The process of co-creating sustainable strategies for girls and women's basketball participation in Melbourne's West

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Institute of Health and Sport
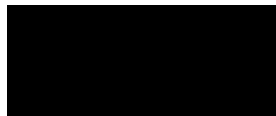**Victoria University**

Abstract

Despite considerable efforts to achieve gender equality in sport in the last thirty years, inequitable outcomes persist. Previous research has identified the barriers girls and women face in accessing sport and how the gendered structure and culture of sport shapes their experiences. In this research project, I aimed to explore and document the process of co-creating and implementing gender equity strategies with community basketball members. I utilised a participatory action framework and worked with three participants over a 9-month period. Throughout this time, I collected and analysed transcriptions and field notes from four collaborative group sessions, six individual meetings, and one in-person group meeting to gain insights into the facilitators and challenges of doing gender equity work in community sport. My analysis of the process revealed the major significant challenge being the tension between gender inclusion efforts (at community level sport) and the dominance of the high-performance model. An emphasis on elite pathways was detrimental in improving the experiences and opportunities for all women and girls at WBA. Based on these findings, recommendations for future research and practice in community sport include the promotion of a sport participation pathway model as opposed to the elite development model community sport is currently organised in. In addition, I stress the importance of having multiple facilitators of change supporting each other and participants when conducting change programs to reduce feelings of isolation and burnout.

Student Declaration

I, Sophie Byrnes, declare that the Master of Research thesis entitled 'The process of co-creating sustainable strategies for girls and women's basketball participation in Melbourne's West' is no more than 50,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

I have conducted my research in alignment with the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research and Victoria University's Higher Degree by Research Policy and Procedures.

Signature   ███████   Date   26/10/2022

Ethics Declaration

All research procedures reported in the thesis were approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee, application number HRE21-052.

Signature   ███████   Date   26/10/2022

Acknowledgements

What an absolute journey this has been. I still remember jumping for joy the day I found out I was accepted into this Master of Research, and wouldn't you know it, I'm finishing the same way.

The ups and downs of this research process will stay with me forever. I have gained an abundance of knowledge and learnt a whole lot about myself along the way. This definitely wasn't an easy ride, (you'll find out about that pretty soon), but I wouldn't change a thing.

My biggest thank you goes out to my research supervisors, Dr Fiona McLachlan, and Dr Brent McDonald. People always say, 'I couldn't do this without you', but never have I meant something more. Your constant support, feedback, guidance, and impromptu therapy sessions really made this research meaningful and enjoyable at the same time. I will forever be grateful.

Thank you to Wyndham Basketball Association for allowing me to conduct this worthwhile research within your organisation and a special thanks to my participants. The hard work you put in to a not-so-easy issue was appreciated.

Lastly, I want to acknowledge the network of people around me who were with me all the way. My family, friends, research colleagues, and especially my support person. You have no idea how grateful I am for your encouragement, check ins and overall hype about this research. I hope I've done you proud.

I end with a quote I wrote down in the first few weeks on a little post-it note that is still stuck to my wall now. It's nice to know I now have.

"Contributing to a world you want to live in"

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List of Abbreviations

CALD – Culturally and linguistically diverse

GIP – Gender Inclusion Program

PAR – Participatory action research

SfD – Sport for development

VJBL – Victorian Junior Basketball League

WBA – Wyndham Basketball Association

Chapter 1: Introduction and Literature Review

> Over recent years much effort has gone into developing women's sport and reclaiming it. I have changed my position somewhat over that time from being unconvinced about the wisdom of becoming embroiled at all to being convinced that if we vacate the scene, we merely support masculine hegemony. What we must do is encourage the development of reflective and critical understanding and practice. (Bryson, 1987)

Gender equity 'action' has been occurring in Australian sport since at least the 1980s. During the past forty years, significant efforts at both national and state levels have been placed on ensuring that girls and women can enjoy the same opportunities and rewards in sport as boys and men (McLachlan, 2019). There have been waves of serious attempts by local governments and other professional organisations to promote the "broad movement" of women's sport to make up for the ways in which girls and women's opportunities to engage in sport have been "curtailed" (Bryson, 1983). For example, the beginning of significant activity toward gender equity in Australian sport began in 1980 when the New South Wales Women's Advisory Council held the 'Fit to Play' conference which was claimed to be the first national conference of its type. In an article celebrating the conference, it is said that "the conference will seek to give women a better deal where sport is concerned, break down myths and barriers that preclude women from participating in sport, shake up the administration of women's sport and hammer for an increase in media coverage, government funding and private sponsorship" (Australian Women's Weekly, 1979, p.7). The 1980s and 1990s held a lot of promise for action in sport as this coincided with a more general push for equal opportunity and equal status for Australian women and included a National Agenda for Women and the Sex Discrimination Act (1984).

I was born in 1997 and as such I am clearly a product, or beneficiary, of the increased opportunities that were afforded to girls in sport from the 1980s. I did not think I couldn't play sport because I was a girl. Indeed sport, specifically basketball, has always been a part of my life and my identity. At the age of two years old I picked up a ball, and my Mum noticed the way I was moving it. She knew that basketball would be the sport for me. And it was. I got my start playing at the community level with Strathmore Unicorns Domestic Basketball Club where I learnt to play alongside boys and demonstrated talent and affinity for the game. I was short, and everyone around me told me that my height would hold me back, so I played to my strength, my speed, and I set to work practicing my ball handling skills. I played and trained in a domestic and a representative team, shot hoops in the back yard with my dad and sisters, played with the boys at lunchtimes, and bounced the ball throughout the house day and night. I spent a considerable amount of my time as a kid with a ball in hand. I loved everything about basketball: the opportunities to travel around the state for Friday night games, to be with friends, to improve, to play. I knew I was good, and I was confident in my ability. I had aspirations of being the next (shorter) Lauren Jackson.

At ten I did not consider that gender was a factor that would constrain my dreams, my skill, or my value. That was until one day in Physical Education class in 2007. We were about to play a game of golden child. A key requirement of this game is two nominated attackers from each team to shoot balls into a basketball hoop. This is an in-class game, the stakes are low, but winning is important. As we broke into our teams to select the two shooters, I felt confident that I would be one of the chosen ones. I mean we had Anthony, I (along with everyone else) recognised that he was automatically number one because he plays basketball. But the next best shooter on the team was me. The girls on my team immediately rallied around me, "Sophie should do it, she *plays*" they said. And the boys knew I played too as we have been playing together at lunch times. So my heart sank when I started to hear the boys say "Brendan, Brendan should shoot". "Brendan? Brendan?!" I thought to myself. "He doesn't even play

basketball. I mean he is one of the sporty boys – but what help are footy and cricket skills going to be in this game?". I stayed silent, and the rest of the girls stopped saying my name. Brendan moved towards Anthony on the shooting line, and they assumed their positions. Enraged but silent, I took my place on the defensive line, seething as Brendan poorly shot, or as I describe it, piffed the ball all game, never making a shot. All these years later, Anthony and Brendan have no doubt long forgotten the inconsequential game. Yet in an instant I can conjure the feeling of that day. Overlooked and undervalued. Because I was a girl.

I have opened this thesis with this seemingly low stakes incident in 2007 because I think it captures the underlying gendered dynamics that persist in the face of greater "opportunities" for girls and women in sport. Gender equity 'actions' need to take into account that sport occurs within a social structure informed by gendered ideologies and inequities as a part of a social system that is often consented to by girls and women and boys and men (Connell, 1987; Connell & Pearse, 2014; Gramsci, 1971). This highlights to the difficult and complex issue of enacting change toward gender equality in and through sport. Given this complexity, perhaps it is not all that surprising that, after at least forty years of trying, why change has been so difficult (McLachlan, 2019).

I have been playing organised basketball for the last 19 years and although my past experiences with basketball are some I will cherish for the rest of my life, after undertaking an undergraduate degree in Sport Science and Human Movement and being exposed to sociological tools, I have been enabled to see further entrenched inequities in the sport of basketball. While I have, for the most part, not felt subjected to overt gender discrimination in the sport, some inequities I've experienced include the increased emphasis on the men's team on social media networks, as well as the pay gap between the men's and women's players in the senior teams I have played in and experienced first-hand.

Furthermore, the participation statistics in Australia and Victoria for basketball highlight that gender still plays a role in shaping who plays, coaches, and officiates basketball. Due to the most recent data from the 2021 and 2020 annual reports showing a lack of participation data stemming from the cancellation of competitions, participation data from Basketball Australia and Basketball Victoria was obtained from the 2019 season.
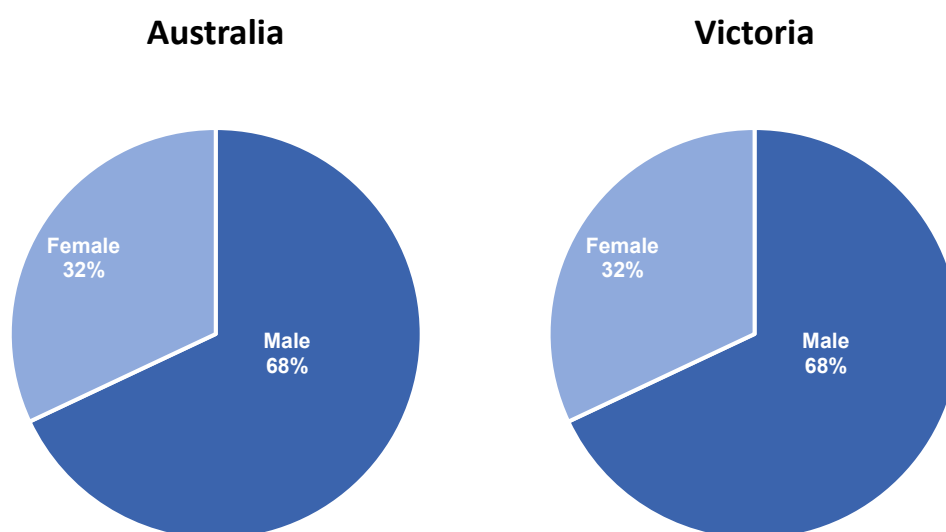
Figure 1. Basketball participation rates across Australia and Victoria

As seen in Figure 1, participation data is explored in Basketball Australia's 2019 statistics stating there are 473,975 registered playing participants with 32% being female, and 68% being male (Basketball Australia, 2019). Breaking this down to a state level, Basketball Victoria's statistics from 2019 show that there are 435,000 participants across the weekly domestic competitions, school, skills development, and inclusion programs, as well as the league and representative competitions (Basketball Victoria, 2019). Of this number, 139,200 were female and 295,800 were male. Both Australia and Victoria's participation statistics conclude there is an over-representation of boys and men and a clear inequality evident within the sport.

Literature Review

Much research has been conducted into the barriers to participation and leadership in sport for women and girls. There are many challenges resulting in hindered sport participation for girls and women such as life priorities, time commitment, travel difficulties, socio-economic status, participation costs, and a lack of support from friends and family (Casey, Fowlie, Charity, Harvey, & Eime, 2019; Coakley & White, 1992; Craike, Symons, & Zimmermann, 2009; Eime et al., 2013). With a particular interest in female participation, many studies still show a lack of sport infrastructure to cope with the heightened demand of female sports, along with providing female friendly facilities (Casey et al., 2019; Coakley & White, 1992). Difficulties in resources continues to be seen where the lack of volunteer capacity is not enough to cope with the growing demand of sport participation for women and girls (Casey et al., 2019).

Externally, societal norms and expectations have a direct link to the dropout evident in sport participation for young girls, with male-dominated sports still not completely viewed as culturally accepted for women and girls (Casey et al., 2019; Fowlie, Eime, & Griffiths, 2020). The male-dominated hierarchy continues to uphold the historical social constructs in sport organisations that value male participation over female participation (Anderson, 2009; Casey et al., 2019; Spaaij, Farquharson, & Marjoribanks, 2015). The power relations evident in men's and women's sports in turn promotes the gendered differences highlighting masculine and feminine features that ultimately exclude the participation of women and girls in male-dominated sports (Hickey, 2008; Koivula, 2001). There is a continued need for changing organisational culture moving away from a 'boys club' and providing a more inclusive space where women and girls are encouraged to participate in all aspects of the sport organisation (Casey et al., 2019).

Opportunities to participate continues to be a major issue in female sport. Women and girls are not awarded the same opportunities as boys and men whereby there is limited access to participation or even progress in their chosen

sport (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). Participation pathways based on fun and social reasons, rather than elite development, are limited due to the highly competitive way sport is organised and structured (Craike et al., 2009; Fowlie et al., 2020). Even if female participants are aiming for elite development, there are fewer opportunities to develop and progress through the levels of sport. A number of reasons can be drawn on such as a lack of female representation in the media, an absence of female role models, and the gendered ideology that sport is not for females (Fink, 2015; Fowlie et al., 2020). Not only is there evidence to identify the lack of pathways for female athletes, across multiple areas of involvement, there are persistent barriers in furthering a career pathway in coaching (Greenhill, Auld, Cuskelly, & Hooper, 2009; Hancock & Hums, 2016; Shaw & Allen, 2009), and leadership positions (Burton, 2015; Knoppers, 1992; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007).

Previous research has identified the barriers women and girls face in participation and leadership in sport and how the gendered structure and culture of sport shapes their experience. In other words, gender inequity in sport is not a new problem. Indeed, it is a problem that has been well understood for nearly forty years. What we know less about is what the barriers to change are, and why is change so difficult?

From a research perspective, not much is known about what works and does not work in terms of gender equity actions. Scholars in the early 2000s provided robust critiques of gender equity in sport and leisure management. There is further evidence surrounding the gender-power relations that are reproduced within organisations that require cultural change in order to enhance opportunities for women's career progression in sport and leisure services (Aitchison, 2000; Shaw & Hoeber, 2003; Shaw & Penney, 2003). In addition, gender inequities were often evident within sport organisations and predominantly viewed as the norm, and the emphasis for change was on improving performance rather than fixing the gendered inequities that persisted (Hoeber, 2007a, 2007b).

Most research about the effectiveness of gender equity initiatives is conducted in the early 2000s. Despite the recent 'boom time' for women's sport, sport management research has focused on the problems of under-representation and poor conditions for women in sport rather than the policy and politics of enacting change. I became interested in exploring questions like: What happens when we try to create the conditions for gender equity in a community level sport setting? How far do intentions and appetite for change get us?

Achieving gender equality in my own sport of basketball has been something extremely important to me. Throughout my playing, coaching and various other roles within a community basketball club, I understand how this environment can act as a welcoming space, however too many times I have seen the negative impacts due to the gendered treatment of women and girls in these spaces. Therefore, I chose to do this specific research project, to understand further and with it, bring new knowledge that can one day ensure girls everywhere have the same opportunity and experiences as boys in sport.

Research Aims and Question

The aim of my research was to explore and document the process of co-creating and implementing gender equity strategies with community basketball members. I placed myself at the heart of change in basketball to see what happens when well-intentioned, well-supported individuals are empowered to make a difference in their domestic clubs. I looked to answer what facilitators and challenges were faced when designing and implementing gender equity strategies. As there are multiple levels of influence when conducting change programs within sporting organisations, I utilised an adapted socio-ecological model to acknowledge the various levels of impact and decided to organise the findings at the external, organisational, interpersonal, and individual levels of facilitating a change program. Each level and its relevance to the facilitation of my Gender Inclusion Program will be explored further in chapter two.

Thesis Overview

This thesis documents and critically examines the process of co-creating and implementing gender equity strategies with community basketball members. The structure of this thesis mirrors the progression of the change program (I called the 'Gender Inclusion Program') that I created for the purposes of this research and follows a chronological journey through the process of the ups and downs of conducting the program through the various stages of facilitation from preparation to final reflections.

Following the introduction, chapter two will address my specific methodology, participatory action research (PAR) and how I have applied this framework to the facilitation of the Gender Inclusion Program (GIP). I will provide a detailed explanation of the research site Wyndham Basketball Association (WBA), as well as the three participants involved in the program. Finally, I will outline my specific types of data collection methods, the type of analysis used throughout the process, and provide more detail on the adapted socio-ecological model used to present the findings.

Chapters three to five are presented in a format that most closely resembles 'Findings' chapters. I use examples from my data analysis to explain the different challenges and facilitators at each stage.

Chapter three examines the first stage: preparing for the Gender Inclusion Program. The focus of this stage involves the steps that are required to initiate the facilitation of a change program including participant recruitment and the scheduling of the sessions with the basketball organisation. By analysing my own reflections, I was able to determine the facilitators for change such as the organisational appetite for change. Challenges also emerged including the impacts of the lockdown restrictions, the lack of translation from the appetite for change, and significantly the beginning of the emotional toll I began to experience as the facilitator.

Chapter four looks at the commencement of the program whereby the context around the issue of gender ~~inequality~~ inequity and planning for gender equitable change is addressed within the first two sessions of my GIP. The addition of one-on-one self-reflection meetings with the participants is explored to determine that building connections are a key enabler in conducting a change program. It is at this stage that conflicting influences, such as emphasis on elite player pathways started to enter the discussions causing adaptations to the gender inclusion strategies that were being developed through the GIP.

Chapter five explores the creation and implementation of gender equitable change. Here I analyse the final sessions and one-on-one meetings with participants. I focus the discussion on how collaboration between participants and myself proved to have a positive impact on the process, however, noting the continued challenge of the (over)emphasis on the elite development of women and girls. I also make further comment regarding the detrimental emotional toll experienced as a facilitator of change.

Chapter six is a more in-depth and theoretically informed chapter in which I discuss the emphasis on elite development in the community basketball space and how this impacts gender inclusion efforts. Here I draw on Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Connell's gender regime to understand the power relations and taken-for-granted understanding of sport.

In the final chapter, I present a summary of the findings and provide recommendations in which gender equitable change programs can be improved without the challenges identified during the various stages that will, in turn, help future practitioners in the sport and leisure settings aim to achieve gender ~~equity~~equality.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

As I described in Chapter one, a variety of different approaches have been utilised by researchers to identify the challenges faced by women and girls and their participation in sport. However, my aim is to seek solutions to those problems by understanding the process of change. That is, the experiences of those involved and the challenges and facilitators of enacting change. I position this project under the umbrella of 'transformative research' as it aims to seek justice in the community by creating a more just society (Mertens, 1998). I decided to use a primarily qualitative methodology and I specifically used a participatory action research (PAR) design, and my data collection involved a combination of field notes, documents and artefacts, informal conversations, and more formalised interviews with participants. In this chapter, I outline my approach to PAR and describe the research site and participants involved in the program, the data collection methods, and the analysis to flesh out and justify my methodological choices.

Participatory Action Research

The chosen approach has been shaped by my aim to explore the process of change. As McDonald, McLachlan, Luguetti and Carboon (2021) state, for sustainable change to occur, solutions to enhance experiences and increase participation in community sport must be contextually specific and community led. Through the use of PAR, the promotion of transformative change is made by prioritising the voice of the marginalised community (Mertens, Bledsoe, Sullivan, & Wilson, 2010). In keeping with a transformative approach, PAR can be important in the understanding of the experiences of those involved in community sport (Frisby, Reid, Millar, & Hoeber, 2005). Kemmis and McTaggart (2000) state this requires a self-reflective process that involves an initial plan, action and observation, and reflection on the outcome.

The use of PAR has been used in many areas of sport literature. One of the areas it is prevalent in is evaluating sport for development (SfD) programs acting to enrich the lives of those participating in sport initiatives. In order to truly understand people's experiences, PAR enables participants to use their voices through various methods allowing for meaningful and contextually specific answers (Hayhurst, Giles, & Radforth, 2015). Specifically to gender studies, the use of PAR in a Physical Education setting whereby the aim of this activist approach is not to overthrow current forms of masculine domination, but rather take small steps to improve the experiences for girls within specific contexts (Oliver & Kirk, 2016). According to the literature, the best way to determine the most accurate and efficient framework to enact the greatest outcome in a community is to use the knowledge of the participants to create, implement and evaluate their desired change.

Considering the benefits of using PAR, I was mindful of the limitations of using said approach. An analysis of SfD research saw that the biggest challenges in this were the active involvement of the participants in the research process, power shifting by the research facilitator, and reflexivity by all researchers (Luguetti, Jice, et al., 2022; Spaaij, Schulenkorf, Jeanes, & Oxford, 2018). In activist research, there must be a shift in power to let participants contribute to the direction of the research and therefore, I was mindful to uphold a mutual control (Frisby et al., 2005). Although it was difficult at times, I was aware I would have to be flexible and be willing to modify plans to involve the input of the participants (Luguetti & Oliver, 2018).

In the next section, I will describe the site whereby my research took place and the selection of participants involved.

Research Site

Wyndham Basketball Association

The chosen site for this research was Wyndham Basketball Association (WBA), situated in the west of Melbourne. With an affiliation with Victoria University, WBA was considered a suitable choice due to the body of work previously done for the association in identifying the social and cultural factors that contribute to the lack of female participation across all sectors of basketball within the organisation (McDonald, McLachlan, & Byrnes, 2020).

WBA was first established in 1972, under the name Werribee Basketball Association, which was then later changed to Wyndham Basketball Association in 2019. This decision was described by the President as an exciting opportunity for the future of the association and for basketball throughout the rapidly growing Wyndham area (Wyndham Basketball Association, n.d.) The more inclusive name was set to promote WBA to the broader members of Wyndham and attract more residents to the organisation.

