves beneficial to the community. In doing so, we explain how a recipient becomes an external operant actor and resource integrator through providing feedback to the internal operant actor (employee/volunteer of the social inclusion community center), which increases the operand's resource capability. We also highlight the importance of understanding emotion and its effect on attitudinal change in individuals vis-à-vis how the external operant actor gains knowledge and self-confidence and makes progress in their life, thus contributing to self and society. We offer insights into how social marketing can enhance the stakeholder view (Roemer et al., 2021), which is important from a theory building perspective.

## 2. Theoretical Background and Literature Review

### 2.1. Food Banks—Placing This Study in Context

In the UK, food security is a sensitive topic, especially since COVID-19 has had pronounced knock-on effects in terms of economic growth. According to the Office of National Statistics (2022), the UK's Gross Domestic Product fell by 19.4% at the highest crisis point. Acknowledging that "income plays a key role in safeguarding the satisfaction of physiological and safety needs" (Rojas et al., 2023, p.11), food can be considered a basic necessity that affects an individual's ability to function and to perform fully to their potential (Maslow, 1943; Taormina & Gao, 2013).

Both the Trussell Trust, which operates 1400 food banks in the UK, and the Independent Food Aid Network, which is associated with 1172 food banks in the UK, are instrumental in organizing food share programs and are keen to see an end to the need for food banks (Irvine et al., 2022). However, in May 2021, the Trussell Trust (Irvine et al., 2022) estimated that 700,000 UK households (2.5% of all UK households) had used a food bank in the period 2019–20, which is an alarmingly high figure. The Trussell Trust (Irvine et al., 2022), in their May 2021 report entitled *State of Hunger*, identified three main reasons as to why a person may need to use a food bank: (i) insufficient income from social security; (ii) ill health/adverse life experiences; and (iii) insufficient formal and informal support.

Acknowledging that income maintenance payments to disadvantaged people have been reduced over the years (S. R. Smith, 2015) places emphasis on staff based in not-for-profit organizations managing their limited resources to maximum effect. Ways need to be found to innovate, and coproduction is a form of innovation that can both unite the specialist providers and build on the influencing role of the user of the service (S. R. Smith, 2015). Hence, we focus our attention on the value co-creation concept and its application in the context of enhancing interventional provision for community sustainability. We believe it is useful as it allows us to extend our knowledge of interventional processes and clarify our understanding of how forms of intervention can be developed (Pinto & Park, 2019). We recognize that food security interventions are diverse in nature (Himmelheber, 2014) and are extended to include food community gardens that are supportive of nutrition education that is aimed at improving the eating habits of people. Community garden programs help to raise awareness about the empowerment process but often rely on institutional support to be successful. Hence, we concur with Gutiérrez et al. (1995) and view empowerment as occurring within an organizational context whereby the provider of an intervention is supportive in terms of raising the critical awareness of an individual in need and the support provided helps build a beneficiary's confidence and allows them to carry out a

task/action that has value to them. In addition, empowerment can be viewed as helping an individual in need to assist a group by becoming an influencer within the community. We acknowledge, however, that this “requires change on multiple levels” (Gutiérrez et al., 1995, p. 250) and is likely to give rise to community engagement whereby the manager of a social inclusion community center takes ownership for novel forms of intervention that raise the profile of community center staff and are beneficial to the community.

Organizational intervention and assigned accountability (McDonnell, 2017) can be viewed as a social inclusion community center providing relevant services to people with specific needs. Community center intervention, which includes food parcels via a food bank, is aimed at satisfying hunger related needs and helps to foster the confidence of people that leads to them undergoing behavioral change (Baptista et al., 2022). The demand for such a service is the result of the failure of the welfare system to provide adequate unemployment benefits as well as high levels of taxation that affect the disposable income of low-income earners (Loopstra et al., 2018; Beck & Gwilym, 2022). In order to reduce food insecurity and deal simultaneously with the challenge of food waste, it is necessary to consider the role that government plays (Stewart, 2014) in incentivizing people to make their surplus food available to those in need. However, the salient aspect that needs to be recognized is that the sense of empowerment, which influences involvement at the personal level and permeates down into community engagement (Himmelheber, 2014), is dependent upon intervention, which involves a change in attitude and encouragement to interact through participation that is reflective of reducing interpersonal barriers (Gutiérrez et al., 1995).

Reducing interpersonal barriers calls into question how those in need of food are identified and how the coordination of food availability (e.g., near expired food) is coupled with delivery and increased community participation. Juanpera et al. (2022) highlight the importance of digital communications technology (e.g., WhatsApp Business); however, they also indicate that those in need do not necessarily have an email/SMS account as it is considered too costly. This highlights the need for social innovation whereby an autonomous approach involving volunteer action is needed to match the requirements of those in need with the supply and delivery of a service that results in the consumption of a good that increases a community’s well-being. In our study, we go a step further and explain how a social inclusion community center provides intervention that increases an individual’s self-worth through increasing an individual’s participation in the community. This, we argue, is achieved through resources generated via social marketing activity.

By knowing how to transform information into knowledge and utilize knowledge as an operant resource (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), the manager of a social inclusion community center can view knowledge management as an integration of values and beliefs that underpin behavioral norms essential for the management of knowledge (Hult, 2003, p. 192). This suggests that to avoid innovation failure (McKee, 1992), actors need to engage in open communication to ensure that synergy exists between functional areas, which in the case of a social cause could be financial management and marketing (fund raising). Open communication must incorporate the needs of stakeholders, be based on transparency, and ensure that the necessary governance and compliance mechanisms are in place (Holtgrave et al., 2017). As regards building a co-operative trust-based relationship with stakeholders, the trust embedded in social networks (Morris et al., 2023) needs to be viewed as providing supportive social ties that provide access to necessary instrumental resources (Ho et al., 2006; Fliaster & Schloderer, 2010; Morris et al., 2023). This approach is reflective of the view that the quality of service delivery is viewed as collective action, which is considered important for reinforcing stakeholder relationships (King, 2008).

## 2.2. Insights Gained into Social Exclusion

Social exclusion is often attributed to issues of poverty, which can be related to low educational attainment, unemployment, and barriers of entry to social and political institutions (Oxoby, 2009, p. 1134). Understanding what social inclusion involves and how it is to be eradicated is important from a policy perspective. However, for people to be productive, attention needs to be given to the relevance of social capital and social cohesion and how people can be integrated into the “economic, social and political framework of society” (Oxoby, 2009, p. 1134). Underpinning this view is the need for people to avail themselves of the opportunities in life, and this means utilizing resources effectively. By fully utilizing the resources available, a person can enhance their own quality of life and achieve the status they desire, and at the same time contribute to society’s economic and social well-being.