Competition Structure of Basketball at WBA

There are multiple levels of competition within WBA catering to the abilities of junior and senior players. These competitions are played within the community of WBA as well as Victoria-wide and are highlighted in Figure 2. Big V is the highest senior level of basketball available at WBA. Wyndham teams comprising of the under-23s youth league and senior level for both men and women compete against different associations around Victoria. VJBL, otherwise known as the representative level, acts as a similar level of competition for junior players. Representative teams from WBA in under-12s to under-20s age groups compete against 54 associations across Victoria in a graded structure. Within the WBA, there are 12 basketball clubs that make up the domestic competition. This level caters for all age groups from under-8s through to open

age and is graded to suit all ability levels. The domestic basketball competition is split up into junior and senior competitions. As the domestic competition is open to anyone, the emphasis is on participation and enjoyment through playing. It is for this reason the research only focuses on improving the opportunities and experiences of girls and women in the domestic competition.
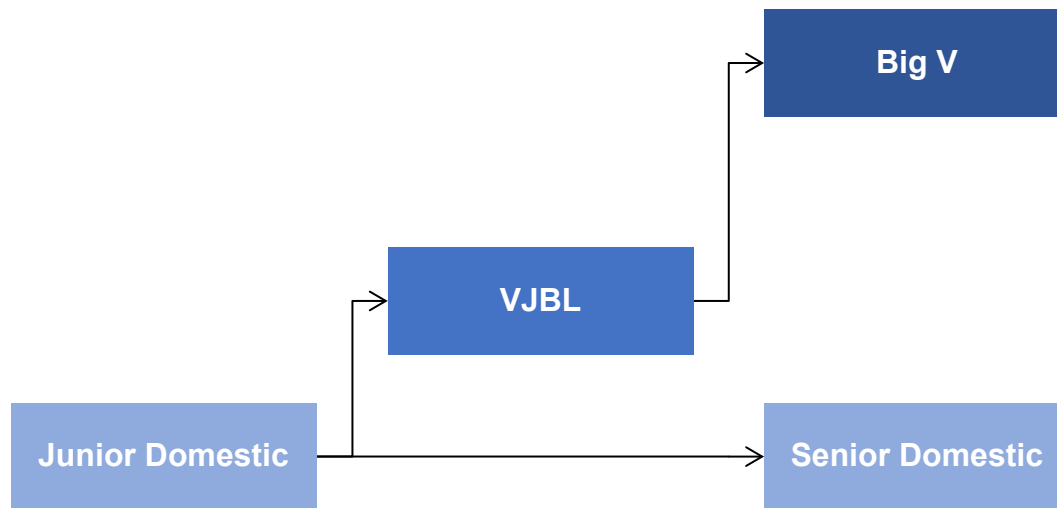
Figure 2. Pathways of the basketball competitions at WBA

Ethical Approval

On the 22nd of April 2021, I submitted my low-risk ethics application HRE21-052 to the Human Research Ethics Committee at Victoria University. Ethical approval to conduct this research was approved on the 16th of June 2021 allowing the research to begin.

Participants

Domestic basketball coaches were selected as the target participants for their ability to act as change agents in an attempt to better engage girls and women

in the sport of basketball. Research into the influence of coaches shows their pivotal role in positively or negatively influencing the experiences of youth in sport (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2006). In a gendered analysis of coaches, sports can promote and maintain a gender order unfavourable to women in coaching positions (Norman, 2010). The negative impact coaches can have on women and girls in community sport provides justification to prioritise this as an area for change. It is for this reason, I wanted to flip the script of coaches as the problem, to the solution.

Techniques used in this research included both purposive and voluntary response sampling. Purposive sampling was used to determine WBA domestic coaches as the targeted participants as they are deemed most useful to address the aim of the study. Voluntary response sampling was used to recruit participants as the project relied on domestic coaches to volunteer to become a part of the program. As the project revolved around collaborative group sessions with participants that act as focus groups, a sample size of 5 to 10 participants was ideal. Any more than 10 participants would make it difficult to control the group sessions and limit the opportunities for participants to share their thoughts (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

With assistance from WBA, all 12 domestic club presidents were contacted via email to distribute the information regarding this research project to all coaching members of their clubs. After 10 weeks dedicated to recruitment with only four responses from presidents, I had five confirmed participants. This number was then cut back to three participants as two had failed to show up to the first session, or any session that followed. Although the targeted participants for this project were domestic coaches of girls, due to the lack of response and time pressure, selection criteria were broadened to include anyone highly involved or playing a pivotal role within a domestic basketball club. Importantly all the participants wanted to be involved in the program because of their stated desire to improve gender equity and the inclusion of women and girls at their clubs. Information about the three participants in the program can be found in Table 1.

Name	Basketball Club	Role at club
Fran	Hoppers Crossing Basketball Club	Coach
Terri	Hoppers Crossing Basketball Club	Vice President
Pam	St Andrews Basketball Club	Team manager and committee member

Table 1. Participant Information

Data Collection

Drawing from my understanding of PAR and pedagogical practices, and with a critical feminist lens, I designed a gender inclusion program for the domestic coaches who volunteered into my study. I also drew inspiration from my experience as a research assistant in the Change Makers Project with Football Victoria in a program designed to encourage gender equity in sport (McDonald, McLachlan, Luguetti, & Carboon, 2021). It is with this understanding, I generated the GIP to be conducted at WBA. The program was initially structured to include six group sessions along with additional one-on-one support to the participants. With changes occurring throughout the program, there were minor adaptations that were deemed necessary to achieve the best outcome. Below is a brief outline of what the GIP entailed:

- Session 1 involved the participants part taking in an extinction exercise adapted from the Change Makers Project by listing the conditions that would be needed to ensure women and girls are excluded and isolated at WBA. This exercise allowed the participants to understand how many conditions there are that impact the experiences of girls at WBA.

- Session 2 was dedicated to allocating responsibility of each of the conditions to someone or a specific role within WBA. This was important in understanding the role of a coach in creating a safe space for players. Next in the session was deciding the best way to measure how inclusive WBA was in each of the conditions. This allowed participants to acknowledge the importance of evidence when creating gender inclusive strategies.
- As lockdown impacted our ability to gather in-person evidence, I conducted one-on-one reflexive meetings with each of the participants to gauge what they believed was a priority issue to address.
- Session 3 involved the participants deciding which conditions they would choose to prioritise and create strategies for.
- Session 4 allowed the participants to share their plans so far and gave more time to collaborate and work on their strategies. We also decided on what the desired outcome would be for each of the strategies and how we would measure this outcome.
- Following the more formal group sessions, I met with participants one-on-one to assist in the co-creation of their strategies.

The overall aim of the GIP was to assist participants to create gender-equitable strategies and implement these within WBA. After measuring the success of these strategies to create sustainable solutions, the outcome would be reflecting and adapting strategies to produce the best result for women and girls' participation and retention within WBA. A more detailed explanation of the program will be discussed in chapters three to five and in the Appendices.

The GIP utilised three different methods to produce the data generated for analysis: recordings and transcriptions from group sessions and individual meetings, fieldnotes and reflections, and document and artefact analysis.

Group Sessions and Individual Meetings

Conducting focus groups and interviews allow participants to reconstruct past events to gain a greater breadth of coverage in relation to addressing particular themes (Bryman, 2016). Focus groups can be adapted to the suitability of the project which is evident in the study addressing social change in an urban sport for development initiative (Nols, Haudenhuyse, Spaaij, & Theeboom, 2019). In this project I used the structure of the group sessions to act as a focus group whereby questions and tasks were developed to encourage discussion from participants. All focus groups and meetings were recorded, transcribed, and used to create field notes for further data analysis. Altogether, there were four group sessions, six individual meetings, and one group meeting conducted over a period of nine months.

Field Notes/Reflections

Commonly used in social science, field notes from observations can be utilised to further add valuable insight into the sporting practices in specific settings (Luguetti, Oliver, Dantas, & Kirk, 2017). As the lead researcher in a participatory action research project, I too underwent self-reflective cycles throughout the process of the program (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). For the cycle to be effective, I carried out my own reflexive practice during and after each group session or individual meetings with the participants. I began by differentiating my field notes, which were taken throughout the session and directly following, with my reflections, which were taken within the week following.

Following the format from Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018), I unobtrusively engaged in short notetaking throughout the sessions to highlight immediate thoughts and assist in remembering important aspects of the session when completing detailed field notes immediately following the session. Following suggestions, after the completion of the session or meeting and using my short notes taken throughout, I dictated my field notes from the whole session. This

allowed a free flow of ideas without the constraint of emphasising structured writing and grammar (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018).

Within a week following the session or meeting, I referred to my written and spoken field notes, as well as a review of the recording to then complete my overall reflection of the session. It is in this final step of self-reflection that I was able to enter a new cycle and plan for the next session program (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000).

Document and Artefact Analysis

In an initial assessment of the organisation, documents and artefacts detailing male and female basketball participation data specific to Australia, Victoria, and WBA were analysed and presented to participants in the first session to provide a comparison of where their organisation sits within the broader context. This proposed method is used to provide a baseline when evaluating the outcomes of gender equitable strategies (Soler, Prat, Puig, & Flintoff, 2016).

The 2019 annual reports for Basketball Australia and Basketball Victoria were chosen on the basis that the 2021 and 2020 reports lacked participation data due to COVID-19 related disruptions. AusPlay data supplied by Sport Australia was also used to illustrate the approximate male and female basketball participation rates from both the adult population and children under 15 in Australia, as well as a breakdown of each state.

Due to an ongoing relationship, WBA allowed me access to the entire organisation's participation data from 2014 to 2021. From this participation breakdown, the participants were able to see the difference in participation rates for boys and girls across all domestic clubs.

An extensive range of data was generated over nine months of data collection. With 10 transcripts from group sessions and individual meetings, as well as field

notes and reflections, data analysis could be conducted to address the aim of the research.

Data Analysis

Due to the nature of the project, data analysis was ongoing for the entirety of the program, both in terms of answering the research aim and questions, but also to reflect on and adapt each session of the GIP that was conducted. Participatory action research requires a self-reflective cycle to be an ongoing process (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000) and therefore, the changes in ideas and the direction of the program adjusts each of the sessions to follow. To cater for this self-reflection, following each session, I watched the session recording again, as well as manually analysed the transcription to make notes of possible shifts in the program and plan accordingly for the future.

Recordings of the group sessions and individual meetings were all transcribed to be used for data analysis. The professional transcription service Smart Docs was used to transcribe five of the individual meetings, the remaining individual meeting along with the four group sessions I transcribed myself using the online transcription software Otter.ai. All transcriptions were put through a manual analysis initially as mentioned to plan for future sessions, as well as highlight key quotes and ideas that could be drawn upon for emerging themes.

A more critical approach to the thematic analysis of the transcripts was completed using NVIVO (Version 12). Using a similar approach as the non-linear coding process for qualitative research (Williams & Moser, 2019), I began with open coding and drew out as many themes from the data as possible. With time, I was able to concisely draw together themes and present the findings using an adapted sociological model to address the major themes relevant to each level affecting change from occurring.

Using a socio-ecological model for data analysis and representation

An adapted version of a socio-ecological model was utilised to organise the data and present the findings in a clear and coherent way. The developed model has been based around the Ecological Intersectional Model (Hogan, Bowles, & Kitching, 2021), as well as the application of the ecological model used in the work of LaVoi and Dutove (2012). This model was chosen to organise the data and represent the findings as it can capture factors across a system of structures that have a direct impact on enacting change. The socio-ecological model was not used to interpret the findings, rather it was used as a way to clearly demonstrate the challenges and facilitators of conducting a change program. Although certain factors were able to cross between the levels, I found this model was still the best and most informative way to organise the findings from extensive amount of data produced over a long research process.

An added benefit of using this model was given the nature of this PAR project, that I was able to keep a broad view of the issues at play evident in the data collection and analysis. During the beginning of my analysis, it was easy to be heavily influenced by factors only evident in certain levels such as the impact of COVID-19 at the external level, or my own frustrations with the lack of progression at the individual level. In using the socio-ecological model to organise and analyse the data, I was confident that I was not missing other factors affecting the progression and outcome of the program. For this research, the model was divided into the four levels displayed in Figure 3.

Figure 3. The adapted socio-ecological model

The individual level was based around the challenges and facilitators that I faced during the process of attempting to enact change as the facilitator of the change program. This level takes into account the personal and psychological aspects that were evident across the entire process (Hogan et al., 2021).

The interpersonal level was used to represent the challenges and facilitators evident with the participants of the program. Participants acting as agents of change were the driving force behind enacting change and a key contributor to any positive or negative impacts stemming from this program.

The organisational level details the effect WBA had in facilitating the GIP. This level looked at organisational policies, members of the WBA executive outside of the program, and the overall control the organisation had in the effective running of the program (LaVoi & Dutove, 2012).

The external level being the most distant from the facilitation. This includes societal norms and expectations as well as factors outside of the direct control of the facilitator, participants, or the organisation.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have highlighted and explained the methodology and data collection methods of my research. I used participatory action research to work with and co-create gender equitable strategies with members of a community basketball association. The qualitative methods I chose allowed for a rich data source to be thematically analysed in order to examine the challenges and facilitators present within the process. The themes are clearly and critically presented using an adapted socio-ecological model to represent the different levels that impact both positively and negatively, the outcome of change.

The following three chapters will provide a detailed explanation of the GIP broken up into three stages: preparing for the Gender Inclusion Program; planning for gender equitable change; and creating and implementing gender equitable change. Each stage will bring forth different and ongoing challenges and facilitators in conducting a change program at WBA. Chapter six then discusses the most significant challenge I identified through my experience and analysis of facilitating the GIP.

The following chapter will begin with the findings from the preparation stage of conducting my GIP for WBA members.

Chapter 3 – Preparing for the Gender Inclusion Program

Before delivering my GIP with WBA members, I put in a considerable amount of work into the preparation phase. In particular, this included recruiting for agents of change and liaising with the organisation to execute the program. In this chapter I draw on the socio-ecological model as a tool to organise my findings and outline the factors that I found to challenge or facilitate change during this phase. I will begin by describing the preparation of working with WBA, the procedure of participant recruitment and the execution of the sessions, followed by an analysis of the key findings relevant to this stage.

Process of Recruitment and Execution of the Gender Inclusion Program

Preparation to conduct the GIP at WBA began well before the commencement of the first session with participants. To conduct an initiative of this nature within a grassroots sporting organisation, a great deal of time and effort must go into establishing a relationship with the members themselves and understanding the context of the organisation (Luguetti, Singehebhuye, & Spaaij, 2022). My understanding of the context came from a previous project evaluating the gender inclusion strategies and practices within the basketball organisation. Using methods such as participation data analysis, focus groups, and field observations, the aim of the project led by Victoria University was to present a summary of the major issues facing continued increases in girls and women's participation and recommend further actions to increase participation (McDonald, McLachlan, & Byrnes, 2020). The key findings from the analysis revealed five social and cultural factors that underpin the lack of participation and retention for women and girls at WBA. The themes listed were gendered

norms, competition structures without variety, lack of pathways, ill-equipped coaching, and the most significant theme of all, a hostile culture. Developed from the thematic analysis of the findings and guided by international literature on gender inclusion in sport and The Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation (2015), the following recommendations to address the above issues were presented to WBA:

- Set clear participation targets (ratio for girls and women by 2025)
- Establish that reporting on targets becomes a standing item on the agenda of all WBA meetings
- Develop policies and practices to reduce the levels of hostility and aggression that are apparent at all levels of the game at WBA, including zero tolerance for referee abuse
- Develop competition structures that overcome the talent differentials between purely domestic and representative players
- Provide specific women only coaching courses
- Ensure that the WBA website and social media communicates content that is 50/50
- Build a community of practice model between domestic clubs to harness collective problem solving and develop an inclusive and supportive sporting culture
- Conduct active research program with domestic clubs and coaches to enhance their capacity to ensure change occurs and targets are met

Following on from the last recommendation, I developed the GIP to utilise the information gathered from the report and actively work with members of the organisation to develop gender equitable strategies to enhance the experiences of girls and women at WBA. An extended summary of the report was given to the Executive at a later date where talks of recruitment for my GIP began on the 16th of December 2020.

As previously stated, WBA was aware of the program I planned to deliver and offered their assistance to help recruit coaches to be involved. After my presentation of the report to the executive where participant recruitment was first addressed, I attempted to initiate communication by emailing the General Manager and Vice President of WBA, however, was unsuccessful to begin this process as I did not receive a reply. After ethical approval had been granted for my research, the official recruitment process was able to proceed. To seek the best approach in recruiting participants, I once again sought out the input from the General Manager of the organisation to assist in my communication to the relevant basketball members. The initial plan was to present my GIP at the next WBA domestic club meeting, as well as doing visits to each of the domestic clubs to speak to their Presidents and coaches in person. I attempted to stress the importance of meeting the members face-to-face, however this was postponed several times due to COVID-19.

The General Manager expressed that as I already had a presence within the organisation having previously presented at their Annual General Meeting, he was comfortable and suggested that I could contact each of the Domestic Club Presidents directly. The Presidents could then be encouraged to relay the information to all their members. He also suggested involving Collin, the Vice-President of WBA who was also the President of one of the domestic clubs, to seek his input on the recruitment approach. After emailing Collin, it was under his advice that he would be the one to make the initial contact with all the Domestic Club Presidents to share the flyer I prepared to advertise and program and invite interested coaches to contact me for more information. After receiving no contact from interested coaches, I was given the details for each of the Domestic Club Presidents to email individually as a reminder about the program and encourage them to share with their coaching members. From the 12 emails I sent, I heard back from four Club Presidents confirming they would forward the information onto their coaches. The last approach for recruitment was utilising the Marketing and Communications Manager to upload the flyer to the organisation's website, as well an organisation wide email. One

setback was the incorrect spelling of my name and email address on the website for an unknown period. As it stands, I have no way of knowing if someone did attempt to contact to me using the incorrect email address.

The optimism from Collin to have 12 volunteers for the program, one from each domestic club, had diminished and his focus shifted to making sure all clubs had access to the resources of the program, even if they did not wish to be a part of it. Although I was very happy to share the resources with the entire WBA network, I was still in need of participants to get the program underway. After two months of waiting and through three recruitment approaches, I was able to confirm five participants who were interested in taking part in the program. There were another two coaches interested, however not able to participate due to being under the age of 18. After learning more about the interested participants, it was apparent there was only one active coach of girls among them. Domestic coaches of girls were the target participants as I felt they were an untapped resource that has a direct influence of the experiences that girls face playing basketball at WBA. With a lack of time being a factor, I had no choice but to adapt the contents of the program to suit a wider range of roles involved in the basketball organisation.

Emails were individually sent out to all five participants seeking their availability for the first two sessions, as well as asking them to share more about themselves to initiate the relationship. Originally, the sessions were planned to be delivered in person, however due to the ongoing challenges with restrictions due to COVID-19, the best option was to conduct the sessions over zoom. Prior to the commencement of the first session, I was hoping even with no recent communication from two of my participants, that they would all still attend the session after they confirmed their interest in the project. To my disappointment, those two participants did not attend the first session or any following. After follow-up emails, one participant explained due to a family emergency, she would not be able to take part in the program after all. The remaining participant never replied to any of my emails for the duration of the project. After a long

and tiring recruitment process with many ups and downs, I was left with three confirmed and willing participants to be a part of the program.

Facilitators and Challenges in Preparing for the Gender Inclusion Program

After analysing the data from the first stage of the program, I found five key factors that had a significant effect on the outcomes of the preparation stage of my GIP. Specifically, I found two facilitators and three challenges as outlined in Table 2 below. In the remainder of the chapter, I discuss these five factors in detail.

	Facilitators	Challenges
External		COVID-19
Organisational	An organisational appetite for change	An appetite but no investment for change
Interpersonal		
Individual	Previous working relationship	The beginning of an emotional toll

Table 2. Facilitators and challenges relevant to the levels when enacting change in preparing for the Gender Inclusion Program

Facilitators

An organisational appetite for change

Changes over the last five years in the sporting landscape of Australia has been a major driver for the recent attention in women's sport. The emergence of the Australian Football League Women's (AFLW) and Super Netball in 2017,

followed by the inaugural State of Origin and National Rugby League Women's (NRLW) in 2018, has drawn the attention of gender progress in Australia (Toffoletti & Palmer, 2019). The celebratory discourse of this progression results in the apparent boom we have witnessed in women's sport. Although such discourse can undermine the evident way to go for gender equality (McLachlan, 2019), this attention has been effective in highlighting the need to place central importance on female participation in the sport sector, especially at a community level.

Federal, State and Local Governments have put their effort into conducting a sheer number of initiatives and strategies to support and encourage female participation at all levels of sport. At a federal level, Girls Make Your Move developed by the Department of Health, aims to encourage, and support young women aged 12-19 years to be more active and therefore gaining the benefits of an active life. In addition, The Women Leaders in Sport program managed by Sport Australia in partnership with the Office for Women, offers development opportunities for women in leadership roles in the sports industry. An emphasis of the promotion of women and girls in sport at a national level, filters down where we see the Victorian State government highlight particular importance in female sport participation.

In 2015, the Victoria Government published The Inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation recommending practical actions to increase participation in sport and leadership roles for women and girls (Victorian Government, 2015). A game plan comprising of four distinct themes with nine associated recommendations was provided in order to achieve the future vision of the report of women and girls having the same opportunities and experiences as boys and men in the sport sector. As a result, the Office for Women in Sport and Recreation was developed by the Victorian Government in 2017 with a goal to directly respond and implement the nine recommendations provided within the report.

Making a substantial impact on the sporting sector in Victoria, the Change Our Game campaign was announced in 2016 bringing together organisations to challenge gender stereotypes and encourage more women and girls to reach their full potential in sport. Informed by the game plan within the 2015 inquiry, the campaign offers a range of strategies and resources sporting organisations can adopt and utilise (Sport and Recreation Victoria, 2018). Historically we've experienced similar booms in the attention given to women's sport (McLachlan, 2019). However, the directive for change apparent in society today through the strategies and initiatives implemented by the Federal and State Governments, promotes and propels sporting organisations to take action and adopt these attitudes and recommendations.

With an increase in the attention given to women in sport, naturally, this sparks a continued effect filtering down where there is an appetite for change from sports organisations to do better for gender ~~equality~~ equity within sport. In consultation with sport sector leaders and individuals involved in grassroots sport and active recreation, it was found there is a strong appetite for more female representation in the media (Victorian Government, 2015). With an increase in attention given to female participation in sport from governments in recent years, there comes an effort from organisations to follow in the footsteps of the top level and enforce recommendations.

It was WBA who first reached out to Victoria University to conduct a research project investigating the social and cultural barriers affecting participation in basketball for women and girls. It was also WBA who followed the recommendations provided from the report to allow the GIP to be run at their organisation. Noted down in various meetings between myself and representatives of WBA was their apparent appetite to uphold a successful and welcoming female basketball program at their association. The determination of the Vice-President of WBA to have all clubs involved in the program and making it clear that all clubs would need to have access to the resources and outcomes related to the program so no club would be left behind. Without this appetite for

change stemming from the organisation, change programs, such as my GIP, would be unable to be delivered.

Previous working relationship

My relationship with WBA began on the 23rd of May 2019 at our initial meeting to discuss plans for the first project investigating the lack of female participation and retention at Wyndham. From this point, I was in communication with members of WBA on an ongoing basis and therefore had the opportunity to associate with and develop a working relationship with their members. This relationship stemmed from executive meetings, and through the research conducted with different stakeholders of the organisation. This in turn was a benefit to me once the time had come to relying on online communication to organise sessions and recruit participants. Although many challenges described in the following section were noted during this process, the established relationship allowed for some ease in communication between me and the executive members at WBA.

As previously discussed, it is essential to establish a strong relationship with the context in which the research takes place. Both for the benefit of understanding the experiences of the participants required for the PAR approach (Luguetti, Singehebhuye, et al., 2022), but also to efficiently undertake the organisational process with an external organisation. Circumstances where credibility had already been established due to previous work involving community partners has been seen to assist in trust building between the researcher, the organisation, and the participants (Frisby et al., 2005). Similarly noted in my process was the General Manager's approval for individually emailing all Domestic Club Presidents in the recruitment process. This was due to the fact that I already had an established presence within the organisation and therefore could be trusted to take matters into my own hands and independently contact members. It was this relationship that eased pressure off the organisation so that the sole responsibility was not on them to initiate the organisation of

participants. This then in turn acted as a facilitator so that sporting organisations are not overworked and responsibility for change can be shared amongst other members and external researchers.

Challenges

COVID-19

The World Health Organisation declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic on March 11, 2020. State Governments within Australia began enforcing lockdowns and social distancing restrictions with the need to slow the spread of cases and protect the safety of the community. There were disruptions to many aspects of the everyday lives of people within Australia, not excluding the considerable impact the COVID-19 pandemic had on the structure and organisation of sport. Communities forced into isolation and local sporting organisations unable to open their doors resulting in significant declines in organised sport participation rates (Eime, Harvey, Charity, Pankowiak, & Westerbeek, 2022), with major forms of emotional struggle evident for young players and families (Elliott et al., 2021). While preparing for participant recruitment and the organisation of the sessions, Melbourne was experiencing one of the strictest lockdowns in the world, taking away the ability to meet anyone face to face and relying on online communication. Challenges from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were evident across many aspects in community sport, however in particular, I saw the detrimental impact it had on organising and facilitating a change program within a basketball organisation.

In my work prior to this program, I had experience with conducting focus group sessions both in person and online. Although both approaches have positive and negative elements, the lack of face-to-face interaction can make it difficult to build a sense of comfort between participants and myself as the facilitator. This program was asking participants to be vulnerable and open themselves up for critique and self-reflection. To do this, the sessions had to act as a safe space for participants to share thoughts and experiences with one another.

Time and effort must be taken to build rapport between the researcher and participants when meeting online. Utilising proactive strategies such as communicating regularly with participants prior to the beginning of the sessions replaces the comfort experienced from face to face interaction (Shamsuddin, Sheikh, & Keers, 2021). I attempted to develop a relationship by individually emailing each participant welcoming them into the program, giving them a short introduction about myself, as well as asking the same from them. Three out of my five interested participants responded accordingly. Terri and Pam both replied with a very short introduction describing their family, involvement in their basketball club and an explanation as to why they decided to do this program. Fran sent me a letter of introduction outlining in great detail the same points the other participants also addressed. The two remaining interested participants never sent me any form of introduction and inevitably, never attended the program. Although this strategy helped facilitate a relationship with those who replied, it was not enough for me personally to have felt completely comfortable when meeting them in our first session. Within my written reflection, I noted prior to the start of the session "there was a part of me that was nervous, mostly to do with the fact this would be my first interaction with my participants and at times zoom can be a little awkward". Although this had no detrimental effect, it is important to address the impact conducting sessions online has on the initial relationship of a facilitator and participants.

The use of online sessions also presents a barrier to those from marginalised communities. The sample selection automatically contains a bias to those with internet access (Shamsuddin et al., 2021). Due to longstanding political, economic, educational, and employment discrimination, people from marginalised groups are less likely to have access to the technology or the technological skills to participate in online research (Sevelius et al., 2020). Minority groups, especially from culturally diverse backgrounds, can show resistance in participating in intervention programs (Lindenberg, Solorzano, Vilaro, & Westbrook, 2001), therefore it is necessary to provide a range of options to connect with hard to reach populations.

The virtual recruitment process created complications in the process of facilitating a change program. In order for effective participant recruitment, multiple communication methods should be applied (Kaba & Beran, 2014). In-person information sessions are the most effective recruitment method in education research (Kaba & Beran, 2014), as well as one-to-one interaction being most effective with people from culturally diverse backgrounds (Lindenberg et al., 2001). For this program, there were three main methods of recruitment utilised after the initial plan to physically meet with all domestic clubs was not able to occur due to lockdown restrictions. Having to rely on the Vice-President of WBA to relay information to clubs, and the distribution of the flyer to the broader WBA members was ineffective and provided no affirmative response. The next and only method under my control was relying on email communication directly with each Domestic Club President in which I was able to gain two interested participants from one domestic club. The remaining interested participants came from the domestic club the Vice-President was a part of, as well as another interested participant from another committee. There are a number of difficulties in recruitment, however the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic played a role in the lack of interest from coaches within WBA.

An appetite but no investment for change

Organisational support is vital when attempting to enact change. In this example and prior to the commencement of the project, WBA were adamant they were interested and wanting to pursue a change within the organisation to increase and retain participation for women and girls. While one can argue the benefits of an inclusive and supportive environment for women and girls, what was not clear was if this decision to act was extrinsically or intrinsically motivated. Extrinsic motivation highlights the decision to do an activity in order to attain a separable outcome, contrasting to intrinsically motivated behaviour catering to an inherent satisfaction and enjoyment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When looking to create positive outcomes in behaviour or performance, intrinsic motivation is

shown to be more beneficial in enacting change (Kuvaas, Buch, Weibel, Dysvik, & Nerstad, 2017).

Despite the effort by WBA to bring forward this issue to an external source to investigate, the lack of urgency to share the findings to members within the organisation shows a major benefit to the association was to be seen doing something about this issue, without an invested interest in the problem. Records have shown the Evaluation of Gender Inclusion Strategy and Practices report prepared for WBA was sent to members of the executive on the 29th of October 2020. It was not until the 18th of May 2021 this report was distributed to the rest of the WBA members, even after multiple requests for the report during this time. Over a year has passed since the report was released to the WBA executive and currently only one recommendation provided within the report has been followed. That recommendation being the GIP which has ran as an active research program working with members of the WBA to enhance their capacity to ensure change occurs. Although allowing my continued effort to conduct this program, I was the driving force behind the follow through of this recommendation, not the WBA. A drastic problem such as gender ~~equality~~ equity in sporting organisations requires permeable change that addresses the source of the issue. Deeply rooted sporting structures run by men, for men reproduce highly masculinised spaces that are difficult to overcome (Anderson, 2009). Unfortunately, with female participation in sport drawing the deserved attention needed, having an appetite to change does not always suffice to meaningful and intrinsically motivated positive change.

The beginning of an emotional toll

COVID-19 barriers forced the recruitment process to go virtual and as a result the time taken for the information to get from myself to the domestic coaches was extensive. The recruitment process first started with communication to the General Manager on 21st June 2021. Following this initial exchange, email correspondence between myself, the General Manager, the Vice-President of

WBA, and Domestic Club Presidents occurred for the next six weeks. In that ~~time~~time, I had only been contacted by one Club President with two interested volunteers, however no details had been provided yet. With time pressure being a factor, I was forced to provide a deadline to WBA for the end of recruitment, being 20th August 2021. Within two weeks of providing said deadline, I had been contacted to say I now had five interested participants willing to part take in the program. Although WBA were on board with the program for gender equitable change, unless pushed it was still not a priority to make happen.

After multiple efforts of contacting members of the organisation with no reply and constant brainstorming of new ways to connect with prospective participants, the emotional toll of the recruitment and organisation of facilitating a change program had kicked in and would have a lasting effect. The frustration associated with only receiving the help from the organisation once I was forced to provide a deadline also contributed to the tension accumulating on my behalf. Even prior to the commencement of the program, the exhaustion from the effort I had put into this part of the process was clear and having an impact on my motivation already.

Conclusion

Before programs aimed at creating societal change can occur, there is a considerable amount of work done in order to see the commencement. Such attention to the preparatory stage of conducting a gender equitable change program has not been explored in previous research as a direct challenge or facilitator in enacting positive change. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated lockdown impacted access to the program as well as the smooth organisation of the sessions. However, although having a major impact in the sporting landscape, the pandemic cannot be solely responsible for the challenges experienced in facilitating the organisation of a change program. The apparent boom in women's sport drawing the attention of governments and

filtering down to organisations to put an emphasis on increasing female participation in the sport sector. Although the attention given to women in sport from an organisational perspective may seem positive from the outside, the appetite to change does not always amount to meaningful change within the organisation. To finish, there is an enabling aspect of having an established relationship with a sporting organisation to help facilitate the communication between the two parties. However, a combination of all the challenges addressed initiates and sheds light on the emotional toll I experienced as the facilitator of this gender equitable change program.

Chapter 4: Planning for Gender Equitable Change

Moving to a more practical side of the process, this chapter explores the context and planning behind the focus and creation of gender equitable change. Specifically, I explore the activities and work conducted within the first two sessions of my GIP, along with the one-on-one time I had to reflect with each of the participants. With the program up and running, I began to identify the challenges and facilitators dominantly evident within the interpersonal and individual levels.

Process of Planning for Gender Equitable Change

As discussed previously, leading into the first session for the GIP, I had an optimistic expectation that there would be five participants attending. Although my hopes were not high for the two participants I had not heard from, I had planned the session assuming their attendance. This was not the case unfortunately and therefore initiated the ongoing and necessary process of adaptation to the program.

I began the session with a quick introduction about myself, my studies, my background in basketball, as well as my passion in this area of focus. I had prepared a presentation that would address the current state of play of basketball and the required background information relevant to the program I had created (Appendix A). I chose to summarise the Evaluation into Gender Inclusion Strategies and Practice report that was facilitated by Victoria University at WBA (McDonald, McLachlan, & Byrnes, 2020) and highlighted the recommendation of conducting an Active Research program, eventually leading to the development of the GIP. I was certain to emphasise the program as a collaborative effort where I would be working with them to create the opportunities and give them the resources to co-create gender equitable

strategies. My last addition to the presentation was to outline what the six sessions of the program would consist of. The first two sessions contained more detail, however the remaining four sessions were kept quite brief due to the fact there had already been so many disruptions to the program even before commencing. Although I had planned the entire program, I was not willing to confirm any specific details regarding the later sessions to allow for some room to adapt if necessary.

I handed it over to my participants to introduce themselves and tell me why exactly they joined this program. Fran spoke first and although I had already met Fran through the previous project and her letter of introduction, she spoke more about her background and proclaimed that she is not a head coach at the moment but a very active member of Hoppers Crossing Basketball Club. Part of her passion for female participation came from allowing her daughter to have as many opportunities to develop her skills and playing ability as her brothers. Another reason she mentioned was the fact she is a Physical Education teacher, so she likes to see as many kids be active as they can be, whether they are girls or boys. Terri was up next to say she has been a part of Hoppers Crossing Basketball Club for the past six years and has been the Vice-President for two years. What she enjoys most about the club is meeting new families, especially from diverse backgrounds, and seeing if there are any girls that want to participate. Lastly, Pam spoke about herself and how her two daughters play for separate clubs as it was their choice where to play and they wanted to join their friends. She is also the team manager of both teams, and those clubs are Corpus Christi Basketball Club and St Andrews Basketball Club where she is also a committee member.

The introductions were now complete, and we could begin the activities of the session and first up was the extinction exercise borrowed from The Change Makers Project (McDonald, McLachlan, Luguetti, & Carboon, 2021). In our session, instead of brainstorming ways to help increase participation and retention of girls and women playing sport at WBA, the aim of the activity was to

come up with conditions to ensure there were no women and girls playing basketball at WBA and eliminating any opportunity they have to participate in the domestic competition. Although the complete opposite reason for the program in the first place, I emphasised the importance of breaking down the issue of gender inclusion to make it clear what exactly we are trying to change in the space of WBA (Appendix A).

Despite some initial feelings of discomfort with the exercise, all participants worked well together to develop a long list of conditions that would be necessary to make women and girls at WBA extinct (Appendix B). Throughout the exercise there were sarcastic comments and laughter at the sad reality that some of these conditions for extinction were either already in place to some extent or used to be evident at WBA. Although the conditions that were being listed were all relevant, it took until halfway through the exercise for someone to suggest a coach's role in female participation. Although spending a lot of time discussing their experiences, they managed to do quite well to develop the conditions required by coaches to make women and girls extinct. An adaptation I was required to make during the session was to draw attention to the role of different stakeholders for this exercise. As Terri was the Vice-President and Pam was a team manager and committee member, I directly asked what they could possibly do in their roles to achieve the goal of the exercise. The next and last activity was to brainstorm what they thought were the attributes of a good coach (Appendix C).

To wrap up the first session, I made sure to emphasise that they could contact me anytime if they thought of anything else to add to our lists and that eventually they would be using these conditions to reflect on their own practice in the basketball space, whether it was as a coach, team manager, committee member or Vice-President.

In our second session, once again only Fran, Terri and Pam were in attendance, and I had come to terms with this being it for the program.

To begin, there was a discussion around the new framework that WBA would apply to its representative program called the 'Wyndham Way". There was an information meeting for parents of representative players to attend and learn all about the new direction for WBA that Pam and Fran had attended during the previous week. There was emphasis on the professionalisation of WBA with a distinct separation between the representative and domestic level of basketball.

My aim for the first activity for the session was to decide which stakeholders from WBA would have the responsibility to make sure the extinction conditions that we listed would not actually come true if they weren't already present (Appendix D). As I read each condition from the list, the three participants discussed who they believed to be responsible (Appendix E).

Once the list was complete, the next activity was to focus on the conditions that the coach was deemed responsible for, and brainstorm methods to assess how inclusive and supportive WBA are for those specific conditions (Appendix D). As this program was designed to develop evidence-based strategies by and for domestic coaches, there were some changes that had to be made to cater to my participants not being active coaches. However, I still believed it was important to draw focus on what the coach can control. The rest of the session was used to brainstorm methods to assess the conditions a coach had the greatest influence over (Appendix E)

To finish the session, I quickly explained that these methods can be utilised once the season resumes. However, for now the only method we would be able to do during lockdown would be to catch up one-on-one and do a self-reflection. The aim of the one-on-one meetings was to engage in a casual conversation led by some reflection questions (Appendix F) to discuss their own experiences participating in their role within the domestic basketball space, as well as an observation of others.

After I had completed each meeting with my participants, I then completed a manual analysis whereby I watched each recording noting down all the themes they addressed. I then grouped these themes together to come up with the six most common themes being pathways, respecting opposition players, a welcoming environment for girls from diverse backgrounds, perception of female players, coaching language, and court time. I then presented these themes to the participants in session three for their confirmation or to see if they had any more input. Now that the evidence had been gathered, it was now time for the creation and eventually implementation of gender equitable strategies.

Facilitators and Challenges in Planning for Gender Equitable Change

After the commencement of my GIP, factors became more prevalent in both enabling and challenging the outcome of the program. In this stage, I found eight key factors, four facilitators and four challenges as outlined in Table 3 below. I will now discuss these eight factors in detail.

	Facilitators	Challenges
External	Accessibility to sessions	Adapting to zoom
Organisational		The 'Wyndham Way'
Interpersonal	Participant connection	Emphasis on pathways
Individual	Building trust through basketball	Adapting sessions on the go
	One-on-one time	

Table 3. Facilitators and challenges relevant to the levels when enacting change in planning for gender equitable change

Facilitators

Accessibility to sessions

The challenges foreseen by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic forced Melbourne to live virtually and rely on majority of our communication to be online. In the initial stages of planning, I had hoped to conduct the workshops with participants face-to-face. However, with increasing uncertainty regarding when we would be able to meet in person, I was forced to plan the sessions to be conducted over zoom. As much as I was disappointed in this outcome, with it came the benefits for myself as well as the participants in conducting the GIP.

A major benefit of conducting zoom workshops was there was no need for travel to physically attend the meeting meaning saving travel time and costs (Gray, Wong-Wylie, Rempel, & Cook, 2020; Shamsuddin et al., 2021). As with previous evidence, participants were more flexible with their time now that majority of people were working from home and outside commitments were put on hold (Buckle, 2021). My participants were all busy parents of children with a vast number of sporting commitments. With the ease of logging onto the zoom session from home, my participants could manage participating in the program and taking care of the many other responsibilities they had. This then allowed for more meaningful participation in my GIP.

Participant connection

My GIP was designed to bring together domestic coaches who all shared the same passion in making WBA a more inclusive and supportive environment for women and girls. The highly professionalised climate for youth sport however has put a greater importance on talent development and winning (Gould, 2019). In the same system that pins clubs and teams against each other to strive for competitive success, this program aimed to harness and develop a collective buy in between the domestic coaches and therefore domestic clubs at WBA.

Prior to the first session, I did not know whether my participants knew each other already or if I had to help build relationships between them as well. Luckily, during the introductions Fran had explained the relationship that she already had with the other two participants.

> *Fran: So Sophie, I know both Terri and Pam quite well because Terri is from our club and, and my daughter plays domestic with Lily and has played rep with her. And Pam's daughter, Ivana was in my daughter's team this year.*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 1*

This relationship between the participants helped aid the discussion and allowed the participants to easily bounce off each other, especially within the extinction activity.

> *Terri: Oh, another one, let's not have any training session for the girls.*
> *Pam: Yep, not enough courts.*
> *Fran: And when you play, there's no feedback or instruction. It's just off you go and play.*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 1*

This was also noted when they discussed both their positive and negative shared experiences.

> *Fran: Fair enough too, Terri because it was a terrible year for us. Terri's daughter Lily would have been in with Ivana and Amy, and we had an awful year. So, we're just, we're just having a friendly chat. We love you Terri and we love Lily."*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 1*

From the first session I could gather the participants had a close relationship with each other which allowed them to be in a comfortable environment to casually chat.

> *Terri: We're going to forget you're here in a minute Sophie and we'll just keep talking.*
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 1*

With the challenges of facilitating the GIP online, what acted as a facilitator was the previous relationship the participants shared prior to the program. This meant that there was not as much emphasis on building the rapport between the participants to encourage the flow of discussion during the activities, this was already achieved. Building a community of practice model between domestic clubs to harness collective problem solving and develop an inclusive and supportive sporting culture was just one recommendation provided by the WBA report. With a relationship present between participants, a step towards this model could be achieved.

Building trust through basketball

As noted previously, a trusting relationship is important to establish when initiating research within a community and can be done in a number of ways (Frisby et al., 2005). In my circumstance, having a background of basketball knowledge and a wide range of basketball experience allowed me to not only build a relationship with my participants, but also to understand the terminology and issues they were facing within their clubs. I was able to add to the discussion by sharing my own personal stories in relation to basketball.

> *Sophie: I was about to say personal story. I remember being told I was too small to make the first team.*
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

My experience in basketball was an enabler for building trust between myself as the facilitator and the participants as they could engage in more casual talk, even sharing jokes within the second session.

> *Fran: Hey you can come down and coach Soph, we'll come video you.*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

I found having a prior knowledge of the sporting context was beneficial to the overall flow of the sessions. There was no holding back or rephrasing while discussions were had regarding the inclusion of women and girls at WBA.

One-on-one time

The decision to go virtual to gather evidence to develop gender equitable strategies although was forced due to the restrictions we were currently living in, acted as another facilitator in developing a relationship between participants and myself. I put a large amount of emphasis on this one-on-one meeting acting as a casual conversation to gain further information about the participants and their experiences at WBA.

> *Sophie: You would have seen the questions that I emailed you, maybe a couple of weeks ago. We can go back to these every now and then, but it's very casual, not anything formal at all. Obviously, completely up to you what you share. You don't have to say names if you're talking about others. I just really wanted to get an insight of your experience at the domestic club that you're currently involved in.*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Refection with Terri*

Similar to my past experience in basketball acting as a facilitator, these one-on-one meetings gave me the opportunity to talk more freely to the participants about basketball.