From a policy perspective, promoting social inclusion is complex because there are many economic, cultural, social, and political hurdles to overcome. In addition, disadvantaged communities have distinct and different issues and challenges to address that are at the root of the problem. To successfully promote social inclusion, barriers need to be removed (Nwachi, 2021, p. 47). Furthermore, social inclusion can be facilitated through people being allowed to participate in the plan-making process, which is viewed from two perspectives: increasing social capital and enhancing local ownership (Nwachi, 2021, p. 47). This suggests that the process of social inclusion is transformational in nature and that the necessary political will must exist to allow change to occur.

The findings from case study research involving residents of Abuja, the capital of Nigeria, make clear that there is a need to involve local people in socially inclusive urban planning systems and that the plan-making process needs to be as inclusive as possible and take into account people’s “origin, class and ethnicity” (Nwachi, 2021, p. 64). Involving local people in plan-making is essentially about breaking down cultural barriers and changing perceptions in relation to existing belief systems (Nwachi, 2021, p. 64). Another case study involving persons with disabilities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Malakand, Pakistan, revealed that participation in decision-making created a sense of ownership in terms of familial, communal, and societal activities (Ahmad et al., 2022, p. 7).

Returning to the findings from the Abuja case study, it can be suggested that participation involving socio-cultural groups in plan-making has specific benefits in terms of countering discrimination and facilitating communal living and information exchange (Nwachi, 2021, p. 66). Essentially, policy makers need to understand that creating a sense of inclusion is important from the stance of enhancing mutual understanding and increasing social capital (Nwachi, 2021, p. 66). Interestingly, the research being referred to established that when the public were involved in the plan-making process, there was an incentive for people to engage and participate further in the planning process (Nwachi, 2021, p. 70). This was because engagement resulted in self-amplifying, which was due to the participants feeling that they had contributed to the planning process through their opinions, which were deemed important (Nwachi, 2021, p. 70).

A study undertaken by Hussain et al. (2017) is relevant to the social inclusion debate because it chartered the changes that occurred in Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan, when the road infrastructure was improved and spatial mobility occurred, which allowed community members to increase their engagement with people outside their immediate community and gain access to additional resources. The transformation embraced a range of factors and there was a noticeable change in “income, employment, political participation and citizenship, access to transport, education, healthcare, and availability of goods and services” (Hussain et al., 2017, p. 205).

Möhlen and Prummer (2023, p. 107) purport that a lack of parental support, social background, and the environment at home are influential factors in terms of a young person's development and refer to the COVID-19 pandemic. Möhlen and Prummer (2023, p. 107) undertook grounded theory research in Austria and discovered that school children encountered a number of problems during the pandemic when schools were closed, and as a consequence some school children did not receive digital devices on which to do their schoolwork. In addition, digital literacy proved problematic, and a lack of IT support compounded the problem. It was noted that parent–teacher cooperation proved essential for school children to make progress in their studies, and the role of the teacher was instrumental as regards providing guidance that allowed the child to progress with their studies (Möhlen & Prummer, 2023, pp. 104, 110).

The work of Li and Woolrych (2021) can also be drawn on because it highlights the concerns of elderly people in Chongqing, China, as they struggle to utilize technology and adopt to life in a smart city. Li and Woolrych (2021, pp. 7–8) discovered that the level of education and health-related issues were determining factors as regards elderly people being able to use technology on a day-by-day basis. Although on occasion some elderly people were dependent on help from younger relatives, they considered that the Internet and facilitating technology allowed them to keep in contact with their carer and healthcare practitioners and allowed them to gain information and knowledge from various sources (Li & Woolrych, 2021, p. 10).

Li and Woolrych (2021, p. 11) were able to establish that there were limited opportunities for elderly people to contribute to the decision-making process and to participate in a range of activities that were important in terms of the smart city agenda. This resonates with the findings of Nwachi (2021) relating to people's involvement in plan-making. Creating the opportunity for people to participate in plan-making and allowing them to feel fulfilled through the process has been given attention by Kirakosyan (2019). It is clear that social inclusion in some parts of the world will only transpire if international institutions such as the United Nations provide guidance that can be drawn on. Kirakosyan (2019, p. 14) makes reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and suggests that more needs to be done in countries such as Brazil to establish how individuals with impairments can benefit from various engagement initiatives.

### 2.3. The Role of Social Marketing

Social marketing incorporates marketing programs, the need for having a formal marketing policy in place, and the identification of target groups vis-à-vis a social idea/practice (Kotler, 1975) being implemented. Dietrich et al. (2022) suggest that the view of social marketing can be broadened and covers influencing behavior that takes into account ethical principles and finding solutions to recurring problems. This is important from the stance of well-being, and what needs to be noted is that social marketing imbues social support (Baptista et al., 2022). To ensure that the social marketing concept is applied in a logical way, it is necessary to understand how stakeholders view and contribute to co-creation initiatives (Baptista et al., 2020) and how sustainable value creation occurs because of the management of social change (Hamby & Brinberg, 2016).

The intervention implemented is likely to give rise to a secondary intervention in the form of a training program that is specifically designed for the volunteers (i.e., internal operant actors) who provide the service. This focuses attention on the need for internal marketing, which is aimed at promoting training programs to internal staff/volunteers. Not-for-profit staff are required to undertake social impact assessments, and the definition of social impact assessment provided by Becker (2001, p. 312) clarifies our understanding of the subject: “the process of identifying the future consequences of a current or proposed

actions, which are related to individuals, organizations and social macro-systems". This is, we suggest, a fundamental component of social marketing and links internal marketing activities with external marketing activities. It also highlights the need for the different parties involved to communicate openly with each other and to manage multiple agendas under a shared vision (Perrault et al., 2011). Recognizing that multiple agendas need to be managed is important because transparent communication helps to foster interaction between the provider of a service and the beneficiary of a service.

Reflecting on the role that marketing plays is beneficial, as Shah and George (2021) indicate that those working for a not-for-profit organization can benefit from the marketing approach vis-à-vis mission-based performance outcomes. Hence, the manager of a social inclusion community center needs to engage in forward planning and ensure that appropriate resources are available to support the interventions provided. However, maintaining the required level of resources needed has to be placed in the context of planning. For example, as regards intervention vis-à-vis adopting a customer-oriented approach (Leo, 2013), it is important to view resource generation from the perspective of value co-creation. Bearing this in mind, we pose the following question: what do social inclusion community center staff need to reflect on in terms of resource provision?