> *Terri: After everything I just said, I have to ask it, are you six foot?*
>
> *Sophie: No, no. I was always one of the little ones.*
>
> *Terri: You should have said yes, and then I would have went, "Oh!"*
>
> *Sophie: No, I was one of the smaller ones. Point guard, that was my role.*
>
> *Terri: That's the same with my daughter. She's point guard, and she's little.*
>
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Refection with Terri*

Reactions from the participants made it clear they also they enjoyed the one-on-one time and benefited just as much as I did.

> *Sophie: …but the way we conduct over Zoom, it's so formal and you miss that part of getting to know each other. That's why I wanted to do these one on ones as well, just so I could talk with everyone a bit more. So, it's been good.*
>
> *Terri: It's good. Like I said, I was looking forward to this so I could just express some of the things that's been bugging me. I need to be heard.*
>
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Refection with Terri*

While I designed the program as a collaborative project to develop the best gender equitable strategies, the use of one-on-one time with each participant was beneficial for both building the relationship as well as gaining more of an insight into the participants' experiences.

Challenges

Adapting to Zoom

As much as there were complications with the organisation of the GIP primarily relying on online forms of communication, the challenge of now conducting the sessions over Zoom were also apparent. Common disadvantages of using

Zoom include technological issues such as difficulty connecting to calls, and the quality of the call itself (Archibald, Ambagtsheer, Casey, & Lawless, 2019). There were countless examples of technical issues, both on my end and the participants, most commonly to do with poor connection.

> *Terri: My computer is glitchy, it's just going mental. Is everyone's computer okay? Is just mine?*
>   - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

As disrupting as these technical issues were for the participants, they also disturbed the flow of the discussion when having to admit participants back into the Zoom and wait until they connected once again.

> *Sophie: So I'm thinking back to what you said at the very start when you were talking about the, sorry I'm just admitting Terri, she'll come in. Sorry I'll just see if she's back. Terri, are you back?*
>   - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

Although these disturbances were not a major challenge that required much attention, unfortunately they did not aid the facilitation of my GIP and therefore need to be taken into consideration when planning change programs to be conducted online.

The 'Wyndham Way'

Over recent decades, Australian youth sport has become increasingly professionalised with an emphasis on winning and elite excellence (Gould & Carson, 2004). The detrimental impact on youth sport participation due to this professionalised paradigm needs to shift to a more holistic approach fostering the physical, psychological and social development of children (Gould, 2019). This shift would allow sporting environments to move away from the priority being on competitive success and moving towards a more inclusive

environment where participation regardless of ability remains the most important feature. Amid the GIP being conducted aiming to foster this holistic way of thinking and make WBA a more inclusive and supportive environment for women and girls, a newly developed framework was being implemented at the representative level making WBA a more professional environment for their athletes. The 'Wyndham Way' consists of the four pillars; holistic approach, renewed 3x3 focus, player development and coach development, that make up the association's philosophy creating a clear pathway for junior players to the senior level. When comparing to the aims of my GIP, the emphasis on the technical development of players, rather than on inclusion directly opposes the philosophy of this program.

When brought up in the discussion at the beginning of session two, I already had some concerns on how this framework would interfere with our focus of our gender equitable strategies to enhance the experiences for women and girls. After learning more about the approach Wyndham were looking at, I soon realised this professionalisation of the representative side of the association would be detrimental to the direction of this program targeting the domestic level.

> *Fran: They're trying to make a definition between the rep player and the domestic player and as Pam said, they will use player for domestic and athlete for representative.*
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

> *Fran: With that nutritionist they talked about going to VU, using the kitchens at VU, talking to people about, this is what they hope to do by the way.*
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

As previously discussed in Chapter three, an appetite for change from the organisational point does not always translate into practice through the structure

and organisation of the association. Although this framework is aimed at the representative level of basketball within WBA, it was pointed out by Pam.

> **Pam**: [It is] the framework going forward that Wyndham is going to use for their rep, which the building blocks of that is the domestic.
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

This focus on elite based development directly goes against the recommendations set out within the WBA report. Although previously placing such importance on the issue of female participation within WBA, the framework has made no such attempt to place any attention on female participation.

> **Pam**: But I just thought in this day and age that they would have had something specifically in there for the female athletes, and perhaps how they were going to grow because compared to the amount of boys' teams that we had compared to female teams, I don't even think it would be the 70/30.
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

It is through the lack of action towards making a difference in the culture and experience of women and girls at WBA, that this decision to provide a framework encouraging an elite based pathway for junior players that this gendered structure and organisation of basketball will continue to reproduce a division in the participation and experiences between male and female players. Unfortunately, this mindset doesn't stop at the organisational level, but filters down so that the emphasis on skill development is placed as a top priority for change as discussed below.

Emphasis on pathways

As previously mentioned, mindsets developed at the top level are often passed down and influence decisions made at the bottom level. Possibly swayed by the

'Wyndham Way", a major direction of our focus to improve the environment for girls and women was based on creating more pathways for girls at the domestic level so they can have the same opportunity to excel in basketball as boys and men. Although the intention of participants involved community sport are well suited to providing fair play to all players, more often than not this coaching philosophy is not always implemented through their practice (McCallister, Blinde, & Weiss, 2000). Even though the aim of my GIP was to improve participation and the experiences of women and girls, the direction of the 'Wyndham Way' had already taken its toll on the mindset of the participants.

> *Pam: Hopefully it might shake out some of those ones who were, who are there because they've always played, they don't really want to, but they've always played.*
>   - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

With an emphasis on pathways, the direction targets a pyramid system that filters out those who are not looking to excel in the sport, but merely participate for social or enjoyment reasons. Different motivations were clear with an example shared by participants in the women's league.

> *Fran: Thing that happened women wise for me playing senior women. Nobody wanted to be in A grade. So they had a B grade the year that I played… that was just bizarre for me that nobody wanted to be in A grade that season. So they called it B, and C grade.*
>   - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

Although this example is present in a senior women's league, only focussing on pathways as a strategy to enhance the experiences of women and girls, means there are a lot of girls who miss out in this pyramid system. The participants recognised the need to understand and cater for the different motivations that girls have to play, however, there was still an underlying emphasis on pathways being the way to solve the problem of gender inequality at WBA.

> *Fran: Understand that kids are out trying to improve their skills and have fun. And they're not super, super serious, like some of the others too.*
>   ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

While speaking in reference to a team of boys who began in a lower grade for basketball, Fran once again put the emphasis on assuming the motivation to play was through competition and skill development.

> *Fran: At least four or five of them have gone on to play WBA [representative], so you can't write out those kids that are in those lower grades.*
>   ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

Adapting sessions on the go

A major challenge during the initial stages of the program was a constant state of adaptation due to many aspects. Firstly, with COVID-19 and the changing restrictions, it was very difficult to plan for all sessions of the GIP. I had made a thorough plan for the first two sessions and planned what an ideal progression through the sessions would entail. However, it was difficult to confirm details for my own plan as well as letting the participants know the direction of the program.

> *Sophie: Just quickly, session three, four, five and six, it's quite, I've left it a little bit open. Because the great thing about action research is we change as we go because it's a co-creation program. So I have planned what's ahead. However, it's really determined by what we all come up with in these sessions*
>   ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 1*

Even while planning the ways to assess how inclusive and supportive WBA is to women and girls, I was forced to plan for two ways of thinking, self-reflective methods that can be utilised once the season resumes and basketball returns, and also an individual self-reflection that can be done during lockdown.

> *Sophie: Everything that we've thought of there, that's our optimistic future, what we can, what we'll be able to do once basketball's back… what I've said, as lockdown methods of ways to gauge an idea of how inclusive and supportive we are in these conditions, is thinking about actually doing a self-reflection.*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

While conducting PAR, it is essential to seek the input from participants to guide the direction of the outcome. Therefore, a common challenge is to allow room to alter plans based on the participants engagement (Luguetti & Oliver, 2018). While I certainly experienced this challenge while planning for gender equitable change within the first two sessions of my GIP, I was also forced to adapt to the various positions my participants held within their domestic clubs. This program was initially designed to cater for current domestic basketball coaches. However, due to issues with recruitment, I found myself with three participants, with positions such as Vice-president, team manager, committee member, assistant coach, as well as some experience with coaching boys and girls. This required a broadening on the focus of the activities that initially were only aimed at domestic coaches.

> *Sophie: Pam, you're a committee member, Terri, Vice President, thinking about in terms of maybe your role in the clubs, or Pam as a team manager as well. If you can think of anything sort of specific, in that sense, in what could you do as a team manager? What could you do as a committee member?*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 1*

This late adaptation although made sense due to the participants involved in the program, also made it challenging to ensure the coach's influence remained the most important aspect to address when thinking about ways to improve the environment for women and girls.

Conclusion

Once again, the COVID-19 pandemic was evident as a facilitator and challenge when attempting to plan for gender equitable change. The online sessions created the opportunity for easy access to join sessions without the hassle of transportation and an extra time commitment. However, common amongst the challenges of being online, technological issues were often apparent impacting the flow of the sessions. A facilitator of this planning for change stage was the familiarity shown in multiple aspects. Firstly, the established relationship between participants encouraged the community of practice model to be adopted and built upon for sessions to come. Secondly, my previous experience with the sport of basketball allowed for ease in understanding difficult terminology and issues that were present within the sporting organisation. With these facilitators also came challenges with an emphasis put on the developmental pathway for basketball players directly opposing the aim of inclusion. The 'Wyndham Way' framework developed by the organisation and adopted by the participants showed to have a substantial impact on the direction for change emphasising the need for more pathways, and essentially reinforcing a pyramid system for the organisation. Lastly for myself, constantly having to adapt while planning as well as during the sessions took a toll on my capacity to feel confident in the program. The multiple avenues I planned for was not enough to enable the smooth running of the GIP before we even were able to gather evidence to co-create gender equitable strategies.

Chapter 5: Creating and Implementing Gender Equitable Strategies

Once the planning behind gender equitable change occurred, it was now time to move onto the creation of gender equitable strategies. This stage of the process was by far the most time and energy consuming involving the creation of the strategies during session three and four, and individual meetings with the participants. In this chapter I again explore these aspects of the process paying close attention to the role of the interpersonal level, and the detrimental impact this process had on myself as the facilitator of change.

Process of Creating and Implementing Gender Equitable Strategies

After presenting my analysis of the self-reflections at the beginning of session three (Appendix G), I wanted to give the participants an opportunity to share their thoughts. This conversation was dominated by elite basketball talk along with showing me the Technical and Tactical Player Development Matrix. This has been designed for representative level coaches to know the skill set that have been deemed appropriate for each age group. Fran had decided this matrix would be appropriate for domestic coaches to use to allow the girls to be coached appropriately and further develop their skills. She went into detail even sharing her screen to go through each age group and the required skill level to match. As Terri and Fran were only in attendance, I asked their thoughts and after becoming side tracked a few times, we decided to choose two important aspects and come up with two different strategies. We decided on our strategies to target coach development and a welcoming environment for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. After many distractions, I wrapped up the session and emphasised that I was here to help

in developing their strategies and to come to next session ready to present a few ideas and think about how we can implement them.

Following from this meeting I caught up with Pam separately to give her a recap of what we discussed during session 3 and let her know the direction of what strategies Terri and Fran had come up with. Pam emphasised two different areas, recruitment, and retention. For recruitment, her idea was a come and try day for primary school age girls in the whole Wyndham area as they have lost a lot of girls over the lockdown period. Her next point was to do with clubs communicating better between each other to help accommodate girls rather than let them quit. Her second strategy was to do with inclusive language and having a ~~do's~~dos and don'ts guidebook.

Leading into our fourth session, I hadn't heard from any of my participants regarding if they wanted any assistance with their strategy planning. Pam wasn't able to make it once again and Terri was slightly late. To begin, Fran started sharing her strategy which was a WBA Gender Inclusion Initiative consisting of many pillars (Appendix H). She gave the most detail around the aspects of the strategy that would focus on the technical knowledge of the coaches and slightly skimmed over the aspects deemed to be inclusive practice. We then moved onto Terri who outlined she was still in the planning stages and had not prepared a document, although had come up with a few focus areas for her topic of creating a welcoming environment for girls from culturally diverse backgrounds. Her first one being the word welcoming and always having a welcoming tone, in-person introductions and always follow up with them. The second was safe, this was about making sure the player feels as though they ~~belong~~belong, and the right support is always there for them. The last point was enjoyable where she further split this up into three categories, participation, individual progression, and opportunities for different teams and grades. She also began sharing that she has many stories to support these strategies making them based on evidence.

Once both Fran and Terri had presented, I then shared the strategies Pam had come up with in our individual meeting and how they can interrelate with the strategies they came up with. I also presented a recap of the original conditions we came up with in the extinction exercise, adding two more that came out of the reflections. I made sure to emphasise the strategies always having a women and girls focus and making sure they are sustainable by evaluating them (Appendix I). Once again to finish the meeting, I emphasised that I could assist in any way they needed and that between now and next session they could come up with more specific information about their strategies and how they plan to implement them.

Our next session was just between Fran and I as the other participants couldn't make it. To begin, I wanted to follow on from the last session and start to think about how we make these strategies sustainable (Appendix J). I developed another sheet of the google doc to address this aspect (Appendix K). It was difficult as it was only Fran's input, but it was the best we could do. I asked her what she would specifically like to achieve in relation to each condition to make her club a more inclusive space. I also asked how we could evaluate how successful any changes were.

The next part of the session was dedicated to Fran filling me in on her meeting with the Player and Coach Development Manager to discuss the courses being run at WBA. Specifically, the coaching coordinator looked at how to better prepare coaches at WBA with the relevant skills and team play to improve participation, fun and therefore retention of players. She managed to answer most of the questions Fran went to the meeting with, but most were addressed in relation to the representative level. My focus was still on the inclusive practice that was evident in their courses however both Fran and the coaching coordinator were more focused on the direction our technical coaching knowledge is going and how we can develop this. Eventually, at the end of the session Fran was able to come up with a strategy called 'Be Like…' whereby WBA can showcase real life inclusive coaching examples from their domestic

coaches. Settled on this idea, we ended the sessions with Fran putting forward she would continue to work on the strategy over the holiday break.

In the beginning of 2022, after not hearing from any of the participants I decided to reach out again to continue the creation process. Pam then informed me she would no longer participate in the program as she was too busy. I then met up with Terri where she presented her welcoming environment to culturally and linguistically diverse women and girls strategy. We further developed this into clearly defining from her own experience what it means to be welcoming and providing a checklist for coaches to determine whether they are ticking all the boxes when it comes to inclusivity (Appendix L). Once again, Terri ended the session motivated to finish and we would contact each other again soon.

I had finally heard from Fran who had spoken to Collin, the Vice-President of WBA who was also the President of Hoppers Crossing Basketball Club, to involve him in our strategy to help with the implementation. After a few back-and-forth emails along with Fran's new strategy she had sent (Appendix M), I had organised to meet with her and Collin to discuss how to implement the strategy we had been discussing. Upon the Collin's input, the strategy began to adapt to include his agenda and after an hour-long meeting with some casual talk included, we ended with everyone having their own work to put into the strategy. A month later, I heard from Collin that he had not made any progress and Fran had made no input, I was left with nothing to show for our new strategy months down the track. I was still hopeful after some time our strategies could be implemented, however each month that passed with no contact resulted in less and less hope.

Facilitators and Challenges in Creating and Implementing Gender Equitable ~~Change~~Strategies

In the final stage of my GIP, the factors having an impact on the progression of the program began to favour more challenges than facilitators. In my analysis, I found five key factors, one facilitator and four challenges as outlined in Table 4 below. I will now discuss these factors in detail.

	Facilitators	Challenges
External		
Organisational		The takeover from WBA
Interpersonal	The buy-in stemming from collaboration	Time on task
		Resistance to change
Individual		My death by 1000 cuts

Table 4. Facilitators and challenges relevant to the levels when enacting change in the creation and implementation of gender equitable change

Facilitators

The buy-in stemming from collaboration

As indicated in the process, the continuation of the GIP saw a decline in commitment by the participants. This was due to a planned increase in time between sessions, but also a decline in collaboration with participants not attending all sessions. This resulted in more one-on-one time between me and each of the participants which, as noted previously, was seen as a positive aspect of creating gender inclusion strategies. Despite the lack of collaboration between participants, I saw underlying links between the strategies the participants were brainstorming. Throughout the program participants had difficulty in shifting their minds to an inclusive practice approach using reflective

techniques. Their heads firmly in the belief that catering the elite model towards women and girls will increase their participation and retention. It was through the discussion and collaboration within the sessions, I began to see various glimpses of the participants buying into the inclusive practice techniques to improve the environment at WBA.

The conditions outlined were developed by the participants and therefore it was their choice to decide what theme they wanted to focus on, and how they were going to assist in improving their chosen condition. Although they all chose different approaches, I saw multiple overlaps between their ultimate goals.

> **Sophie**: Everyone's done something separate but joined together in some form anyway. But Pam was also looking at, wanted to look out for the coaching language and the behaviour or feedback. So it was good to see that you included that in yours as well, Fran.
> - WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 4

To avoid a double up, each participant was aiming to work on a particular condition from our original list of conditions. What we soon came to realise, was that together we could make the most out of our strategizing and attempt to cover as many conditions as we could within our strategies. In doing this, we saw that we could come up with a large-scale strategy that each participant could contribute to.

> **Sophie**: I've said, separate strategies, but they're not really separate, because like you've just mentioned they intertwine. So even if, Fran, you're looking at coaching development and doing these age specific courses. And Terri, if you're looking at, if I'm relating back to the themes, that welcoming environment for girls from diverse backgrounds, you've already sort of made mention that, how many links there are between the two. So, I think that's one really good part of it as well. So that if you, let's

say work on it separately, then we come back together, and we can draw the links between the two.

- *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 3*

From the effort I put into establishing a relationship between myself and the participants, the benefits came when it was time for us to work together (Frisby et al., 2005). Although the participants did not work together in a collaborative manner, their ability to use time within the sessions to collaborate with myself allowed me to pick up on the links between their strategies. Terri made time outside the session to brainstorm what she wanted the purpose of her strategy to be, used time within our one-on-one session to ask for my input in her strategy.

Terri: So, I guess the awareness route can really come under the communication. So, I might change that and leave that, so does that seem alright?
Sophie Yes. Fantastic.

- *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Terri*

It is difficult to control participant collaboration as one cannot force participants to attend, especially when this was a volunteer-based program. However, when participants were attending sessions and engaging in discussion, there was a notable increase in their motivation to create a better environment for women and girls at WBA.

Sophie: I mean, I don't mind it because I'm even thinking you could pick out coaches as well within the domestic clubs if, word of mouth or something, just you can be like, "Hey" –
Fran: You hit the nail on the head. We could do a "Be like" campaign. All right, we've got it now. Good work Sophie.

- *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Fran*

On multiple occasions, Terri had expressed her newfound motivation for the program during the sessions.

> **Terri**: *This has really got me back on what I need to do now. I'm reflecting on what I need to do.*
> **Sophie**: *That's what I love to hear.*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Terri*

> **Sophie**: *Absolutely no rush to get everything completed in time, but that just may mean this program might extend a little bit longer. Yeah, if you're okay with that.*
> **Terri**: *I'm determined to get this.*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 4*

This determination ebbed and flowed throughout the program, however, during sessions when the interaction was productive and the ideas were pouring out, the program was successfully progressing. During these times, I was hopeful in my imagination of what may stem from this program. Especially since each of the participants in their own way had adopted what I had been trying to get across to them since the beginning of the program.

> **Terri**: *Coaches and team managers reflect on their own – "Am I doing that" "Am I actually making that player and its parents feel like they're part of the team?".*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Terri*

> **Pam**: *I think we would probably need to record some different types of coaching and listen to it and pick up on actually what they're saying. We would have to I guess not tell them what we were looking for, more of we are looking just as general coaching because people will adapt the way they talk in those kind of things. So, I think that's the only way because if they fill something out 100%, they're going to write I always encourage, I*

am this, I am that, that kind of thing. Whereas I think if we recorded the actual bench, so we are not even really recording the game as such it's more focusing on the coach at least we will get a true indication of what is actually being said to the girls and I think we'd have to do a cross, so start at the very young girls and go all the way up to our top age 18s and just see as well.

- *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Pam*

Fran*- and 'be like', and then we will have gender inclusive 'be like and have inclusive practices and – what did we have in our inclusive practices - were – so, yeah, let's go back to the blue. Let's go back to the blue.*

- *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Fran*

Challenges

The takeover from WBA

Throughout the process of my GIP, there was very little input from the organisation while the program was running. With multiple staff leaving the organisation, no responses to emails, the GIP was mostly run on my own. It was not until it was time for members of the group to communicate with the President of their own domestic club, who also happened to be the Vice-President of WBA, Collin, who I had been in communication with. Being an original supportive member of my GIP, I had high hopes that his support would help drive the strategies and therefore easing the implementation process. However, with the influence of the Vice-President, I noticed especially with Fran's strategy there were slight modifications to the overall approach. Fran began with her Coach Development Proposal (Appendix H), which then morphed into the 'Be Like…' campaign after our discussion together. After seeking the input from the President of Hoppers Crossing Basketball Club, the next update I received was somewhat different to what we had previously discussed. The 'Be Like…' campaign was now more focused on inclusive

language from coaches. An ideal outcome one would think as this was one of the conditions we had developed together to ensure an inclusive environment for women and girls. However, it had steered away from the evidence-based strategies we discussed with great importance. I was unsure of where this adapted strategy had come from ([Appendix M](#)). Upon further investigation into the strategy in which Fran was focussing on, during our meeting along with Collin, somehow my input into the strategy seemed further away and Collin had appeared to take over. I found Collin use the strategy Fran and I had been developing as a way to fulfil the initiatives he aimed to implement on his own accord.

The "Be Like…" campaign had morphed into the Positive Influence Campaign whereby the aim was to highlight the positive aspects of coaching from domestic coaches within WBA and showcase them on social media. With some similarities to the 'Be Like…' campaign Fran and I were in the process of developing, which was targeting gender inclusion, the input from Collin was that we could go beyond just gender and focus on all forms of diversity and inclusion. Although a positive outlook, it directly goes against one of my points of emphasis being to always have a women and girls lens when developing strategies. Another difference was the motivation behind the strategy was now the emphasis was using a competitive model to motivate good behaviour out of the coaches, rather than because it is the right thing to do. Common in the sport setting, members within sports organisations can find it difficult to work with other members as they are viewed as competitors, rather than collaborators (Culver & Trudel, 2008). Written in my field notes, the discussion was based around using this strategy as a way to create a competitive edge over clubs that they want to be the ones showcased to lure players their club and not others. Going as far as to provide rewards for clubs as motivation to beat the other clubs competing. Once again, through this program I have implemented, from the start it was always a priority that the clubs within WBA worked together, hence the initial recruitment strategy was to involve one member from each club. This program was all about collaboration not competition. The competition

between clubs was one that contributed to the hostility evident within the clubs. Therefore, creating a strategy basing on the competitive edge of clubs to outdo each other goes against the community of practice that WBA needs to provide an inclusive and supportive environment for women and girls.

When I had the time during sessions, the participants eventually grasped the concepts I was putting forward in relation to the gender inclusive strategies. However, with the influence of the organisational practice, in this case the Vice-President of WBA, competing priorities take control and it is easy to forget the points of emphasis of inclusive practice, when the competitive model we know and are used to is proposed (Hoeber, 2007b). During an in-person catch up with Collin to discuss some background information regarding their club and their push for gender ~~equality~~equity, I noted the underlying reason behind WBA's effort to increase female participation at the domestic level. The purpose of making the domestic basketball space an inclusive and supportive environment for girls wasn't to retain all girls playing domestic basketball, it was to try and improve the girls' behaviour to ensure that the skilled female domestic players don't end up leaving to play representative basketball at another club because they aren't getting along with their fellow teammates. So even with an emphasis on increasing and retaining female participation in the domestic space, still the priority is retaining those girls who are playing at the more elite level. The main issue he seemed to care about, much like the participants, was the pathway for domestic girls to go into the representative level. Once again, not focussing on all female participation, only the highly skilled girls. With this direction coming from the Vice-President of WBA, and the President of one of the larger domestic clubs, there is no wonder the drive behind female participation in WBA is focused on elite development.

Time on Task

The environment I wished to create in the GIP was one that was comfortable so that participants felt they could share their stories and ideas with me. With this, I

needed to make sure not to take control of the sessions and let the participants drive the discussion. Although the relaxed state allowed free flowing conversation and a development of our working relationship, I also found their ability to stay on task fluctuate. On multiple occasions I found our conversation, especially during the sessions only Fran and Terri were apart of since they were from the same club, I noted many disruptions to our conversation on unrelated to gender inclusion, but in relation to basketball in general.

> *Fran: So if we've got a few teachers out there that are coaches that want to coach but can't register because of that, I just thought that might be a blocker.*
>
> *Terri: Yeah, there must be another. Yeah, I'm sure Collin will look into seeing another way of, explains why there was one that didn't register and I'm thinking maybe she's a teacher as well. That's probably why, I kept trying to chase her up and she…*
>
> *Fran: So I'm not sure because when I did my, when I did my registration. Sorry, Sophie I'm sort of just diverting.*
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 3*

> *Terri: No she's adorable. Yeah, yeah. Anyway, sorry I'm going off the track here.*
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 3*

Session 3 I found to be particularly disrupted with unrelated conversations between Fran and Terri. In an analysis of the transcript, I found that approximately 28 minutes of the 77-minute recorded session was spent talking about topics that although may have been about basketball in general, had no relation to the work related to the GIP. This is a substantial amount of time taking up 36% of the session, considering the recording only begins after I allow casual conversations to occur at the beginning.

Although this was noted as a problem in the group sessions, I found it a particular issue during the in-person meeting I had with Fran and Collin. As I could only detail certain notes during the meeting, the productive time spent during the meeting was discussing the new Positive Influence Campaign that we would each have a role in organising. I estimated that 20 minutes was spent discussing the campaign, involving a possible placement student to assist with the campaign, prizes that could be rewarded to coaches who show they have a positive influence and some more aspects around the initiative. The remaining 40 minutes of our meeting was spent by Fran and Collin chatting about other basketball related stories, in particular, stories about the boys' representative teams. As they are both very involved in the boys' representative program, the conversation couldn't help but divert to this topic. Once again, there is an understanding that discussion will go off topic. However, spending more than half of the meeting discussing unrelated topics to what we planned to meet for was disappointing to say the least. What I found worse was, the two involved in the meeting would walk away thinking they've just spent an hour discussing how to make WBA more gender inclusive, when really, approximately 20 minutes was spent discussing a campaign that diverted further away from gender and more to diversity and inclusion overall.

Time on task is a silent but deadly challenge participants face when implementing gender inclusion strategies. We can celebrate the time that we put aside to meeting about gender ~~equality~~ equity and attending the GIP. However, what we make of this time is the detrimental factor in this case whereby not all our time is spent on the issue at hand. Diversions in conversation although are natural can lead to wasted opportunities in making progress for gender equality and unfortunately can be masked because the meeting has gender inclusion in the name of it.

Resistance to change

Throughout the program, I had experienced various forms of resistance but none greater than the resistance to fully embody an inclusive practice model to improve women and girls' experiences at WBA. The contradictions were constant with participants addressing the issues at WBA being hostility coming from the coaches to the female players, coming as a direct result of the level of competitiveness set at the domestic level.

The issue was clear when participants clearly believed that improving the technical knowledge of coaches would be the best way to improve the environment for women and girls at WBA. If coaches had better knowledge and more elite level of understanding of the game of basketball, girls may not drop out as much. This level of understanding stems from the model that is currently active in community sport. As this puts the focus on athlete development to elite excellence (Eime, Charity, & Westerbeek, 2022), the participants then put the emphasis on building strategies that made sure coaches had access to the appropriate skill level and progressions that should be achieved in the specific age groups.

> **Fran** - *I think that as a new coach, you can see, "Right, under 10, I should be introducing this and they could've mastered it by under 14."*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Fran*

> **Fran** - *Because I think that would really help develop our players, whether they're playing social or not, just to learn new skills.*
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 3*

Something that definitely fed into this focus on elite development was the continued comparison and addition of the representative level when discussing the domestic basketball level. The pyramid system of sport tends to override any other system that allows players as they age to continue to participate for

fun (Green, 2005). It is seen as a natural progression of players that they should be aiming to achieve excellence in the sport of basketball and therefore there was constant mention of how changes in the domestic space can positively influence the representative level. Ignoring the fact that the domestic level is supposed to be for fun and participation, too often the conversation diverted to the benefits to the representative level.

> *Fran - Yeah it does benefit WBA as well, if they can skill up their coaches domestically, they might have a bigger pool of coaches for Rep. Just saying, you know.*
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 3*

All too often the domestic space was used to envision what the representative level wanted to achieve. This was evident when Fran met with the Player and Coach Development Manager to run our ideas on the gender inclusion initiative (Appendix H), who she admitted didn't have anything to do with the domestic basketball space at all. Even then, still bringing his ideas into our discussion targeting the technical knowledge of representative coaches.

> *Fran - Yeah. I think it's a really good opportunity for WBA to push what style of play they would like and how they would like basketball to be played.*
>> ▪ *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Fran*

After listening to Fran speak of her meeting with the Player and Coach Development Manager who clearly focused all his energy into the technical knowledge side of the initiative, I explained that maybe because the technical knowledge is being taken care of by the organisation, for our initiative we could focus on the inclusive practice knowledge coaches can improve. Even after highlighting the fact that there had been no mention of the inclusive practice points, Fran was still concerned with how the education around technical knowledge translates to coaches.

Fran - I just wonder how much that filters down, to be honest to you. I did a level 1 and I got nothing out of it, yeah. I could've got a bit more out of it. So I didn't feel that that set me up for the assistant coaching role that I was taking on.

- *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Fran*

The underlying theme of resistance continued throughout the program. With a big emphasis on reflexive practice by coaches, there was reluctance to enforce any strategies that could target coaches critically reflecting on their own practice. It was evident in the early sessions when I suggested filming coaches could be a great way to identify language and behaviours that may be detrimental to creating a welcoming environment for women and girls. There was a clear resistance to putting this pressure on volunteer coaches and not wanting to scare them away. This was evident again when Pam and I had talked through this idea once again in our individual meeting and I expressed this to Fran and Terri in our next meeting. Although coming on board with filming coaches who are doing a good job, they quickly shut down without fully understanding the idea of filming as many coaches as we could to identify those who may not be practicing inclusive coaching.

Fran - And we'd have to act out, we would have to put unpaid actor on the, because I don't think you can go up and say, hHey, you're a crap coach, you know.

Terri - I'm gonna record you and I want you to watch yourself. Ain't gonna work.

Fran - We'll record you at your worst, because this is what we don't want people to be like.

Terri - Yeah it'll be another team without a coach.

- *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 4*

Another form of resistance came from the shift of blame to other sporting codes. Not taking responsibility that players were leaving basketball, but other sporting codes were 'stealing' players. This was especially prevalent as the AFLW was to blame for marketing their sport so well resulting in basketball players leaving the association.

> **Terri** - I was a bit sad when all this promotional stuff came out for AFL because it's like basketball for women is just got nothing over the years I feel like you know. And then they just straight away get all these women for AFL. Hello! Netball got its own, Netball's fine. You know, I think but basketball.
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 3*

Another issue that was constant when creating our strategies was a resistance to focus only on gender when developing our inclusion strategies. From the Vice-President attempting to make the Positive Influence Campaign target all forms of diversity and inclusion, to Terri planning her strategy targeting culturally and linguistically diverse women and girls and couldn't help but think about broadening her target audience. More often than not, when in conversation about targeting female participation, male participation came into the picture as a problem worth tackling also.

> **Terri** - Even though, I've made it about the cultural diverse background, but when I look at it, I see it – all girls, actually just all players, because when I've written some things like this, I'm thinking of a couple of boys who aren't also attending. Why are they not attending, you know what I mean?
> - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Terri*

Lastly, with all the time and energy from both participants and me in planning the strategies, I always seemed to receive very little input outside of the sessions. I did my very best to utilise as much time within the sessions to do the

necessary work to create gender equitable strategies. However, there were times work needed to be done outside of the sessions. In these instances, I made sure to emphasise that I would be there to assist the participants in any way they please. I encouraged them to reach out as I was more than happy to contribute to the work that was required. In each of the group sessions, individual meetings, and follow up emails to the participants, I always made it clear to contact me.

> **Sophie** - *Obviously, I can work with each of you. Up until that point, how often or how little you like, again, I'm here all the time. If you have any doubts at all, yes, contact me. But again, I might have to bug you as well, at some point. That's just me.*
>   - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 3*

Following multiple requests, the participants made next to no proactive measure to work with me outside of the sessions. Countless emails where I did not gain a single response, preparing for session four after only meeting one-on-one with Pam as she had missed the previous session and not knowing what to expect from the other two participants. The passion was there in the sessions where participants really wanted to make a difference with the strategies we were creating.

> **Fran** - *Yeah, we want some outcome from this, and we don't want just ideas that have just dissipated over time like my energy for pathways. Yeah, we want to get something positive out of it at the end and I think that campaign certainly sounds fun.*
>   - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Fran*

However, as soon as the session finished, I rarely heard from the participants again. Whether it was through no response to my email or letting me know that they are really busy at the moment and won't be able to meet or complete any more work. I found the engagement at the start of the program more involved,

and as the program progressed, more time had passed and in a ~~way~~way, participants may not have anticipated going in terms of an inclusive practice approach, rather than a development of the technical knowledge of coaches, I found less and less interaction with participants. Pam letting me know in February she would no longer be able to participate in the program as she's too busy, Terri telling me in March that she was very busy and would be in touch when she has her strategy finalised, and last hearing from Fran during our meeting with the Vice-President in April where the onus was on Collin to finalise some work on his end before we could proceed. To which after our meeting in May, nothing had been done.

I found even though it may not have been intentional, a resistance to fully engage in the program by the participants. With an estimated 580,000 people volunteering in the sport and recreation sector in Victoria (Victorian Government, 2017), there is no doubt the central importance volunteers have on the organisation and running of community sport. The reliance on the unpaid labour of volunteers to ensure the survival of sporting organisations (Costa, Chalip, Christine Green, & Simes, 2006) ,comes with it the highly prevalent risk of burnout amongst members (Cuskelly & Boag, 2001; Engelberg-Moston, Stipis, Kippin, Spillman, & Burbidge, 2009).

As such, throughout my interactions with the volunteers in my GIP I was very understanding of the overloading volunteers can experience in sport, hence my over-emphasis on my ability to help them outside of the sessions. However, the lack of interaction and communication on the participants end came as a challenge to proactively create change in WBA.

My death by 1000 cuts

As I came to the end of the sessions for my GIP for the year, I reflected on what I had set out to accomplish when I first began this program. In the initial stages of planning, I knew it wouldn't be smooth sailing with constant disruptions,

mostly because of the effects of the pandemic. However, being that this was something I have always had such an immense passion for, I knew I would find a way to come out the other side with a roaring energy for doing good for female participation. I had my backstory behind me the whole way and a motivation that I thought would be with me forever. I have previously noted the challenges I faced when attempting to implement gender inclusion strategies, but what I failed to consider was the emotional toll of completing this kind of work. In Chapter three, I detailed the beginning of an emotional toll when attempting to recruit participants for the program and being left with no responses, no communication, and a little less hope for the benefits of this program to reach the entirety of WBA. Unfortunately, the effects of these micro interactions throughout the whole process did not diminish and with it brought a growing burden I was experiencing.

My optimism throughout the program was decreasing, however, with that came an increased sense of denial about the feelings I was experiencing. Not me I thought, this can't happen to me. Not to that little girl whose anger caused by gender inequality in sport that has stayed with her until she was an adult. Not who has dedicated her life to fighting issues in gender inequality, volunteering time and effort into making sport a better place for girls. Not the girl who was so thrilled about this opportunity that she could be responsible for making WBA a better place. It just couldn't be so. Hence the denial continued, and I began wondering why I would begin to feel a dreading sensation whenever I attempted to do any work with this program. This then eventuated into work in writing, work in the university, even to the point of reading/hearing news about women in sport. I was defeated. There I said it. The girl who had chosen this as her career path, defeated at the fact that she had failed.

I lost all motivation for the program; I lost any confidence that there would be any positive change come from my program. In fact, I thought I may even be making things worse. I lost my motivation for my work in relation to this thesis, every challenge I faced led me to this point, the fact I did not care anymore. Of

course, part of me knew this wouldn't be forever, however at this point in time, I did not care about gender equality in sport, I didn't even want to think about it. However, I was consumed by this defeat that not only was it affecting my study, but it was also affecting my life outside of work. There is no doubt completing a master's thesis is a lot of work, but this was different. I had changed and not for the better. My frustration was constant and evident even expressed in my relationships. Text messages I had sent to a supportive network can be seen below.

> **Sophie** - *But like do you want to know why we don't see any major positive changes to women in sport.*
> *Because you have people like me who 18 months ago I fucking lived for this stuff and wanted nothing more than to invest every moment of my time in doing better for girls participation in sport, to now after putting all my energy into doing exactly that and running this program, dealing with all the bullshit that comes out of it I feel burnt out and generally want nothing to do with it anymore.*
> *I generally cannot believe how much this has changed me.*
> *And I know it won't be long term like I still care immensely, and it is something I want to do.*
> *But fuck me I want nothing to do with it now.*
> *But this whole project has just depleted any motivation I had to do better.*

I found myself staring blankly at a screen as I tried to encapsulate all the work I put in, all the time, emails, preparation, practice, all the work behind the scenes. To inevitably come up with there had been no strategies implemented at WBA since the start of my program. There had been no notable change since my program. I had failed at what I envisioned this program to achieve. Being the only one conducting the program, liaising with the ~~organisation~~organisation, and communicating with the participants, I felt the load of responsibility and still to this day dwell in the lack of action and change created for women and girls at WBA.

Conclusion

The creation of gender equitable strategies has been by far the longest part of the process that is still ongoing in many ways. Unfortunately, as the program continued, there were more and more challenges to emerge. In saying that, when participants collaborated together or with myself, there were positive signs for real progress in their gender equity strategies. Not only progress, but a real sense of understanding the need to target our approach to improve the inclusive practice of the coaches at WBA. Unfortunately, the influence from the organisation resulted in a change of direction in our strategy approach and essentially took over the meaningful work we had put in. At the interpersonal level, it was time on task that had a discreet effect on the productivity in meetings where dedicated time to discuss women and girls was dominated by unrelated basketball talk. Along with the resistance to fully engage in tackling the issue of female participation as the elite development model sways participants to focus on improving the technical knowledge of coaches, instead of the inclusive practice knowledge. With every challenge I faced came the downward spiral I experienced where this work became too much to handle. All the setbacks I encountered led me to the point of anguish at the thought of increasing female participation in basketball. I was lost both in my work and in my life as the pressure and challenges leading to feelings of isolation was too much to bear and something had to give. Unfortunately, which ended up being my passion for women in sport.

In the previous three chapters, I have explored my findings when documenting the process of conducting my GIP. In the next chapter, I will discuss the most significant challenge to emerge from the research process.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In the previous three chapters, I have identified the immediate challenges and facilitators from documenting the process of creating and implementing gender equitable strategies. Although broken up into three distinct stages, each one presenting different or at times an evolving factor from the beginning of the program to the end. After highlighting the points that can help enable gender equitable change, I have chosen to focus on the challenges that arose throughout the process as a way to understand the problems community basketball faces and in time, look at ways to avoid these issues arising in the future. In this chapter of the thesis, I will discuss the most significant challenge faced in the program that I found had an influence from the very beginning and still persists. That is, the tension between gender inclusion efforts (at community level sport) and the dominance of the high-performance model.

Throughout the thesis I have noted that the underlying factor leading to WBA to push this issue of participation and retention in female domestic basketball, was elite development. Without realising the detrimental effect the elite development model has on dropout of female basketballers, the organisation and participants promoted this approach and in turn resisted any other way to focus on the inclusive practice of coaches. In this chapter I draw on Gramsci's concept of hegemony and Connell's gender regime (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gramsci, 1971) to make sense of the power and effects of the elite development model on gender inclusion efforts at a community level.

Connell's Gender Regime

Gender ideology is the deeply rooted system of ideas and beliefs used to define masculinity and femininity and determine the appropriate roles for men and women in society and shapes and constrains our experiences. According to Connell, this definition of gender as the cultural difference of women from men, based on the biological division between male and female, is rejected. Instead, she looks at moving from the focus on differences, to the focus on relations (Connell & Pearse, 2014). That is, the social relations between individuals are a reflection of social and cultural ideas, and therefore, gender is considered a social structure. As Connell puts it, you must become a man or a woman, as opposed to this as a pre-determined state (Connell & Pearse, 2014). However, this dichotomous view is widely taken for granted as people unknowingly use it to view the world and their place in it (Coakley, 2016). As gender is the fundamental organising principle in life, lives are impacted and pushed in particular directions because of it. This is not something that is assigned to us at birth, instead gender is performed on a daily basis making the way we talk, the way we act, and the way we present ourselves influenced by the way society constructs gender.

This dynamic is reflected within society and serves as a gender order in which Connell has divided into four areas. First being labour, relating to the sexual division of labour and the allocation of particular types of work to particular types of people. This becomes a social rule whereby women are given certain jobs different to the jobs given to men and therefore transforming this sexual division of labour into technical division of labour (Connell, 1987). This is where choosing the 'best applicant' normally goes to men as they have been better prepared for the role in comparison to women. Also evident is the unequal division of unpaid labour with women completing more unpaid labour including housework and childcare responsibilities (Luxton, 1997). The second area is cathexis, which incorporates an emotional dimension to gender relations. Included in this dimension is the heteronormative coupledom and homophobia, and the sexualisation and objectification of women. The third area is symbolism,

detailing society's gendered culture and with it, the expectations and subordination of women's role in it. The last area, and by far the most relevant to research context is power. Going beyond individual acts of force to a set of social relations enacting a structure of power. Deeply embedded power inequalities allow acts of violence to reproduce male supremacy over women. As well as the organisation of institutional power disproportionately in favour of men. Once again it is important to note, this structure of gender relations does not automatically impose all men in a dominant position over women. Race, class, and sexuality are all key factors in determining the gender-based hierarchy between men (Connell, 1987).

As people embody this gendered classification in society, it is also used to facilitate the organisation and structure of sport. We see this in relation to sport competitions, as it is separated by a two-sex classification system in most instances. This separation invites differences to be highlighted between the two sexes. Connell would suggest that the differences are not as important as the evidence of gender relations apparent in society, with a particular focus on sport. The structure of gender relations Connell uses to give a gendered order to society can also be used to provide a gender regime of sport. Labour is evident where we see women partaking in more unpaid labour roles in the sport setting compared to men taking up more paid leadership roles (Stride, Fitzgerald, Rankin-Wright, & Barnes, 2020). Cathexis is evident whereby heteronormativity makes sport culture homophobic (Anderson, 2002; Griffin, 1992). Symbolism is evident in the masculine culture of sport catering to boys and men over women and girls. Sport is regarded highly for boys and men, whereas women and girls experience inequalities such as the lack of resources devoted to female sport (Casey et al., 2019). Finally, we see power evident where women are less likely to hold leadership positions in sport (Burton, 2015; Knoppers, 1992; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007), the glorification of sporting activities based on competition, strength, and violence deemed more suitable for men (Coakley, 2016), and the sexual harassment female athletes receive in sport (Fasting, Chroni, Hervik, & Knorre, 2011).