To answer this question, the manager of a social inclusion community center needs to remember that there are different types of resources. Vargo and Lusch (2011, p. 184) differentiate resources into two different types: operand, which need some treatment "to be performed on them to have value (e.g., natural resources)", and operant, which are embedded within an individual (e.g., "human skills and knowledge"). So, resource integration activities allow actors to obtain resources from private sources (e.g., self, family, and friends), market-facing sources through barter or economic exchange, or public sources through accessing communal and government sources (Vargo & Lusch, 2011). We consider a social inclusion community center to be the hub of a wide set of services. Hence, a community center (e.g., operand resource) is the focal point of a charity's social marketing operation. Through achieving relational connectiveness, which is the "desire to be connected with an organization, its employees, and other communal customers" (Obaze et al., 2023, p. 116), stewardship is exercised. This manifests in person-centric intervention, which conforms with the view purported by Ojasalo and Kauppinen (2024, p. 10), who suggest that "Public value is collective value that represents aggregation of the value perceptions of individual citizens who are the beneficiaries". Hence, social inclusion community center staff collate information from local people (e.g., resource feedback), identify the problems that the community faces, and work with the community to rectify problems, thus making the community resilient.

#### 2.4. Value Co-Creation

How to address specific public problems (Trischler & Charles, 2019) draws attention to the complexities associated with providing welfare provision that fits individual needs. Reflecting on the question how can staff based at a community center identify operant resources to improve the sustainability of the community?; it can be noted that service provision (e.g., helping the potential beneficiaries to complete online forms and/or find appropriate recreational activities) is important, and so too is taking cognizance of the limitations of resources (e.g., the availability of volunteers, expertise, skills, and finance) that are needed to help deliver a person-centric service. A person-centric approach requires that an individual is placed at the center of activities and has their emotions and values interpreted so that the service provided is aligned with the objectives underpinning the intervention. Therefore, it can be argued that emotional attachment is at the heart of tie development, which maximizes access to knowledge resources. Bearing in mind that social

bonding affects the way in which information is turned into intelligence and is shared (Day, 1994), it is important for the manager of a social inclusion community center to view this from the perspective of the development of knowledge that is co-produced through time.

Drawing on the customer-dominant marketing logic approach (Anker et al., 2022) is helpful with regard to making an association with the value co-creation concept (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016) because it helps to establish how a set of services that utilize the resource integration process ensures that the recipient of the service has their need(s) fulfilled. Traditionally, the value creation concept has been pertinent because it “encourages marketers to think of other types of value by reaching beyond value in exchange and even value in use” (Sheth & Uslay, 2007, p. 303). More specifically, value rests with the producer of the good/resource. However, value co-creation occurs through interaction and results in value being added by both the supplier of the good/resource and the receiver/consumer of the good/resource (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004; Sheth & Uslay, 2007). Hence, we view value co-creation as being central to helping people to articulate their needs better and receive support that allows them to contribute to the community (Trim & Lee, 2024). Consequently, intervention can be viewed as helping to make a community more resilient because, as Trischler and Charles (2019, p. 20) acknowledge, the service-dominant logic approach is relevant to public policy “because it presents a lens that acknowledges that value is co-created between multiple actors in many different ways”.

The key aspect of value co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2016) is how a service provider benefits from close interaction with the customer as the delivery of value occurs through the resource integration process, involving interaction between the supplier and the buyer. Value co-creation occurs through interactions and collaboration with a range of stakeholders, some of whom are third parties (Grönroos & Voima, 2013; Constantinides et al., 2018). Collaboration is viewed as necessary for value co-creation to occur, as it helps to achieve or obtain specific resources (Kibbeling et al., 2013) that enable an end user to have their expectations met. This is accomplished by matching needs to outcome provision and managing the process in a systematic and pro-active manner (Hollebeek et al., 2019) so that a relationship is deemed to have developed. By ensuring this happens, an individual develops the confidence to articulate a specific view that results in resource feedback being accumulated and interpreted, and which gives them a sense of empowerment. This is achieved through the recipient internalizing matters and deriving perceived psychological value (Vargo & Lusch, 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2019) that is beneficial to more than one party. Hence, buyer–seller interaction can be likened to racing car driver–mechanic interaction and recipient–volunteer interaction, hence the value of the analogical approach.

The value co-creation concept can, therefore, be used to establish how the producer of a product/service and the end user enter an interactive value-enhancing relationship that results in resource integration and innovation (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015). Hence, for the purpose of this paper, the social inclusion community center is viewed as the operand resource (facilitator/enabler); a full-time employee of the community center and a volunteer that provides a service on behalf of the community center are deemed an internal operand resource (initiator/actor); and the recipient of the service (person in need) is denoted as an external operand resource as they provide resource feedback that helps improve the intervention provided. In due course, if a recipient of a service joins the community center as a volunteer, they become an internal operand resource (initiator/actor) because it is the volunteer that possesses the knowledge that is embedded in the service provision. This raises the issue of knowledge transfer. Sharma and Phookan (2022, p. 449) are of the view that interpersonal (micro) knowledge transfer is either formal or informal in nature and leads to organizational-level knowledge transfers. It is for this reason that the manager of a

social inclusion community center needs to place their work and the work of the center in the context of intra- and inter-community involvement.

Therefore, for this study, the following question is posed: how can staff based at a social inclusion community center identify operant resources to improve the sustainability of the community? To answer this question, we consider how staff based at a social inclusion community center motivate the recipient of a service to become a volunteer and utilize their individual skills and knowledge to enhance the quality of the service on offer and, in addition, broaden the reach of the service offer. This gives rise to another question: how can the policy objectives of the social inclusion community center align with the needs of the local community? This question needs to be placed in context and related to the issue of prioritizing service provision from the recipient's perspective, as this is concerned with the efficient use of resources, which enables the recipient to become more independent and self-sustainable. Both these questions share a common denominator, which relates to the role that multiple actors play (Trischler & Charles, 2019) vis-à-vis value co-creation from the perspective of how a community can be made more resilient. However, also of interest is how the provider of an intervention undergoes organizational change as a consequence of improving organizational processes through incorporating and implementing new interventionist actions. This can be attributed to the manager of a social inclusion community center adopting what is known as a circular view of value creation that is employee-focused (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015, p. 310).

As regards facilitating the process of value co-creation, Ballantyne and Varey (2006) argue that three different aspects need to be connected: appropriate structural support needs to be in place; there has to be a communicative interaction relationship in place; and the services (activities) to be improved need to enrich the individual/recipient of the service. Initiating interaction and building a relationship with recipients vis-à-vis the process of value co-creation, according to Grace and Lo Iacono (2015), places attention on the form of motivation (e.g., monetary value, task-related value, emotional/intrinsic value, and social/relational value) and how an individual actor within an organization provides a service to an individual who is external to the organization. Hence, the core process dimensions that aid knowledge building and manifest in "specific actions that build capacity for people to gather together collectively" (Sawyer, 2021, p. 116) need to be identified. By doing so, the manager of a social inclusion community center can align the skill development of the volunteer with practitioner awareness (Sawyer & Brady, 2022) so that attitudinal change allows the recipient to integrate the resources effectively.

### *2.5. Attitudinal Motivation and Involvement*

Research undertaken into the attitude and motivation of consumers focuses mainly on three components: cognition (knowledge or belief about a specific object/attribute); affective (emotion/feelings toward a specific object/attributes); and conative (behavior intention toward a specific object/attributes) (Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019; Mothersbaugh et al., 2024). The key point to note is that these components differ in importance depending on an individual's motivation in relation to their attitude toward an object and their concept of self. Hence, it is necessary to associate an individual's behavior with four functions: utilitarian function, ego-defensive function, value-expressive function, and knowledge function.

Much of the research into the consumer decision-making process is focused on social motivation vis-à-vis the use of one or more of the four functions and how the social function helps to explain individual behavior and how individuals identify with members of a social group (social-adjustive) that they wish to be associated with (Katz, 1960; Shavitt, 1989). Within the process of social integration, an individual is assimilated into a group, utilizing

their knowledge function to interact with the ego-defensive function and adjust their decision based on either positive or negative cues (Lee & Trim, 2019). Once an individual has been accepted into a group and is integrated into it, they adhere to the central values and beliefs (value-expressive) and conform to the group norms, as this is what is expected of them (Snyder & DeBono, 1989). In other words, social interaction both facilitates and influences the attitudinal change of an individual so that they adopt a certain behavior intention vis-à-vis achieving/satisfying a certain need(s)/desire(s) (Shavitt, 1989; Wilcox et al., 2009).

As regards the ego-defensive function, it is important to note that it relates to how individuals defend their “self-image” and maintain “self-esteem” (B. M. Smith et al., 1956; Abrams & Hogg, 1988). We can assume that people have certain needs and learn to cope with issues and challenges through various mechanisms such as denial and repression, which protect them against threats (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993); however, they also need to make decisions that provide personal rewards, as they wish to improve their own position and/or that of their family.

In relation to attitudinal change vis-à-vis individual and situational characteristics that affect changes in attitude, Solomon et al. (2017) studied how an individual forms an attitude and provided three different possible ways this is carried out: (i) establishing a cognitive information process, which requires the individual to proactively search for and evaluate information of interest; (ii) changing behavior and learning through experience, which is achieved through passively searching for and evaluating information; and (iii) forming an attitude based on experiential consumption, which is representative of an individual responding to their emotion and includes situational factors or surroundings, such as where, how, and with whom an interaction has occurred. Bearing this in mind, it is important for an individual and anybody that manages them to take cognizance of “personal and professional life experience”, and to identify skills and knowledge gained so that the learning experience can be recorded (Williams & Lowes, 2001) and acted upon. In addition, it is important to remember that a learning culture helps individuals to build knowledge capital (Garcia-Perez et al., 2019, p. 78), which is important in terms of building and transferring knowledge among and between stakeholders.

We consider it useful to reflect on the attitudes of individuals in terms of linking the degree of knowledge they have or are developing about a subject with their motivation and capability to learn. With regard to people in need, we are concerned with how people without relevant knowledge can develop the right attitude, through motivation, to learn and change their behavior to better themselves and/or their family. To do this, we pose the following question: what stimuli does an individual in need draw on to evoke their emotion and seek an answer that results in them satisfying their need(s)? By utilizing attitude motivation theory, we are able to explain how a not-for-profit organization can derive value co-creation from the “values, beliefs, preferences, motivations, and behaviors” (Young & Hinesly, 2012, p. 146) of those in need. In this paper, we do not go deeply into the psychological motivation of emotional outcomes (Bian et al., 2016); however, we focus on the attitudes’ motivational function, as this allows us to make a link between an individual who is the beneficiary of an intervention and how the positive experience is internalized and expressed through an emotional commitment that results in feedback that perfects the intervention provided.

### 3. The Metaphorical Approach—Linking the Metaphor to Value Co-Creation

Taking cognizance of the advice offered by MacInnis (2011), which suggests that a specific conceptual goal can be viewed as advocating a specific kind of entity, we utilize

the metaphorical approach and link it with the view of [Anker et al. \(2022\)](#) to endorse consumer empowerment in the context of value co-creation relating to social marketing. By adopting the view of conceptualization provided by [MacInnis \(2011\)](#), we make a logical link outlining how intervention can revitalize an individual through them being involved in making a community sustainable.

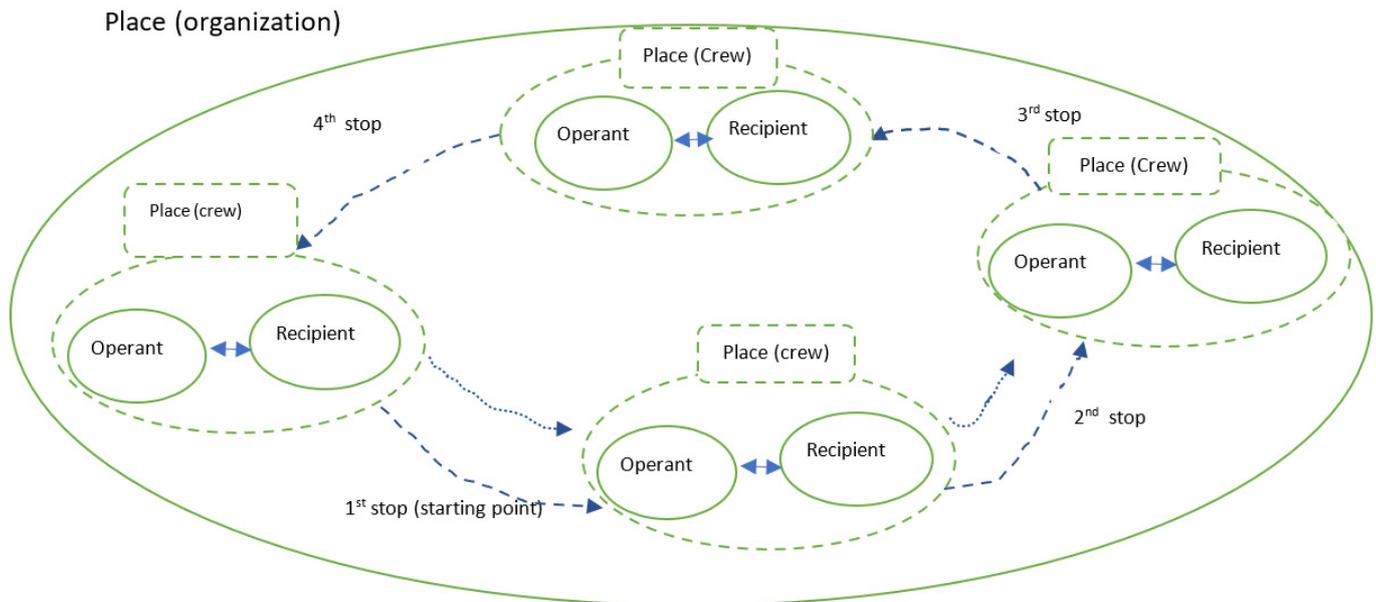
[Cornelissen \(2003\)](#) suggests that a metaphor can be used to highlight the characteristics that are embedded in perceived analogies because the structures relating to the two subjects under study stem from different domains. Hence, a comparison between disparate concepts is possible and allows a metaphorical language to be developed that is used to map and understand the mechanisms and identities relating to a specific marketing phenomenon ([Cornelissen, 2003](#)). [Hunt and Menon \(1995, pp. 81–82\)](#) are clear about the usefulness of metaphors for constructing metaphorical frameworks that aid theory development and state: “We propose that a metaphor is a literally false, declarative assertion of existential equivalence that compares two concepts or things, where one concept, called the primary concept, is claimed to be another, the secondary concept. For example, the marketing warfare metaphor is short for “marketing is war”, where marketing is the primary concept and war, the secondary”. The usefulness of this approach can be seen in the work of [Mulcahy \(2021\)](#), who used case studies to explain the link between dance and the theory/philosophy of law, which allowed the researcher to progress from a metaphor to forming a methodological approach of relevance and developing a metaphorical framework thereafter.