Hegemony and Hegemonic Masculinity

As ideologies are beliefs and ideas, they are never in a constant state in society. In fact, they are constantly changing and evolving depending on the time and location of the society in which the ideologies exist. What makes dominant ideologies difficult to change, especially in relation to improving inequalities that exist, is that those whose interests are benefiting from a dominant ideology, more often than not, possess the power and resources to uphold this set of ideas and beliefs (Coakley, 2016). The work of Antonio Gramsci proclaims that the ruling class maintain their dominance through the active consent over those whom it rules (Gramsci, 1971). Gramsci suggests that the unequal maintenance of power is achieved through institutions that reproduce forms of dominant ideology that become accepted by individuals as common-sense. These institutions include schools, churches, industries and indeed families. In the context of Australia, one would include sport as an institution that also facilitates the acceptance of dominant ideology. The concept of hegemony, the maintenance of power of one social group over others via consensus, is simultaneously political, economic, social, and cultural. As a concept hegemony is subtle rather than overt, as taken-for-granted understanding of the social and economic world make it difficult for individuals to identify practices that indeed may disempower them. This is especially true as hegemony occurs at the level of culture. Hegemonic processes tend to naturalise differences. If populations believe their lives are as good as can be in the current circumstance, there is no need to make changes to those in power. By supporting what people value and enjoy, leaders can maintain their power.

As mentioned, the definition of gender must not focus on the differences, but rather the social relations within society. Connell (1987) utilises Gramsci's concept of hegemony to explain how the patriarchy is sustained in societies, especially those that have experienced feminist movements and have explicit policies in place encouraging gender ~~equality~~equity. As such, Connell discusses how the social organisation of masculinity as relational ensures the maintenance of patriarchal structures in society. This relational form of

masculinity relies on the concept of hegemonic masculinity holding primacy and privilege over other forms of masculinity and understandably, forms of femininity. This term Connell refers to as hegemonic masculinity, is the dominant form of masculinity widely accepted in society and in sport. It is in this logic that men who possess this hegemonic masculinity are deemed more suitable and therefore have more opportunity to participate in sport and take up the positions of power (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This idea is also seen when examining the gendered power relation that privilege men over women in sport. However, as Connell explains, to look at this in a dichotomous view is too narrow in understanding the issue at large. Although there are many types of subordinate masculinities present in society, it is a specific type of masculinity that men must possess in sport in order to hold privilege over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore, the simplistic view that men hold the power over women is not enough. It is the heterosexual men who conform to hegemonic masculinity who are accepted in sport, as opposed to homosexual men and women (Walker & Sartore-Baldwin, 2013). We see this evident whereby there is a reproduction of the type of masculinity sport represents around strength, power, and conquest (Coakley, 2016). This results in sports becoming a place where boys learn what it means to be a man and begins the separation of femininity and sports. This is due to the dominant gender ideology which automatically privileges heterosexual males to positions of power and dominance, resulting in the experiences of girls and women being unwelcoming and exclusive in nature.

Help Me Help You - Sport as a Mirror to Society

The economic system of western societies such as Australia adheres to a form of capitalism based on three features: private property, capital gain, and stratification by class. We also see the general order of these societies relies on patriarchal relations, that is, the social arrangement whereby men have more power than women (Bray, 1983). The connection between the capitalist and

patriarchal society works together and is reproduced in the sport space. Much like a capitalist society, individual success in sport relies on a meritocratic ideal, that is, one gets to where one belongs based on hard work and skill. The only thing stopping you from achieving your goals is yourself. Ignoring the social and cultural factors that inhibit certain outcomes, the meritocratic ideology in capitalist societies, often uses sport as a model, or exemplar, for how the social world should operate (Coakley, 2016).

As much as sport mirrors the capitalist patriarchal society, sport also aids in maintaining the values and beliefs of societies structure. Coakley describes sports as platforms that promote the values of success based on hard work, discipline, determination. They also foster Gramsci's idea about the taken-for-granted assumptions about the way society is organised and how it should operate (Coakley, 2016). Competition in sport is proven to be the best way to achieve personal success, and once again promotes the dominant cultural ideologies, including the beliefs that align with capitalism. Much like sports reaffirm a capitalist system, as previously mentioned the structure and organisation of sport reaffirms the gender ideology and the 'natural' oppression of women (Coakley, 2016).

In order to make sense of the findings and the deliberate emphasis on elite development in sport, I found it was necessary to have an understanding of the ways in which the gender order of society is replicated within sport and how this contributes to the dominance of the widely accepted hegemonic masculinity. Making use of the ideas discussed above, I will make sense of my experiences and the outcomes of enacting change in the next section as I discuss the apparent tension between gender inclusion and the high-performance model.

The Tension Between Gender Inclusion Efforts and the Dominance of the High-Performance Model of Sport

There is no doubt of the importance of developing an elite pathway for women and girls in sport. The obvious gap for female athletes includes the unclear pathway from grassroots sport to the elite, the problematic differences between the qualitative and quantitative media representation of female athletes, and the lack of female sporting role models to inspire young female athletes (Fink, 2015; Fowlie et al., 2020). Not only is there evidence to indicate the lack of pathways for female athletes, across multiple areas of involvement, there are persistent barriers in furthering a career pathway in coaching (Greenhill et al., 2009; Hancock & Hums, 2016; Shaw & Allen, 2009), and leadership positions (Burton, 2015; Knoppers, 1992; Sartore & Cunningham, 2007). While this remains an important issue to address to strive towards gender equality, a major detrimental factor to the progression of gendered participation and retention of women and girls was the over emphasis on elite development as the saviour. Throughout the entire research process with a particular emphasis from the organisation and interpersonal levels, the elite pathway was consistently used as the way to improve women and girls' experiences.

While I argue the importance of improving the pathways for women and girls, if the aim is gender ~~equity~~ equality across all levels of basketball, the overemphasis on better elite pathways does not address the number of female participants who play for social or enjoyment reasons. In fact, the highly competitive organisation of sport has been noted as a reason to drop out of sport all together (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010). Specifically, early specialisation in sport and the significance of sport skewing towards elite development forces a lack of emphasis on the health and educative benefits sport can offer young girls (Macphail, Gorely, & Kirk, 2003). The importance of domestic basketball is providing a competition children can play in an enjoyable and sociable way. Highlighted by the participants on multiple occasions, it's all about participation and all players getting a fair go. However, the deeply rooted structural skew

towards elite development is evident in all levels of competition, no matter what the point of the competition is.

The evidence from my research suggests the detrimental impact the emphasis on elite development had on our gender equity strategies. Beginning with the underlying reason behind WBA initiating the first research project seeking to identify the barriers women and girls face when participating, which then began the creation of the GIP. Although expressed in a well-intentioned manner to do what's best for the participation of women and girls, the essence of their drive to increase participation and retention at a domestic level, was an underlying focus on retaining the highly skilled female domestic players. A behavioural issue evident in the domestic competition causing conflict in the representative level when players must play on the same representative team coming from opposing domestic teams, has resulted in the 'good' domestic players leaving WBA to play representative at a rivalry basketball association. To ensure WBA can continue to develop as a high achieving female representative program, their attention turns to what they deem as the retention of female domestic players, when really, their attention is solely drawn to the retention of the 'good' female domestic players. Once again buying into the model of sport with a dominant focus on elite performance, as opposed to participation.

As Gramsci anticipated, if leaders support what their people value and enjoy, they can maintain their legitimacy as leaders (Coakley, 2016). The findings detailing the organisational appetite but no investment for change in chapter three shows the organisation outlining their solidarity with gender equity work, however the translation of this talk into practice is missing. As a leader within the basketball organisation, to be seen doing gender equity work allows the community to align their values and support with the organisation. From the outside, leaders are seen to be doing something, when as seen from the process, they ended up proving to be more of a challenge when doing gender equity work. The outcome is they get to stay in positions of power without giving up the benefits of upholding a masculinised sporting space.

Moving onto the next stage while planning for gender equitable change was the apparent professionalisation of the association with their new framework the 'Wyndham Way'. This newly developed philosophy created a clear pathway for juniors to move up the ranks to the senior level. The emphasis on competitive success through the promotion of elite development, conflicts directly with a participation model of sport, confusing and obstructing efforts toward (numerical) gender equality. Unfortunately, this way of thinking filters down from the organisational level to the interpersonal level with an emphasis on pathways being the solution to gender inclusion. Although the aim of the GIP was to improve participation and the experiences of women and girls, the direction of the 'Wyndham Way', and the logic that it relies on, becomes accepted as common-sense by those attempting to achieve gender equality. For example, Pam discussed the increased workload for players under the new 'Wyndham Way' framework, and stated:

> **Pam**: *Hopefully it might shake out some of those ones, who are there because they've always played, they don't really want to but they've always played.*
>   - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program Session 2*

In other words, despite an intention to increase female participation, Pam actively engages in a logic to weed out those girls who aren't serious enough (demonstrated by effort, working hard, competing) about playing. Rather than increasing, or even maintaining, the numbers of girls, the allure of improved performances promised by the 'Wyndham Way' necessitates a reduction of players. Presumably quality is more important than quantity.

The 'Wyndham Way' promoted by the organisation was the perfect example of Gramsci's idea of hegemony and maintaining power by providing appealing ideas that align and support the decision by those in power of the organisation. Essentially, the 'Wyndham Way' designed as a framework promoting the elite

pathway within WBA impacted the participants' decisions when brainstorming inclusive practice ideas aimed at improving the experiences of women and girls at WBA. Ideas on how to improve the technical knowledge of coaches at the domestic level so female domestic players can receive the best skills coaching to better prepare them for the next level became the focus of the participants. This is particularly telling as the lack of technical knowledge of coaches was not listed as an issue during the extinction exercise in the first session, and therefore was not named as one of the conditions we aimed to improve. The lack of technical knowledge of coaches also was not addressed during the one-on-one reflections with all my participants and therefore was not a late addition to our list of conditions. It was not until it was time to create strategies the focus turned to improving the technical knowledge of coaches as the way to improve gender ~~equality~~ equity at WBA.

As the program developed and we moved into creating our gender equitable strategies, it was apparent there were certain forms of resistance at play. For example, while I was working with Fran and her coach development strategy, I emphasised that it was clear the player and coach development manager at WBA really took care of the technical knowledge of coaches and that our strategy should look at how we can improve the inclusive practices of coaches. Fran responded.

> **Fran**: *I just wonder how much of that filters down to be honest with you, I did a level 1 [coaching course] and got nothing out.*
>   - *WBA Gender Inclusion Program – Strategies with Fran*

Even when I explained to her the technical knowledge of coaches is already being addressed, she would still rather focus on improving the translation of the technical knowledge, rather than focus on inclusive practice for her strategy. The structure and organisation of sport is predominantly skewed towards elite development. The pyramid model, in which dropout is required when moving up the levels, directly goes against the notion of increasing participation and

retention of female players (Bailey & Collins, 2013; Green, 2005). Understandably, by focusing strategies targeting gender equitable change on improving the technical knowledge of coaches at the domestic level, we not only avoid the biggest issue being the highly competitive nature of the domestic competition, but we also further exacerbate the problem.

In Chapter five, I presented the takeover from WBA as a challenge I faced when creating gender equitable strategies. As much as I had issues with sticking to the inclusive practice of coaches while working with participants, the input of the organisation through the Vice-President of WBA led the direction of the strategies to include the ideas and beliefs of the organisation. As previously discussed, using Gramsci's idea I can attest to the leaders of the organisation appealing to the members by promoting their own ideas as the best-case scenario for the WBA community. However, also proven through the change of direction is the power dynamic that allows leaders in the organisation to make these changes with the consent of those it affects. If this power dynamic was seen through dominant forms of oppression, it would be obvious to see from the surrounding members. It is the not so obvious structure of power that is evident and once again attests why the WBA members not only consent to emphasize elite development, but wholeheartedly support it.

The structure of the gendered power relations supports the glorification of sport activities based on competition deemed more suitable to men, and reproduces male supremacy over women (Connell, 1987). Encouraging good behaviour from coaches and providing rewards to clubs for 'beating' other clubs for being more inclusive promotes the use of a competitive model and therefore supports the dominance of those in power. Further, reflecting Connell's gender order, positions of power at WBA are held mostly by men. These men have benefited from the way that basketball has been organised, namely elite development, pathways, and the quality competition. As such their taken-for-granted understanding of basketball renders them ill-equipped to imagine alternative

approaches, and results in them advancing solutions that inadvertently reinforce their own positions of power.

As documented in the findings, I have expressed the resistance to change and put this on the participants. However, through the analysis, it is difficult to put the responsibility of this challenge to the participants own doing. The community sport logic shows that members consent to their own disempowerment by supporting the ideas and beliefs produced and benefit those in power, which promote competitive success and elite excellence. Therefore, this dominant logic produced by those in power in sporting organisations is too overwhelming to create gender equitable change with well-meaning individuals. Instead by following the common sense logic around the way sport is structured and organised to benefit those in power, being predominantly male, there is a further reproduction of hegemonic masculinity that represents power and conquest (Coakley, 2016; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

This meritocratic ideal evident in a capitalist society reflected in sport does not support the progression of women and girls the same as boys and men. As previously stated, it ignores the social and cultural factors that inhibit women in girls in sport by having the same opportunities to participate and progress the same as their male counterparts. This idea around improving the technical knowledge of coaches so that girls and women can further their skills and have more opportunities to become better basketballers has come from the participants themselves. What is difficult to understand from their point of view is that this common-sense thinking does not change the structure and organisation of sport which benefits men and those in power, it further exacerbates the problem and yet is fully consented to.

Patriarchal and capitalist structures reinforce themselves through the active consent of people who are trying to make gender equitable changes (Coakley, 2016). This is a direct outcome of the hostile mechanisms and micro-interactions I experienced as a change facilitator. The matter of fact is that the

participants are well-meaning volunteers who are actually wanting to make gender equitable changes. However, because they are a product of the system sport is organised in which replicates a capitalist and patriarchal society, their ideas and beliefs are in support of maintaining this structure. Therefore, the hostility shown in their reluctance to adopt a new way of thinking is harder to resolve as it is not an obvious form of hostility. Instead, the responsibility to change their views came down to me putting in more time and effort to help them understand. Inevitably, the hold of this elite development view by the participants and the organisation was too much to confront on my own and resulted in a complete disinterest from myself as the facilitator as I described in Chapter five.

To conclude, there are many factors at play that contribute to the emphasis on performance and elite development as the strategy to provide gender equitable change. Although there is an obvious issue in the lack of opportunities and pathways at all levels in sport for women and girls, the overemphasis on this as a strategy for change for exacerbates the competitive nature of community basketball. Using Gramsci, it is evident those in power promote the ideas around gender ~~equality~~ equity that members value and therefore are supported in their decisions. What is detrimental is their ideas come from the beliefs around Connell's hegemonic masculinity that in this case emphasise performance and conquest. It is in this case that the those in leadership positions hold the power to maintain their legitimacy as leaders and members consent to this logic of competition they provide.

In the next, and final, chapter I will summarise the findings of my research and based on my experience, provide necessary recommendations to aid the facilitation of change programs within sport organisations.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

In this thesis I have documented the entire process of facilitating a gender equitable change program. As such, this thesis makes a very unique and valuable contribution to the field of gender inclusion in sport. The barriers women and girls face in their participation through sport and providing the recommendations that would allow women and girls to have a safe and inclusive space to participate in sport has been widely demonstrated in the literature. Barriers such as societal norms and expectations, difficulties in the allocation and availability of resources, limited opportunities to participate, and the lack of female representation have been well established as having an impact on the gender equality of sport (Casey et al., 2019; Fink, 2015; Fowlie et al., 2020; Knoppers, 1992; Shaw & Allen, 2009). Recommendations have been made to change the culture of sporting organisations to further opportunities as issues of gender were not made a priority to enact change (Hoeber, 2007b; Shaw & Hoeber, 2003). This evidence has been in the literature for years and yet what appears to be missing is the application of this gender equitable change and the impact it has.

For this research, I aimed to explore and document the entire process of co-creating and implementing gender equity strategies with community basketball members. Specifically looking at the facilitators and challenges I faced when designing and implementing strategies at the external, organisational, interpersonal, and individual levels. I used a participatory action approach to allow the three members of WBA to participate in the GIP and have their say on the direction of gender equitable change. The program involved four collaborative group sessions as well as six individual meetings in the hopes of implementing strategies to make WBA more gender equitable. Data collected throughout the program divided into the three stages (preparing for the GIP, planning for gender equitable change, and creating and implementing gender

equitable change), was used to identify the challenges and facilitators evident at the different levels of input.

Summary of the Main Findings

In the preparation for the GIP, there was a considerable amount of time dedicated to the recruitment of participants as well as the scheduling and the execution of the sessions. With this came the onset of the identification of the challenges and facilitators evident throughout the research process. To begin, an organisational appetite for gender equitable change enabled gender inclusion in WBA to be an area prioritised for action. This appetite led to the commencement of my GIP and with it the projected outcomes to improve the opportunities and experiences for women and girls at WBA. My previous working relationship with WBA also aided the process of recruitment as there was already trust established between myself as the facilitator and the organisation to which the research was conducted. Unfortunately, the facilitators evident did not outweigh the challenges identified. Firstly, lockdown restrictions due to COVID-19 had a substantial impact on the timely execution of the program in which recruitment and overall communication with the organisation took a substantial amount of time. Although the organisational appetite for change was enough to allow my GIP to be developed and conducted at WBA, meaningful change was difficult to come by unless forced through deadlines from myself. To finish, the sheer resistance I faced even before the commencement of my GIP was enough to recognise the emotional toll I was experiencing in facilitating change at WBA.

In the second stage of the research process, planning for gender equitable change, included the first two session of my GIP, as well as one-on-one reflexive meeting with all my participants. The aim of this stage was to establish the conditions that affect women and girls' experiences and how we can gain evidence to assess how inclusive and supportive WBA is in these areas. An

equal number of facilitators and challenges were evident in this stage of the research process. Although COVID-19 was outlined as a challenge to facilitation with technological issues impacting the flow of sessions, the accessibility of online session aided the busy schedules of the participants and removed the hassle of transportation and increased time commitment. There were many types of connections evident to facilitate the planning for change stage. The relationship of the participants, my familiarity with the sport of basketball, as well the one-on-one time dedicated to building relationships between myself and the participants, were all seen to assist in the facilitation. However, multiple challenges also arose with an increased emphasis on the developmental pathway for female players. The 'Wyndham Way' framework promoting the elite pathway at WBA influenced the participants' ability to focus on inclusive practices when attempting to enact gender equitable change at WBA. The last challenge I experienced was through the constant adaptation of my GIP. Due to the nature of PAR, I always knew there would be changes, however with factors outside of my control, I found a considerable amount of time went into planning which did not eventuate, taking a toll on my efforts.

The final stage of the research process, the creation and implementation of gender inclusive change, included the final two group sessions, one-on-one meetings with participants, as well as an in-personal meeting with Fran and Collin. The aim of this stage was to co-create gender inclusive strategies dedicated to the conditions chosen by the participants including coach development and providing a welcoming environment for CALD women and girls. Unfortunately, during this stage the challenges to facilitation far outweighed the facilitators. While the collaboration between the participants and myself enabled substantial progress in creating and implementing strategies, time on task was an issue impacting the productivity of meeting times. The influence from the organisation had a negative impact on the direction of the strategies focussing on the technical knowledge of coaches, rather than the inclusive practice of coaches. To assist the resistance felt at the organisational level, participants showed various forms of resistance to change whereby the

elite development pathway was still emphasised as the answer to gender ~~equity~~ equality at WBA. To finish, the sheer number of challenges noted in all the levels of facilitation became a burden to my efforts to continue to work towards gender inclusion at WBA. The emotional toll of having the responsibility of the GIP with what seemed to be no positive outcome had a detrimental impact on my motivation and passion for women in sport.

Although there were many factors both contributing to the facilitation and challenge of enacting gender equitable change, the most significant challenge identified was the tension between gender inclusion efforts and the dominance of the high-performance model. This challenge was explored in depth to address the aim of the research and highlight the key issue facing gender equity efforts in sport today. The ideas of Gramsci's hegemony and Connell's structure of the gender order and hegemonic masculinity, guided my interpretation of the findings and I determined that there is a clear power difference that impacts the decisions and direction gender equitable change is focused on. The value that gender equity has in sport today makes it something that leaders must address if they are wanting the support of their members. However, by using the competitive model sport has always been organised in to promote gender ~~equality~~ equity and emphasise elite excellence for women and girls, those in positions of power can maintain their leadership roles and benefit from the competitive model that favours boys and men over women and girls. To allow this to occur, members of WBA consent to their own disempowerment by supporting this competitive model and further exacerbate the problem that drives gender inequality in sport.

Recommendations

Throughout the research process, I have been the centre of enacting change. While the experience of designing and delivering a change program that did not yield the results I had hoped for was fraught with difficulty and emotional

challenges, I have been able to take my key findings from the research and provide overall recommendations both in the facilitation of change programs, as well as the structure and organisation of community sport competitions. Table 5 below outlines my overall recommendations to coincide with each facilitator and challenges experienced in the research process. I will then discuss certain recommendations in further detail below.

Preparing for the Gender Inclusion Program			
Facilitators	**Solutions**	**Challenges**	**Solutions**
An organisational appetite for change	Utilise the resources available across Federal, State, and Local Governments and the take advantage of the opportunity to facilitate gender equitable change.	**COVID-19**	Take time to build relationships with organisation and participants.
Previous working relationship	Continue to develop relationships with the organisation and participants.	**An appetite but no investment for change**	Provide consistent support to organisations to assist in the facilitation of change programs.
		The beginning of an emotional toll	Ensure supportive networks are available to the facilitator of change.