As regards developing metaphorical frameworks, we pay attention to the ideas that form the concepts that are used to make them specific to marketing. Hence, we draw extensively on the marketing literature and interpret the subject matter from a marketing perspective. In the process, we adhere to the view that creative metaphoric transfer allows new insights to be made, and an explanation is provided in terms of interrelationships relating to marketing phenomena ([Hunt & Menon, 1995](#)). Thus, by engaging in metaphoric transfer, we provide guidance on how marketing theory can be enriched and how relevant marketing knowledge can be transferred between similar but different marketing contexts.

When making a comparison between two subjects, it is important to identify what the similarities are so that sense making is possible and gives rise to concept-driven theorizing ([Hatch & Yanow, 2008](#)). By making an analogy of two different concepts, we are firm in our belief that the metaphoric approach can be used to assist creative thinking ([Hunt & Menon, 1995](#)). We are, therefore, of the view that using theoretical metaphors is helpful for explaining how value co-creation can be applied to enrich the interventionist approach of a not-for-profit organization. So, our starting point is to state that “fast tracking is equated to need fulfilment”. The logic of this is to assume that speedy action through ‘fast tracking’ will help a person in ‘need’ get on the right track and realize their potential. But equally, we could use appropriate metaphors such as “crossing the finishing line” and “mapping out a path to success”, because they have a strong resemblance to the subject matter and are descriptively representative of what a racing car driver and the recipient of various forms of welfare-oriented intervention have in mind.

The metaphorical approach that we have adopted is to emphasize the context within which the recipient of an intervention, such as a person receiving a food parcel, can attend a fixed facility (place) and receive assistance from a specialized team as indeed is the case when a racing car driver (who is intent on winning a *grand prix* race and ultimately the world championship), also viewed as a recipient (person in need), enters the pits during a race and avails themselves of the services provided by the pit-stop team. The coordinated actions of the pit-stop team can be compared with the coordinated actions of staff based at a social inclusion community center ([Trim & Lee, 2024](#)). We denote the Formula 1 racing pit-stop crew as the operand resource (facilitator/enabler) and a mechanic/worker who

performs an activity during a pit-stop as an operant resource (initiator/actor). The racing car driver is the recipient (person in need) of the service provision. Please see Figure 1. It can be noted that ‘place’ is composed of many mini-places (pit-stop equivalents) and the arrow between each place (pit-stop) symbolizes the interaction between staff based at the social inclusion community center and a recipient of their service engaging at different time periods. In other words, the interaction between a volunteer and a recipient occurs on different days (e.g., ‘1st stop’, ‘2nd stop’, and so on). Likewise, a racing car driver enters the pits multiple times throughout the season (e.g., during practice lap sessions and actual races).



**Figure 1.** Metaphoric framework for value co-creation (source: the authors).

The logic of the analogy is that it is necessary for a racing car driver to call into the pits for fuel/to change tires, and a person in need of food to enter a fixed location, ‘place’, to receive a food parcel to stave their hunger. The ‘place’ is where the pit-stop crew is located during the motor race and where the racing car driver receives help and assistance. Hence, we draw on the metaphorical approach to provide a contextual base for the form of intervention we explain. Such an approach is advantageous as it allows the value co-creation concept to be incorporated into social marketing and contribute to marketing theory development in relation to public policy provision. This metaphorical approach is useful in terms of boundary-spanning because the conceptual approach adopted emphasizes “the strategic agency of actors or ‘policy entrepreneurs’” and not just structural configurations (Conteh & Harding, 2023, p. 107). It is important to note that the type of service interaction referred to gives rise to a circular flow of service innovation (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015) that is continuous.

To intensify the effect of the work/service provided by a social inclusion community center, attention was given to the interactions between different stakeholders—government/policy makers and benefactors/sponsors, not-for-profit organizations and volunteer(s), and the consumer/recipient of the service—and information that is available to the actors within the network. With this in mind, we view an actor (e.g., volunteer/operant resource) as seeking to maximize various forms of intervention throughout the service ecosystem, which acts as a resource integrator (Vargo & Lusch, 2011). Those seeking a product from a food bank are likely to have other needs to be serviced. Hence, volunteers involved in providing support can think of value added as combining/bundling resources (Lusch & Nambisan, 2015).

Formula 1 motor racing pit-stop practice has been studied and used to speed up the turn-around time of an aircraft between flights, and surgeons have worked with hospital theater managers to deploy the pit-stop approach to improve the management of operations. So, a clearly defined conceptual approach is valuable in terms of viewing a problem from multiple standpoints and, in addition, helps focus attention on how organizational objectives can be achieved. This highlights the usefulness of an analogy and is why we refer to a Formula 1 motor racing pit-stop, as it allows the process(es) and procedures to be linked with policy (Stewart, 2014), which we have associated with intervention to achieve a stated objective. The approach adopted also provides insights into how the scaling process (Nardini et al., 2022) can be used to align the objectives of a social inclusion community center with those of the government.