Planning for Gender Equitable Change			
Facilitators	**Solutions**	**Challenges**	**Solutions**
Accessibility to sessions	Provide multiple avenues to access resources and support for gender equitable change.	**Adapting to zoom**	Take time to research and prepare for technological issues associated with online learning.
Participant connection	Promote a community of practice between clubs within sport organisations.	**The 'Wyndham Way'**	Provide education to organisations around defining a clear difference between the representative and domestic level competitions as well as the emphasis on performance and its impact on the gender inclusion efforts in community sport.
Building trust through basketball	Take time before programs begin to have a good level of understanding of the sport or context the research is taking place in.	**Emphasis on pathways**	Provide more education to members around the emphasis on performance and its impact on the gender inclusion efforts in community sport.
One-on-one time	Enable opportunities to work collaboratively with members of the sport organisation,	**Adapting sessions on the go**	Although time consuming, be prepared with multiple plans depending on the direction of the change

Facilitators	Solutions	Challenges	Solutions
	as well as dedicated one-on-one time with the facilitator to allow all participants to have their input.		program. Understand the direction of the program is not in the control of the facilitator.
Creating and Implementing Gender Inclusive Strategies			
Facilitators	Solutions	Challenges	Solutions
The buy-in stemming from collaboration	Promote a community of practice between clubs within sport organisations.	**The takeover from WBA**	Provide education to organisations around defining a clear difference between the representative and domestic level competitions as well as the emphasis on performance and its impact on the gender inclusion efforts in community sport.
		Time on task	Express control where necessary during sessions when facilitators of change find a lack of progress toward positive change.
		Resistance to change	Provide more education to members around the emphasis on performance and its impact on the gender inclusion efforts in community sport.

		My death by 1000 cuts	Ensure there are multiple change facilitators supporting each other when facilitating change programs.

Table 5. Facilitators, challenges, and recommendations relevant within the
entire research process.

To begin, I will provide recommendations on my experience with facilitating a
change program. There is no question the effects of the lockdown Melbourne
experienced made aspects of facilitation difficult. Something I can put down as
poor research timing. However, I can say with confidence the importance of
face-to-face interaction and building a connection between the facilitator and
participants, especially if there has been no prior relationship.

As important as it is to give the power over to participants in participatory action
research, there is a fine line in giving too much power whereby time is wasted
discussing irrelevant topics. I found this to be the case during online group
sessions as well as in-person meetings. As much as creating a safe space to
discuss sensitive topics is important, also having more of a say in the direction
of the strategies created may be the best way to make a meaningful change for
women and girls. After all, as a facilitator I was able to identify certain
challenges such as the over-emphasis on elite development that would be
detrimental for women and girls at a community basketball level. Rather than
stepping in and taking control, I attempted to guide participants to a more
inclusive practice mindset, which inevitably was overlooked after the input of
WBA leadership. It is difficult to decide how much control a facilitator should
have in these situations. Upon completion, I would recommend providing more

educative opportunities to help members of sport understand the challenges an emphasis on performance has on women and girls' participation and experiences in community sport.

Thinking bigger picture, the term pathway is multidimensional. The meaning can and should be used to define the multiple opportunities female participants have to play basketball taking into consideration their motivations to play. I found there was an emphasis on only one pathway being to achieve elite excellence. What I believe should be encouraged is the multiple pathways that can still provide opportunities to participate in basketball. Using the Sport Participation Pathway Model, there can be multiple avenues of participation with opportunities to participate at any point in time (Eime, Charity, et al., 2022). Part of the issue in achieving this kind of model is the people in positions of power that have a major impact on the changes to be made. As is to be said, all kinds of power is contested, and so gendered power too is no more total than other kinds (Connell & Pearse, 2014). A requirement to make a shift in the space for women in sport is a solidarity between members of sporting organisations. By having a unified vision for gender equality, organisational leaders have no choice but to follow the beliefs of their members if they want to stay in power. Even if that means giving up on the ideas and beliefs that benefit them most in these positions. Needless to say, it is not an easy task to do. However, by building a community of practice within an organisation who are willing to sacrifice the small wins for a select few elite players, can and will benefit the majority and the cause for gender equality. In this instance, sport can become a more inclusive and supportive place for all members to enjoy.

In what was possibly the most evident and traumatic challenge I faced during the GIP, the burnout in volunteering in sport effected my ability to engage substantially. Although the burnout of various stakeholders within the sport sector has been addressed in previous literature, the burnout of volunteers attempting to enact change, specifically gender equitable change, has been missing. I put myself at the heart of creating gender equitable change and

therefore can attest to my own experiences having a substantial impact in the process of creating change.

The detrimental impact of the apparent boom in women's sports contributed to the empty feeling I felt when realising the boom isn't what it's made out to be. I had prior knowledge that women's sport was not booming as much as we believe it to be (McLachlan, 2019). However, even with this prior knowledge, the resistance, ambivalence, and forms of hostility I faced in attempting to enact change were too much to handle on my own. Having the sociological tools, I could go beyond consenting to my own disempowerment in following the competitive model. I could understand the fact that by following this elite model pathway, it would not create positive change for all women and girls. The pain I felt as the motivator and change agent to do better in space for women and girls at WBA who was unable to do the one thing the program aimed to do. The helpless feeling of isolation where the only thing getting me through the end of the program was the fact that I needed to continue for the purpose of my studies. Having lost all intrinsic motivation to enact gender equitable change allowed the downfall of the program and any chance of a sustainable outcome. The constant wonderings of which challenge was the final straw. To what I deem was my death by 1000 cuts, which one of the cuts I received was the undoing of my motivation to create change. By not focussing on which factor had the most detrimental impact, but the sheer number of factors was the key to understanding my breakdown.

Although there were multiple factors that led to my emotional toll becoming too much to handle resulting in a complete depletion in motivation, it is not one person's fault. After blaming my own efforts of failure on myself for a long time, I eventually came to the conclusion that change cannot happen with one person. Especially when what you're attempting to change is as complex as gender inclusion in sport. With historical, cultural, and social factors that are in favour of the men in positions of power in sporting organisations to actively promote the

elite development of community sport, there was only so much I could do as a facilitator of a gender equitable change program.

There was no support during the GIP, within the sessions, or working with WBA or the participants. The only times I felt optimistic was when I felt supported. This support came from my supervisors, colleagues, friends, or family. Although the feeling of isolation took over and was detrimental, this was mostly due to the support when it was given came from the outside of the program. In comparison, I think about my experience as a research assistant in the Change Makers Project with Football Victoria. The main difference is the sheer number of change facilitators within the program. It is not all up to one person to take all the responsibility. If one change facilitator is having issues with participants, there are multiple support networks within the program there to assist. Something I found to be lacking while facilitating the GIP. There is a need to share the load of facilitating a change program, not relying on just one person.

Final Note

There is no doubt in my mind that this journey of facilitating a gender equitable change program will be instilled in my mind for the rest of my life. While my experiences do not reflect what I initially thought would be achieved, there are so many lessons I now have and are thankful for. The doom and gloom state I was in and my pessimistic mindset of never being able to make change allowed me to realise what valuable knowledge I have been able to produce. My self-proclaimed title of a guinea pig, although made me question just about every life choice I had made in order to get me to this point, can hopefully assist others in sport spaces wanting things to be different, not to give up, not to make the same mistakes I made, and to create something better for women and girls in sport.

I began this thesis with Bryson's quote as there were many times throughout the research I wanted to give up, I wanted to vacate the scene. However, I can acknowledge the importance of this newfound knowledge from my research and that now more than ever it is important to engage in critical and reflective understanding and practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Session 1 Running Sheet

7:10: INTRODUCTION

Good evening everyone, thank you for coming along tonight, I'm sure there are plenty of other priorities in your life at the moment that you could be attending to but clearly the Inclusion of women and girls at WBA is one of those priorities, so I thank you again for caring about this issue and doing something about it. Another reminder and you should know already that these sessions will be recorded, but only for my viewing and will only be used to make transcriptions and that is all. If we were in person, they would've just been audio recorded but things happen and here we are.

POWERPOINT

SLIDE 1: Title Page

By now you will know who I am, I'm the one who has been flooding your inboxes with emails so apologies for that. I'm currently a Master of Research Student at Victoria University and I am also a casual sessional teacher of Sport sociology at Victoria University.

A bit more of my background, I do currently (when we aren't in lockdown), a basketball play, coach, and volunteer in many basketball programs. I'm sorry to say but it is not with Wyndham unfortunately, my club up north, the Hume City Broncos or the Broadmeadows basketball association. I've been a member of that club since I was 6 years old.

So why am I here? I've been working alongside WBA for around 2 years now, initially on a similar project conducted with Victoria University that I'll touch on a little later. But essentially, there were a lot of findings that came from that project, and as we were wrapping up, I thought we're not quite done yet. Something about me is I'm extremely passionate about this topic and I genuinely wanted to create change here. Luckily WBA were more than willing to

allow me to continue working with them and eventually develop this program we are a part of today.

Now you are all aware as you have all read the information about the project I emailed, this project does align with my Master of Research, so everything I sent you were the formalities of conducting university-based research projects. The good thing about that now is, you don't really have to worry about anything like that for the rest of this program, that's for me to deal with. All you must worry about is the reason as to why you joined this program in the first place, which I'm hoping, is to help create an inclusive and supportive environment for women and girls at WBA. What I'll be doing on the other end of this, is documenting this entire process and identifying the challenges and facilitators in implementing gender equitable strategies within this sporting organisations. Because the fact of the matter is, for the last 20 or so year of academic literature, time after time they've identified the barriers or factors that inhibit girls and women in participating in sport and time after time, recommendations are provided to improve participation. The question is, why aren't we seeing a more meaningful change in participation, especially at a grassroots level? This is sort of what I am hoping to answer with my research, seeing if there are any challenges or facilitators that we come across when implementing strategies.

SLIDE 2: State of play Australia

- So firstly, I just wanted to give you the state of play for Basketball in Australia
- Used 2 sources
- Basketball Australia annual report and the AusPlay data from Sport Australia
- Chose the year 2019, for the last normal year let's say, there was more data available
- Firstly, in all of Australia, they reported that of all playing participants, 32% of those were female

- Shown in the AusPlay data, they estimated that there were 699,007 adults participating in basketball in Australia, of those only 202,061 were estimated to be female
- Following that in children aged under 15, there were an estimated 318,962 children participating in basketball outside of school, with only 108,411 of those being girls.

SLIDE 3: State of play in Victoria

- Again, we have 2 sources, Basketball Victoria Annual report from 2019 and AusPlay data again
- Starting with the basketball Victoria, they reported 435,000 overall participants (this included players, coaches, referees and so on.
- The breakdown as you can see is once again, only 32% of those participants were female
- They also noted that there were 247,351 weekly registered participants so this is more likely to reflect the number of players playing formal competition.
- Moving onto the AusPlay data we can see a yet another breakdown but this time, by each state. So, it is quite clear that Victoria sits at being the most popular state to play basketball.
- So, by now we can clearly see from participation rates, that women and girls are well below the rates shown by boys and men.
- So, what is Victoria actually doing about this?

SLIDE 4: Inquiry and change our game

- Back in 2015, the Victorian Government conducted an inquiry into Women and Girls in Sport and Active Recreation which addressed the gender quality that we faced in Victoria. This report also outlined nine recommendations to increase leadership and participation of women and girls and you can see these recommendations on screen divided into their themes.

- From this inquiry, the Change Our Game initiative was established and I'll assume we are all quite familiar but once again you can see on screen some of the goals of this initiative that directly relate to the recommendations outlined by the Inquiry in 2015.
- By looking at the recommendations, this program we are a part of would fall into the Change the Environment looking at point no. 7
- And what is our environment, Wyndham basketball Association

SLIDE 5: WBA Participation
- Now there is quite a bit going here
- I wanted to give you a breakdown of each domestic club here at WBA
- As you can see, doesn't quite matter how big or small a club is, we still can see quite a difference in the number of girls teams compared to boys' teams.
- And wouldn't you know it, overall, there are 32% female teams across all the domestic clubs, same as Aus and Victoria
- Glass half full, at least you're not worse
- However, I think we can all agree we want to make that percentage a lot higher than what it is.
- So what are WBA doing about it?

Slide 6: Evaluation

Some of you have probably heard this before so I won't spend too much time on it. Wyndham Basketball Association came to the team at Victoria University back in 2019 to help with their mission to grow and strengthen their basketball community, in particular addressing the gap of female representation in all levels. We developed this project with the aims of helping WBA achieve this mission in terms of gender equity and inclusion and guide WBA toward a future growth of female basketball.

Slide 7: Project breakdown

Observational fieldwork and fieldnotes taken, were used to capture the interactions between players, coaches, referees, and spectators of the domestic basketball competition as well as basketball programs within in the association. We also used focus group interviews with female domestic basketball coaches, representative level coaches, female referees, and senior female representative players where we posed questions to the participants such as why they thought there was such a gap between male and female participation in all aspects of representation and the kinds of strategies that have previously been implemented or possible new strategies to address the identified issues.

There were five themes that emerged within these focus groups that identified the social and cultural factors that were inhibiting gender equality within the club.

Firstly, gendered norms. Many participants drew on reasons that would be considered gendered stereotypes for the imbalance such as conflicting commitments like employment, study, social life, and self-consciousness.

The second theme was competition structures which created the greatest diversity in responses in what the focus on the competition should be about. Either a focus on winning and achievement, or just competing for fun. The difference between the two results in girls finding themselves in the wrong structure to meet their motivations to play.

The next theme was pathways, participants noted there was a lack of pathways or they were not communicated effectively for both coaches and players.

Next we had coaching, and the general consensus was that coaches at the association were ill-equipped with dealing with the many responsibilities that are involved in coaching girls.

The last theme and by far the most significant theme of all was hostile cultures. There were ample stories to highlight verbal abuse or the threat of physical violence in what should be completely unacceptable behaviour.

Slide 8: Solutions and recommendations

We also sought solutions from the participants and there were four main themes covered.

Firstly, coach development. This revolved around coach education and opportunities to develop more female coaches in the club. It was noted that there were differences between the perceived needs of domestic coaches compared to rep coaches

The next theme was role models and mentors. It was consistently noted that building connections between the senior players coaches and referees and the younger ones was extremely important to ensure support was given as well as someone to look up to

Pathways and recruitment were the next theme which included the promotion and retention of current players as well as recruitment of new players. Specifically, the recruitment of girls from culturally diverse backgrounds as previous research show that they are underrepresented in sport participation. Previous research also indicates that multiple sports tend to attract the same talented athlete which results in the same girl possibly playing multiple sports until she has to choose which sport to continue with.

The last theme was recognition. Participants suggested better recognition and representation of girls that can come in the form of advertising, financial remuneration or forms of positive feedback.

Leads us to the proposed recommendations developed from the analysis of the findings as well as international literature and State Government strategies for gender inequality

Specifically, the recommendations are:

- Set clear participation targets (ratio) for girls and women by 2025
- Establish that reporting on targets becomes a standing item on the agenda of all WBA meetings
- Develop policies and practices to reduce the levels of hostility and aggression that are apparent at all levels of the game at WBA, including zero tolerance for referee abuse.

- Develop competition structures that overcome the talent differentials between purely domestic and representative players
- Provide specific women only coaching courses
- Ensure that the WBA website and social media communicates content that is 50/50
- Build a community of practice model between domestic clubs to harness collective problem solving and develop an inclusive and supportive setting.
- Conduct active research program with domestic clubs and coaches to enhance their capacity to ensure change occurs and targets are met.

Now I've highlighted that for a reason because here we are

SLIDE 9: Gender Inclusion Project

PAR – because this isn't some top-down approach where I just talk or ask you questions, no this is a collaborative project

So rather than top down, I'm thinking more side to side

All I'm doing is giving you the opportunity and resources to reflect on your own practice whatever that may be within your domestic club and finding ways to create and implement strategies to improve the experiences of girls and women at WBA.

SLIDE 10: YOU!

So I've been doing all the talking so now I want to give it back to you.

I've already introduced myself, now I would like if everyone can do the same.

Appendix B: Extinction Exercise

Conditions	Extinction
Social Media/Websites	The social media/website features very little or no content for W&G.
Court Allocation	W&G are almost always allocated the worst courts for training and games.
Scheduling of Games	W&G games and trainings are scheduled at inconvenient times and days.
Referee Allocation	W&G games are allocated the least experienced referees almost always.
Uniforms	W&G play in men's cut or very revealing uniforms.
Prizes	B&M receive trophies, whereas W&G don't receive any prizes for winning.
Coach Allocation	The worst coaches are allocated to the W&G teams.
Fees	Fees are higher for W&G than for B&M.
Pathways	Opportunities to excel are non-existent or unknown for W&G.
Grading	No grading games for W&G, meaning all skill levels are competing against each other.
Competition Structure	There is only one level of competition in each age group for W&G.
Training Session Allocation	Less or no training sessions allowed for W&G teams.
Coach Feedback	No positive feedback or instruction from the coach is given to W&G teams, or the focus is always on what they are doing wrong. Coach ignores certain players if they are not good enough. Single out players for doing something wrong and embarrass them in front of the team.

Court Time	Unequal game time especially for the less skilled players.
Coach Language	Belittle W&G players, emotional abuse, gendered language, comparing them to the boys, emphasising the importance of size, assuming they aren't trying hard enough, swearing. Constantly yelling at W&G.
Communication to Teams	Not communicating to W&G their game times, or changes in game schedule.
Player Allocation/Selection	Moving W&G out of teams because they aren't good enough without considering the player. Selecting only tall/athletic players in teams.
Social Events	Social events have a focus of B&M, W&G are not seen as welcome to these events. Obvious difference in the resources allocated to events for W&G.
Comms	Enquiries related to W&G are responded to very slowly or not at all.
Facilities	No female friendly facilities, poorly kept courts.
Policies	There are no policies for the inclusion of W&G
Reporting Coach Behaviour	There is no easy way to report issues regarding coaches of W&G. Coaches are rarely held accountable for their actions if deemed inappropriate/unacceptable.
Coach Technical Knowledge	
Sense of belonging for CALD girls/families	

Appendix C: What Makes a Good Coach?

Condition	Explanation
Positive Feedback	Acknowledging that players have tried their best and using phrases such as "You'll get there" Truly believing in players.
Attitude	Wanting to learn more about coaching and willing to learn from others. Being firm and fair.
Approachable	Players and parents feeling comfortable enough to approach coaches for feedback.
Recognition	Recognising individual players and their strengths, not just focusing on a few players.
Court Time	Being inclusive to those less skilled players and being strategic about subbing to ensure all players are receiving equal court time.
Communication	Communicating to each player and parents regularly.
Respect	Coaches showing equal respect to each of their players.

	Respecting opposing players and domestic clubs. Promoting good natured competition.
Language	Appropriate use of language no matter the gender or age of their players.
Player Wellbeing	Caring about each player and their mental health.
Expectations	Setting clear expectations to players and parents around their behaviour.

Appendix D: Session 2 Running Sheet

Firstly, in the excitement of finally being able to run the first session, I completely forgot to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, so I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the Wathaurung, Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the lands on which we reside. And I pay my respect to their elders, past and present.

Secondly I'd like to apologise I was not able to attend the Wyndham Way Coaching Seminar or meeting, I thought I'd ask how you found it if someone did attend. As I'm aware this was for representative coaching and seeing as though it was run by (Player and Coach Development Manager), was there more of an emphasis on tactics and strategies in terms of basketball skill.

Lastly, a recap of what to note of our first session and our main two activities. We started off pretty evil by doing the extinction exercise, and once I went through our list a few more times, I released just how well you all did to come up with those conditions and I think as a collective you well and truly were able to make W&G extinct at WBA. Our second exercise putting our mindset in a better place was brainstorming well what actually makes a good coach. Hope by now you've had a chance to have a look at the document I sent you, no problem if you haven't but it just outlines everything you brainstormed together into some nice tables, and we are going to continue to use what we worked on in our first session to inform what we do in this session. Before we do that, did anyone have anything else they wanted to add to it, that maybe they thought of at a later stage, I will say I added a couple today as I was reviewing, mine were Facilities (poorly kept courts, no female friendly facilities) and policies (no policies regarding the inclusion of W&G. They were mine, all good if you didn't have any. You can always add more at any stage, it is not set in stone

This session we have two things we are going to do to our list of conditions, firstly we are going to determine who exactly is responsible for ensuring that our

conditions don't end up like the extinction conditions we came up with last week. Following this we are going to determine ways in which we can determine how we can in a way assess how inclusive and supportive we are to W&G. Before I talk more about that let's go back to who is responsible.

This exercise allows us to look at all the conditions we came up with that directly correlates with the experiences of W&G at basketball at WBA. Now in our list we have 22 conditions, quite a lot. Now if we were going to try and tackle each condition, we'd be here for a very long time and it would need a lot of work. To make things easier and essentially more effective, we want to focus on the conditions that are relevant to us and what we can control. These are the conditions we want to reflect on and evaluate, and eventually create some strategies for. But before we do that, let's get to work with determining who is responsible for what.

I'm just going to share my screen for a second to show you what I've done, I've made a google sheet which I'll share with you after this session, but it's just an easy way to view the work we've been doing and so you can access it an any stage too.