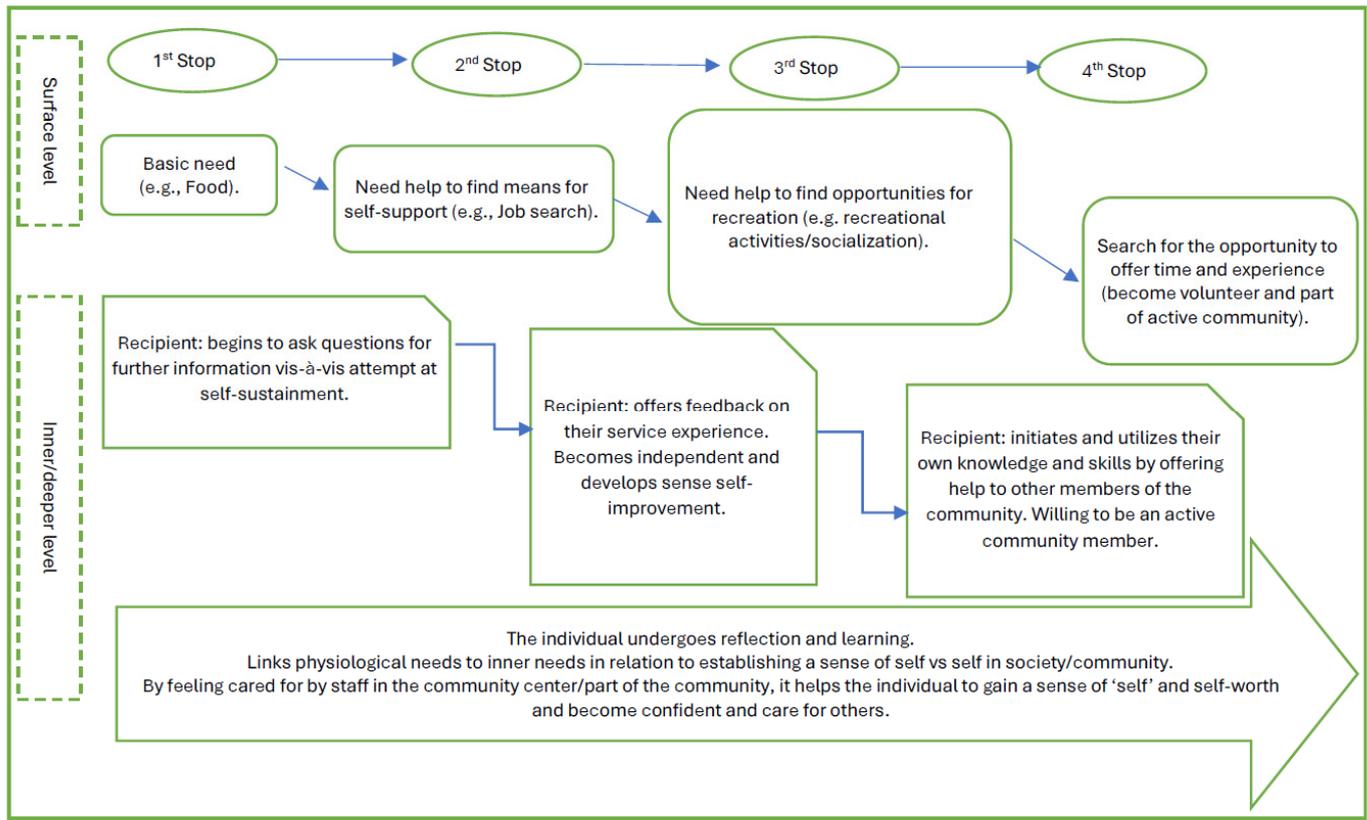
## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. *The Hub-And-Spoke Value Co-Creation Process*

To address how a recipient becomes an external operant actor and resource integrator, we reflect on the metaphoric framework for value co-creation (Figure 1) and develop a further framework (Figure 2) that shows how interaction between staff and a recipient leads the recipient to go through a process of developing their sense of self and be inspired to contribute to a sustainable community. This is supported by the view of Roberts et al. (2014), who indicate that value co-creation, from a consumer motivation standpoint, is driven by an individual's urge to be immersed in innovation that brings recognition from the community they aspire to be connected with. Figure 2 also shows two different process levels: the surface level, which is observable, and the inner/deeper level, which explains emotional/psychological aspects that affect attitudinal change. By depicting the process by which a recipient develops a sense of belonging, staff at a social inclusion community center can better understand how value co-creation occurs vis-à-vis the importance of intervention leading to motivation as well as how it provides structural support for communication flow. Structural support aids the communicative interaction process between the volunteer and the recipient, which results in improving the service offering, as the recipient can influence the level of service provision. It can be noted that as regards the consumer-dominant social marketing approach, the emphasis is on consumers mobilizing themselves in relation to a social issue of concern to them, and, consequently, they undergo behavioral change that leads to the betterment of those involved (Anker et al., 2022). This is, we assert, due to empowerment (Wind & Main, 1998) and the fact that the resources available are utilized fully and community practice is perceived as beneficial (Sawyer & Brady, 2022).

In order for staff of a social inclusion community center to provide intervention that makes a community more resilient, they need to "actively seek the participation or collaborative efforts of consumers" (Leo, 2013, p. 65) so that the interactional dyadic experience (e.g., a volunteer providing a food parcel to a person in need) is viewed as transformative in nature and ultimately benefits the recipient of the service. Thus, this allows us to answer the final question: how can the policy objectives of the social inclusion community center align with the needs of the local community? This is because a focused approach to solving recurring community problems requires not only adequate resources, but the capability to prioritize the issues and identify evolving needs. Hence, feedback from the community is important in terms of understanding the consequences associated with policy implementation and the need for future and ongoing intervention. Feedback emanating from the recipient can be viewed as a resource for rectifying issues efficiently and effectively. The resource feedback from other beneficiaries can be aggregated and then analyzed so that future challenges are placed in context and intervention is planned and

coordinated accordingly. In doing this, value co-creation can be derived from “interrelated resource-integration and service-exchange activities” (Trischler & Charles, 2019, pp. 31–32).



**Figure 2.** The process through which a recipient becomes an external operant actor and then an internal operant actor (source: the authors).

It can be suggested that a social inclusion community center is the hub from which a number of interventions emanate, which allows those in need to receive support “in a way that makes them feel empowered and ensures that their views are respected—all of which will mean that (public) value is effectively co-created via their own involvement as resource integrators” (Trischler & Charles, 2019, p. 32). This is important to note because those in need of assistance possibly possess low self-esteem and specifically focused support will help them to develop their self-confidence and sense of self-worth. By experiencing a number of positive interactions with staff based at the social inclusion community center and feeling cared for, an individual in need of support will develop emotional attachment and seek further information from others through various forms of information sharing.

Building on the work of Boer et al. (2011) regarding the relational aspects that govern information sharing (Håkansson et al., 1977) and the utilization of new knowledge, it can be suggested that the sharing of knowledge is considered central to an organization’s improved performance. Several real-world examples can be drawn on to support this view. For example, BMW’s Co-Creation Lab, where senior managers work with network members to utilize outside knowledge from a number of sources, can be cited. Leveraging various forms of knowledge through providing a high level of customer service maximizes the opportunities available to increase marketing and organizational capability. For example, LEGO averted disaster by pursuing open-source product development through engaging with an established and loyal fan base and ensuring that suppliers adhered to the quality standards set. Furthermore, IKEA has put a formalized co-creation policy in place that seeks new product ideas from a wide and engaged customer base, and links with suppliers

via a hub-and-spoke interactive system to ensure that there is harmonization in terms of group activity. Although a hub-and-spoke arrangement can present challenges for the lead company (Williamson & De Meyer, 2012), the value derived can be immense as the productive interactivity between stakeholders intensifies. By establishing strong ties and focusing on content generation (Jack, 2005), emotion-based trust relationships are formed that unlock new resources and insights (Jonczyk et al., 2016, p. 958). Thus, the process of socialization, which incorporates social bonding and emotional attachment, is viewed as important and so too is the shaping of behavior (Straker & Wrigley, 2016) vis-à-vis nurturing a satisfactory community association.

From the above examples, it can be noted that “Organizations build knowledge capacity by shifting their focus from managing business processes to managing business and knowledge capabilities” (Garcia-Perez et al., 2019, p. 72). Indeed, Boer et al. (2011) point out that the willingness to share knowledge is rooted in actors having similar relational models (e.g., authority, expertise, and cost-benefits or expected utility) that are influenced by social structure and an organization’s culture. It can also be suggested that knowledge is exchanged to influence behavioral change (Valente, 2012, p. 51). Hence, in an advice network, where social influence is high (Wong, 2008, p. 1584), group members share their judgments with their peers and deepen their knowledge by drawing on different knowledge bases. Organizational integration does, therefore, provide a basis for network theory to be utilized by managers at different levels of operation so that business relationships are devised and structured to meet ongoing requirements, as is the case with Hewlett Packard Enterprises, which is known to view the development of knowledge from a strategic perspective.

Through a sense of belonging to the community and availing themselves of the interventions available, individuals in need can make progress in their life and realize their capability. They achieve this by developing skills and knowledge that help them to reposition themselves and become a resource integrator for the local community. By fulfilling their basic physiological needs, they regain their sense of ‘self’ and reflect on their self-improvement. Activating/(re)activating the functions of attitudes in an individual is important as the desire for self-improvement encourages an individual to become productive. Hence, intervention has the advantage of providing and contributing to transformational change that results from and gives rise to transformational learning which is associated with knowledge acquisition (Kennedy et al., 2022). Accepting that creativity helps to build innovative capabilities that result in innovations (De Vasconcellos et al., 2019) allows actors to leverage the support of partner organizations to provide customer value through a commitment to knowing how to analyze and interpret data from a variety of sources. Should this be the case, individual staff should become more productive.

In order for people to become productive, Wayment and Taylor (1995) indicate that individuals with low self-esteem are more likely to utilize social comparative information than personal standard information to guide their self-motivation for improvement. This is due to individuals with low self-esteem lacking in self-confidence, which makes them less able to use personal standard information effectively compared to those with high self-esteem. Indeed, they find personal standard information more ambiguous/unstable; hence, they need to use external information to refine or supplement the meaning of their own personal standard information. It can be suggested that individuals with low-self-esteem can be more susceptible to self-relevant cues as they have uncertainty about their capability (Campbell, 1990; Swallow & Kuiper, 1988). By understanding this, staff at the social inclusion community center can think through what is important to people in need and tailor the interactive discourse so that the recipient gains confidence and aspires to become an internal operant actor. In other words, to activate and/or reactivate recipients’

self-esteem and self-improvement, it is important to pay attention to how staff create an ambiance and develop a sense of attachment to people of low self-esteem so that they feel accepted and develop a sense of emotional safety. Once the trust of people with low self-esteem has been gained, they are likely to ask for further help, as indeed is the case of a racing car driver who enters the pits during a race when necessary. Hence, social inclusion community center staff need to be aware that a person in need can identify the steppingstones that will help them to embark on and complete their journey of self-improvement and self-discovery.

Internalizing self-discovery is associated with the social functional view of emotions and how an individual acts to avoid the threat of low self-esteem from materializing (Yu et al., 2018). Intervention can prevent an individual from becoming demotivated by recognizing how they can deal with their situation. By finding relevant resource(s), an individual can be stimulated to change their behavior and undergo self-improvement. Hence, self-improvement is viewed as a behavior response that changes the life of a person for the better. Understanding this is necessary in terms of how an individual thinks through aspects of self-evaluation and links the outcome to self-enhancement (Wayment & Taylor, 1995) and acceptance into a social group.

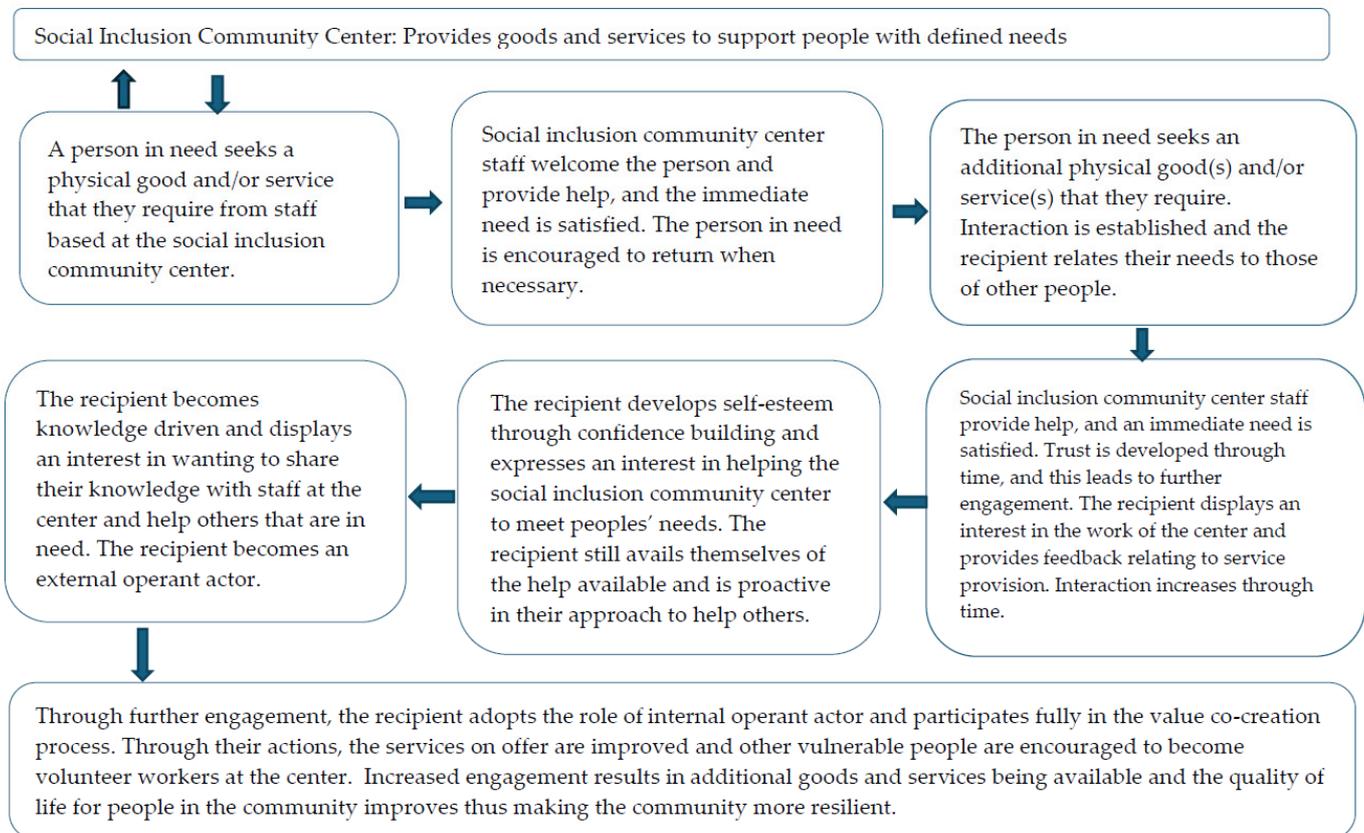
Possessing the desire to be part of a social group encourages an individual to adjust their behavior and be accepted into a group with shared norms (Snyder & DeBono, 1989). This is because it provides them with a meaning in life (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995), and as Wood (1989) indicates, individuals have a desire for self-improvement. Stepping up and taking on the challenge of self-improvement requires the ability to monitor and reflect on one own's behavior and to develop a set of self-reflective goals that enhance the individual's understanding of achieving specific goals through adaptive learning (Zimmerman, 2002). Indeed, Oettingen et al. (2005, p. 241) state that "Mentally contrasting the desired future with impeding reality facilitates the translation of attitudes and expectations into goals".

Through the process of reflection and learning, an individual can be influenced into contributing to a resilient community and, in the process, the recipient becomes socially adaptive. Not having access to intervention can leave a person uninspired and stranded in the sense that they do not know where to turn for help and assistance. When people become tired and demotivated, they are possibly suffering from ego depletion, which is a state of mental fatigue (Baumeister et al., 2006). According to Oettingen et al. (2005, pp. 264–265), "As expectations are based on a person's experiences in the past, mental contrasting can be seen as a self-regulation strategy that tunes one's behavior to one's personal history . . . . mental contrasting makes people consider expectations in forming goal commitments. . .". This, we feel, reinforces the need for intervention to be personalized so that it encourages self-regulation for improvement. This is because if a person in need of intervention receives support that directly benefits them, and they feel emotionally satisfied, they will be inclined to provide both feedback and direct support to the community, which sees them volunteer and engage in various forms of physical intervention that help other members of the community. This can be viewed from the perspective of building resilience (van Breda, 2016) and making the community more sustainable.

By harnessing the energy of external operant actors, the hub-and-spoke approach to interventional provision can be fully utilized. This is because the manager of a social inclusion community center can gain additional resources that are used to map out more precisely the needs of people. Hence, the processes, policies, procedures, and protocols (Stewart, 2014) in place can be drawn on to provide a higher quality of service provision that is aimed at making the community more resilient. Figure 2 shows the process through which a recipient becomes an external operant actor and resource integrator and then progresses to become an internal operant actor. The personalized interactive service stimulates the

recipient to undergo reflective thinking of their self-worth at the inner level, and this triggers a desire to find a way to gain self-improvement and realize self. Progressing through the process of self-realization makes the recipient confident and able to act as a volunteer and utilize their knowledge and skills for the community.

By becoming an external operant actor, and then an internal operant actor, a person in need assumes the role of volunteer and helps to increase the operand's resource capability and align the service provision with the requirements of those in need. This can be deduced from Figure 3, which outlines the transformation process. By helping to satisfy the needs of the local community, the community will become more resilient and other members of the community will, we suggest, be inspired to undergo reflection and learning and become external operant actors and eventually internal operant actors. Reflection is an important process because it includes various levels of dialog as well as contemporary events that have an effect on current thinking and professional practice, and it also has a strong link with the cognitive behavior skills of self-monitoring and self-evaluation behavior (Facione & Facione, 1996).



**Figure 3.** The transformation process from recipient to external operant actor and internal operant actor (source: the authors).

#### 4.2. Benefits of the Study

This study involved desk-based research and was undertaken in a timely and cost-effective manner. Through utilizing published sources, the authors were able to look in depth at a number of factors relating to social inclusion and draw on insight from those that had undertaken field work. By drawing on existing academic theory and linking it with social marketing, it was possible to extend the boundary of social marketing and develop a set of frameworks that incorporated aspects of intervention, interaction, and the utilization of resources. The outcome of this approach allowed social inclusion to be viewed from several perspectives and provided a blueprint for the manager of

a social inclusion community center to both service vulnerable people and meet their needs. In addition, social inclusion community center staff are provided with guidance to devise and implement a sustainable policy and strategy that allows value co-creation to be operationalized. The main benefit is, it can be argued, a contribution to our understanding of how a community can be made sustainable through the beneficiaries of intervention becoming an integral part of the social inclusion process.

#### 4.3. Limitations of the Study

Two limitations can be cited. First, this work is conceptual in nature and would benefit from empirical data, as this would strengthen the underpinning arguments. Second, this work is generic in nature and some of the conditions referred to may need to be altered slightly to accommodate differences in social inclusion need analysis and the type and degree of assistance provided.

## 5. Conclusions and Future Research

Reflecting on the focus of this paper, which is how value co-creation is produced in a social marketing context, we explained how a recipient becomes an external operant actor and thus increases an operand's resource capability, which proves beneficial in terms of making a community more resilient. By explaining the circular motion of value co-creation involving a social inclusion community center and the internal and external actors that interact to provide value, we draw on motivational theory and explained how an external operant actor gains self-confidence and contributes to the well-being of society. We are, therefore, of the view that the circular value co-creation process unlocks an individual's desire to learn and improve their standing in the community. The emotional satisfaction derived from the value co-creation process allows a recipient to develop the confidence to become a role model and thus encourage those in need to follow suit and avail themselves of the services on offer.

As regards future research, several areas of interest can be identified. First, a study can be undertaken to establish the characteristics (e.g., empathy, trust, and commitment) associated with the individual steps an individual goes through when progressing from low self-esteem to self-improvement. A useful perspective would be to study conceptualized trust that is derived from resiliency in relation to how different types of trust affect knowledge sharing, which impacts network effectiveness (De Wever et al., 2005). The reason why this is necessary is to identify the various categories that those in need fall into so that they can be placed in relevant segments and receive appropriate service provision. Second, the personal characteristics or attributes of external operant actors can be ascertained to establish how an individual progresses to be a role model for the community. This can be considered necessary as it will allow training interventions to be developed for volunteer staff so that they can establish a rapport with a recipient and develop their role model potential. Third, research can be undertaken into how an individual in need develops a sense of self-worth. This will allow researchers to identify which forms of intervention are cost-effective in terms of helping a person to self-improve. This can be considered necessary because effective intervention needs to be person-centric.

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