For now we'll focus on the responsibility column, and we will go down the list and determine who has a say in these conditions, what stakeholder or position is responsible for each condition. So let's start with the first one.
Responsibilities

Now we have determined who's responsible for each condition, we can highlight the ones we want to focus on, now I'm aware we all have a few different roles in our domestic clubs, team manager, committee, vice president, for now I want to focus on what the coaches can control, as I designed this program to focus on a coach's impact, I think we'll stick with that and we can always come back to our other conditions at a later stage but to make it the least complicated let's focus on the coaches.

So how can we really know how inclusive and supportive the conditions that as a coach you can control in your own practice. How do we figure this out? Well we are going to look at self-reflection and to do this we need to figure out the best way we can figure this out and assess ourselves in a way. We need to determine what methods we can use to really gather this baseline of where we are at now.

Now spoiler, I'm quite confident in making the assumption that coaches or participants that get involved in these types of educative programs looking at improving the experiences of W&G in basketball, these coaches or participants tend not to be the problem, your willingness to be a part of a program such as this doesn't tend to mean that once we do some reflection on your coaching, you are all going to come out as really hostile coaches and members in the basketball community and you're there's going to be so much that needs to be addressed, I'm not saying you're perfect, however it's usually the coaches that may need the most work, but are happy doing the things the way they've always done it and therefore they don't want to change, it's worked so far so why not keep it going.

That's something I want you all to remember, I'm not doing this reflection of your own practice as determining a baseline of where we are at as a way to call you out on every little thing you do wrong, not at all~~all~~all.

The reason we are doing this is because, like I advertised the strategies we eventually come up with have to be evidence-based strategies. Otherwise what's stopping us from just having a chat and trying to come up with something straight away. Yes we could do that, but in order to have the best chance at being successful, these strategies need to be informed by some sort of evidence. And rather than look at every coach at WBA, that's why I ran this program, to include a small group that really want to see a change happen and

through the work that we do, create something bigger that can be applied more broadly.

So I'll share my screen again so you can have a look, but this brings us back to our table and the next column which is the method. How are we going to gauge how inclusive and supportive we are? What ways can we come up with that will help us determine this and assess ourselves in the least bias way. Now we are going to go down two roads here, first we are going down the optimistic road that we will be back at courts again October 26th and we can physically be there and use practical methods. The other road I'll address after this is, let's say lockdown methods, things we can start to do after this session in the next month we have still in lockdown, but firstly our optimistic practical methods.

Focus on coaching but might have time to look at the others.
Methods

So these are future methods, methods I am hoping we can start doing late October, early November. But what can we do for now, there's not a lot, but can anyone think of what we can utilise at this moment to give us an idea of how inclusive and supportive our coaching environment is. Remembering we want to be self-reflective.

Can't ask others what they think, imagine asking your parents or players, hey what do you think of me as a coach, there's some definite hierarchical issues there.

Self-reflection, so what I'm thinking is each of you can look back at your own experiences, and we've already heard some stories from last week of some good and bad experiences so obviously you have a lot you can count on. But let's deep dive into our own experiences and reflect on both your coaching/ participation as a member of your club but also let's have a look at others you've encountered.

So between now and next session, I want each of you to do a reflection of your experiences within your domestic club. To make this easier, what I'm planning is I'll catch up with you all individually and I'll work out some prompting questions that I'll send to ~~you~~you, and you can think about before we catch up, either writing some things down or just talking it through with me and I can record everything that's said. To make things easier again, our next session won't be for another 4 weeks and that's how the rest of the sessions will go from now. Essentially from now on we'll do our sessions every 4 weeks so you have plenty of time in between to do anything that is required of course with my help as a mentor like I said last week.

Wrap up and what's next, each of you will do your own reflection and I'll catch up with each of you in the next four weeks, and essentially in our next session on October 18th, we can all reflect together at some of the occurring themes that came up for each of you, and at that stage, we can start planning some of the practical methods that we came up with today.

Appendix E: Condition Responsibilities and Methods

Conditions	Responsibility	Method
Social Media/Websites	President, vice president, social media committee member, media, and marketing coordinator	
Court Allocation	President, registrar, competitions coordinator	
Scheduling of Games	Competitions coordinator	
Referee Allocation	Referee supervisors/manager	
Uniforms	President, uniform coordinators	
Prizes	President, registrar	
Coach Allocation	President, vice president, coach coordinator	
Fees	Committee, treasurer	
Pathways	President, coaching coordinator, coaches	Document and feedback analysis - Look at registrations to see motivations to play, team manger feedback from parents, domestic members forward WBA pathways.
Grading	Competition coordinator, president, coaches, grading volunteers	
Competition Structure	Competition coordinator, grading volunteers	

Training Allocation	Committee	
Coach Feedback	Coaches, team managers	Video analysis/coaching evaluation - Observing coaches in action and providing assessment, peer/self-evaluation.
Court Time	Coaches	Record time for each player on court, tracking app
Coach Language	Coaches	Video analysis/language evaluation - Observing coaches in action and providing assessment, peer/self-evaluation.
Communication to Teams	Team mangers, committee, vice president	
Player Allocation/Selection	Competition coordinator, president, coaches	
Social Events	Events coordinator, committee	
Comms	Registrar, vice president, president	
Facilities	Coaches, team mangers, schools, council, Western Leisure Services	
Policies	President, committee	
Reporting Coach Behaviour	Committee, coaching coordinator, president, vice president	
Coach Technical Knowledge		

Sense of belonging for CALD girls/families		

Appendix F: Reflection Questions

Reflection of yourself:

1. How does your coaching change between different contexts (training, game, grand final)?

2. What kind of language/phrases do you use often, feedback?

3. How do you manage game time of all your players?

4. How do you acknowledge each player?

5. Would your coaching differ between girls and boys?

6. The ways (good or bad) you think you have had an effect on the girls you coach/team manage. Good aspects vs things to improve on

Reflection of others:

1. Have you seen/been involved in any experiences that seemed to have a negative impact on the girls being coached?

2. Experiences (good and bad), with coaches of girls within your domestic club or outside.

3. Interactions between players, parents, coaches, spectators, and referees.

4. How were these situations handled?

Appendix G: Session 3 Running Sheet

Once again thank you both for organising to meet with me to have a chat about your coaching and your experiences at WBA particularly at Hoppers. I really did enjoy the one-on-one time, feel like I got to know you a bit better and could understand a little bit more in regard to your experiences within your domestic spaces.

I have made a very short presentation here because I thought it might be better to have some visuals in the background and not just me talking.

PRESENTATION:
SLIDE 1:
So just to begin with session 3.

SLIDE 2:
I just wanted to take us through our process so far in this program.

If you can remember all the way back to our first session, we started with our extinction exercise to identify areas within the domestic basketball space that could impact on the experiences girls and women have here. Starting off nice and evil.

From there we went back to the good side in session 2 and determined whose responsibility it was in the domestic space to look after each condition we identified and see in fact how many our coaches were responsible for. As a reminder these were, pathways, grading, coach feedback, game time, and coach language.

To finish session 2, we started to brainstorm particular methods we could use to actually assess how well coaches are in terms of being inclusive and supportive in the above areas. Remember you can go back to the google doc I shared with you previously to have a look at what we came up with. But again, just a reminder, things like video analysis to look at coaching feedback and language or tracking the game time of players to see how equal it is. Now of course these were the methods we could do in an ideal world when we are back playing

basketball, which hopefully isn't too far away. However, we went with the self-reflection practice which once again was fantastic to hear from each of you. Now from this self-reflection, we have our evidence let's say, so from what you have told me, we can now look at creating strategies to help create a supportive environment, once again, particularly looking at it from a coach's perspective. How can we become better coaches towards girls in our domestic club?

Now before we move onto strategies right now, I'm going to quickly take you through exactly what I did after your reflections. Basically, I wanted to see what common themes came out of your reflections and see if I could see a pattern. Whether they were consistently brought up with each of you, or whether they were specific to one of you, how important you thought certain aspects were. Because essentially the aim of this is that we want the domestic coaches at WBA, but being specific to you here, we want the coaches at hoppers crossing to be the best most inclusive and supportive coaches to girls as possible.

SLIDE 3:

Now I have gone ahead and listened to the reflections again and like I've said, drawn out some of the most important points that have either come up in multiple of your reflections, or if you made a point to highlight this area.

The great thing about this is, once I finish presenting what I came up with, we can discuss together whether you thought I missed anything, or something is more important to focus on, or even if you thought of something else in between when we met up and now. This is quite flexible, and I want to make it clear that the way we progress here is entirely up to you. You're the ones involved in this space so you should be the ones to drive it.

PATHWAYS

Firstly, pathways. You explained instances of parents not knowing the different options for the young players if they wanted to progress further. But also for those older players who didn't have a suitable competition that catered to multiple motivations to play. Whether it was they wanted to progress their skills further, or whether there was a social competition.

RESPECTING OTHER PLAYERS

Many examples of players not showing respect to the opposition and like we've previously talked about. But also, and what we can focus on here, is the fact that coaches are not pulling up their players when they do show this disrespect. So that's something to target here.

<u>A WELCOMING ENVIRONMENT FOR GIRLS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS</u>

Examples here of families, whether that be the girls playing or their parents not having that sense of belonging to the sport. Having to tackle some the barriers impacting participation such as parents that don't see the purpose for girls to play, they see it as interrupting their schooling, they aren't going to make a career out of it so why bother, and also English being the second language. All of this comes down to a lack of communication and how we can accommodate families with lots of kids.

<u>COACHES' PERCEPTIONS OF FEMALE PLAYERS</u>

This was a good point that was brought up with examples to support it. But coaches, in particular male coaches, having this perception that girls don't take it as seriously as the boys, or they think girls are too emotional and don't know how to deal with it. So they don't want to coach them. Meaning there are less available coaches for our girls' teams.

<u>COACHING LANGUAGE</u>

A few different examples of language being used by the coach that is inappropriate, either by emotional abuse, or language not catered to the level, age group and so on.

<u>COURT TIME</u>

Lastly, I thought I would add this in here, I know I was the one to bring it up in your reflections, but seeing as though it is one of our ~~conditions~~conditions, I thought we should include it here as well. How court time must be strategic, and this would be useful for all coaches to have this knowledge on how to sub.

SLIDE 4:

So obviously there were a lot of things brought up in your reflections that I could draw on but for the moment, I thought it would be best to only highlight a few.

Because here is what we want to happen it. You've identified themes that may be impacting the experiences of girls playing basketball and a reason as to why we see so many drop off. Well after identifying these themes, you are going to choose what theme we will focus on first, because today we will start to create a strategy or maybe a couple strategies to tackle your chosen issue.

END PRESENTATION
Once again, I'm going to throw it back to you. What are your thoughts? Did you agree, disagree? I'm very interested to hear.

STRATEGIES
So now the exciting part we get to start creating these strategies.

Now this is what I'm thinking, we're lucky because we have two members of hoppers crossing, your club gets the most benefits. So what I'm thinking to cover a broad area here, we could split the work in a way where Fran you could take one theme and start creating a strategy and Terri, you could take another theme and create a separate strategy. That way if you have a difference in what you think our priority should be, you can choose your priority. Also means twice as much change in the same amount of time.
Otherwise, we could settle on one theme first and together you could come up with a strategy and work on it together. Doing this you would have to settle on what you want to focus on of course up to you.

THEY DECIDE WHAT TO DO
So for the rest of the session, we are going to come up with what we want to implement.
THEY WORK ON WHAT THEY WANT TO DO.
Between now and next session, we are going to continue working on creating our strategy, and when we come back to our next group session which will again be in 4 weeks 15th of November, you are going to "present" what you came up with. So there is plenty of time between now and then. And of course, I

will be here along the way to help in any way I can, this means we may have to have another individual catch up to really get things going but in a ~~way~~way, this will make it easier because you can handball some work off to me as well. I am here to help.

But like I said, you are the ones in these spaces, you need to be the one to drive it, you are both very influential members of your club that can really make a difference. If I tried, no one knows me, it wouldn't be nearly as effective if this was something that I created. No, it is your passion and drive that will create change.

Appendix H: Fran's Strategy

WYNDHAM BASKETBALL ASSOCIATON – GENDER INCLUSION INITIATIVE

COACH DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

POINTS OF EMPHASIS:

- Targeted at women and girls (WBA domestic space is 70% male and 30% female)
- Sustainable change

Two aspects; Technical Knowledge and Inclusive Practice Knowledge (inclusive language)

1. Setting expectations and goals for your team
2. Language used when coaching
3. Terminology – current terms, notifications of changes
4. Age appropriate skills and concepts
   - Wyndham Basketball Association (WBA) matrix and game concepts for age groups
5. Provide game like opportunities
6. Skill progression for individuals and teams
7. Feedback – self, peer and coach
8. Court time for players
9. Assistance from WBA

"COACH DEVELOPMENT

Wyndham Basketball is passionate about supporting developing the coaches of our affiliated domestic clubs and our representative program. We are supportive and committed to seeing coaches at all levels get the best out of themselves and their players.

WBA Domestic Coach Education Clinics

Wyndham Basketball runs a number of FREE Coach Education sessions open for all coaches to attend. This is an opportunity to expose our coaches to high level, professional coaches"

*Quote from Wyndham Basketball Association website

- WBA coaching resources on website including coaching videos from international, national, LOCAL coaches
- programs for player development such as DDP (Domestic Development Program) for domestic athletes, The Edge for representative athletes and school holiday day camps/events for both domestic and representative + all abilities)

QUESTIONS:

How do we better prepare our coaches at the WBA (domestic and representative) to provide the relevant skill/skill progression and team play to improve the participation, learning, fun and therefore retention of our female athletes?

What is the most efficient and successful way to provide information on relevant skill/skill progression and team play to coaches?

How do we gain better attendance at WBA provided clinics/assistance/advice, for domestic coaches on CONTENT (how to teach skills and implement in game like situations) that work for individuals and team, particularly our female athletes?

This would enable domestic coaches to deliver skills and team play with the most up to date information in game like situations providing players the opportunity to progress. It encourages learning, a love of the game, relies on teamwork and should instil respect and sportsmanship. Therefore this is a place girls should want to be.

Other questions to consider:
- Correct language: how to encourage the players to be competitive, and apply teamwork.
- Coach Sportsmanship: the coach treats own players well, but may need to consider how they act towards other coaches, players and referees. (abusive and intimidating)
- WBA runs a number of free sessions that focus on content and skills. Need to add in inclusive practice and inclusive language – RESOURCES: filming or recording language do's and don'ts.
- How often do domestic clubs take up WBA on free domestic coaching clinics (who attends, why do others not attend, what do coaches want information on)
- Hoppers Crossing Junior Basketball Club have promoted clinics, are down on players and coaches after the return from COVID lockdowns, after COVID lockdowns club needs more time and coaches.
- Female only coaches clinics: evaluate, qualitative evaluation; how to increase numbers and RETAIN
- Assistance from WBA has changed from the WBA attending domestic clubs to all domestic coaches attending clinics provided by the Association; what are the reasons for this change (it has only changed in the last few weeks before Gender Inclusion Initiative meeting 4)
- Improving technical knowledge
- Further resources ; what is needed and who/how to make them
- Does it actually work: positively impact girls
    - Getting something out of it?
    - Demonstrate knowledge through practice
    - Can we increase female participation?

Appendix I: Session 4 Running Sheet

~~Unfortunately~~Unfortunately, Pam can't make it again tonight, but hopefully we will ~~b~~be able to all see each other in our next session.

If you got a chance to brainstorm some ideas or even refine the details of a particular plan, I'm looking forward to hearing about it. However, if you weren't able to devote a lot of time to this since our last session, that is completely fine, we are going to spend today's session doing just that.

Before I hand it over to you, I'll just quickly show you this.

I wanted to remind you of our original conditions that we came up with that we decided were a coach's responsibility. We originally had 5, feedback from coaches directly to players that is, coach language, pathways, grading, and court time. Now I have added two more that let's say we missed when we first created that extinction list. These last two came from the self-reflections and the themes that you both wanted to look at for your strategies. I called the first one coach technical knowledge, Fran okay with ~~that?~~that. Second one Sense of belonging for CALD girls/families, Terri are we okay with that?

So these are the conditions that I want us to always come back to when we are thinking about strategies moving forward. How can we address a condition in our strategies, and just how many can we address, might be a kill two birds with one stone strategy, or even kill seven birds with one stone, who knows?

As we continue to look at our strategies, I guess there are two main points of emphasis I want us to cover.

- Firstly, these strategies have to have a women and girls focus. If we make them generic and just about inclusion for everyone, then we know what happens, it automatically skews to boys and men because that's how sport has always been organised and that's the situation we are currently in. 30% to 70% girls and boys at WBA domestic. This is why we need to make sure we target women and girls.

- Secondly, we need to make sure these strategies create sustainable change. It can't just be something we do once and just hope it works, we need to make sure it works and that it's sustainable.

That's all I wanted to show you first up.

Now I did meet up with Pam and we went over what she missed in our last session and we started brainstorming some other strategies which I will share with you now.

- ~~Firstly~~Firstly, we talked about having a better connection between clubs in accommodating girls. For example, in Pam's example they only had a couple of girls for an older age group domestic team in which they were forced to fold due to the lack of players. Now instead of just allowing those girls to leave, Pam contacted another domestic club so they could continue playing in another team. So in this instance, clubs need to ask would they rather lose girls to another team or lose them to basketball forever. I would hope, in these instances, they would rather girls continue playing, even if that means they play for another club.

- Secondly, Pam mentioned the lack of girls teams, especially in the younger age groups coming back to play. So in order to recruit young girls, WBA can do a Girls come and try session, especially targeting schools. We get a bunch of female coaches, even some older domestic players in U18s to run a really fun session with girls from primary schools in the area and from that we can generate some interest and hopefully get some to sign up.

- Lastly, we looked at Coaching language and behaviour or feedback and the suggestion was creating a handbook for coaches with the ~~do's~~dos and don'ts. Now in order to really understand and develop a great resource, it was decided that we could find coaches who volunteer to be recorded so we can hear what coaches are actually saying and doing.

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That way once we start creating this resource, they can come from real life examples. Quite a big ask this strategy so it's maybe something we can all look at assisting with.

Now I'll give you a chance to have your say on everything.

Let's think about exactly what we need to do to make sure these happen.

RESOURCES

COACH DEVELOPMENT

- Technical Knowledge
- Inclusive Practice Knowledge

How do we know they can apply this knowledge? How do we know this knowledge is being communicated positively to impact girls?

Is knowledge just having done something like a course or reading a resource or is knowledge the ability to demonstrate it through practice.

Something to think about in the future - We want to evaluate their application of this knowledge

13th December – Last session for this year.

Between now and then, keep working on these and how we are going to implement them.

I think we can all agree this may be a bit much to organise before the end of the year, so it might be the case that we wait until next year before the start of the next season which I believe finishes right before easter

Appendix J: Strategies with Fran Running Sheet

Just us tonight Fran so we can get straight into it and before I hear about how your meeting went with (Player and Coach Development Manager) I'll just mention this first.

We shouldn't be here too late or anything but all I want to get through tonight is firstly we are going to look ahead a little bit and decide what we actually want to achieve out of our strategy and therefore once we have a clear sense of what we want to come out of this.

Then we'll move onto talking about the coaching course and figuring out as much detail as we can, talk about your meeting with (Player and Coach Development Manager) and so on.

Lastly, just want to put in some future plans because I don't want all our hard work just disappearing now that we have the holiday break so hopefully making a bit of a plan will help us a lot.

So ~~firstly~~firstly, bringing it back to our conditions, now I know it's only you here and the others couldn't make it so I don't want you to think all of this is on you, I will ask the others for their input as well.

But essentially what I think would be really great to do is go through our conditions we developed, and really clearly define what exactly we want to achieve in each one. So if you think back to the extinction exercise where we thought of the worst possibly outcome for women and girls, essentially we're thinking of the opposite now, what is the most inclusive and supportive version of all these conditions, ~~What~~what is it we want to achieve specifically for each of these conditions that are related to the coaching course.

So ideally, once we've implemented the strategy and done the coaching course, we can then evaluate how successful it was based on our defined outcome. As

I've said before what happens a lot is that interventions for women and girls or any inclusion programs often implemented but there is no evaluation on how effective they are. If we really care about creating change, we have to be critical of our approach and see what works and what doesn't. So I'm going to leave it up to you here which might be a bit difficult to do on your own, but I have faith.

Okay now that we've defined what outcome we would like to achieve, I'll hand it over to you to tell me all about your meeting with (Player and Coach Development Manager) and then we can start diving deep into the details. RESOURCES?

- Address each point and what is involved
- Who will run it
- When and where
- Leave it up to WBA to run it

Okay just before we finish up I just want to plan a little bit because like I had at the start, the last thing I want to happen is we've done all this work and planning and then we go on break and it all gets lost and if you're still happy to see this through we'll obviously have a break but if it's possible to meet up again the very start of February before Domestic games begin again.

Because ~~ideally~~ideally, I would love to come along this weekend as it's the last one to do some filming of the coaches so we could get started on looking at the language being used and I could help develop something over the break but I'm not sure how likely that is so it might have to wait until next year.

But ~~yes~~yes, essentially it would be great to have most of the things in your coach development program in order at the start of February so we don't have to waste any time and get straight onto the actual implementation part.

I will hopefully get onto the others as well and see what we can come up with.

Appendix K: Strategy Evaluation

Condition	What would we like to achieve (outcome)	Evaluation/sustainability?
Coach language	Positive, specific to the skill/game play, firm but fair, boundaries, express emotion but in an appropriate manner.	Pre and post evaluation, checklist for training/game
Feedback from coaches	Prepared and deliver instructions in appropriate manner, age-appropriate skill progressions, feedback to specific to what they want to achieve, clear expectations and goals and tie feedback to those goals and the team character they have built. Relevant and specific.	Feedback from players, parents, other coaches. Specific and small questionnaire.
Pathways	Multiple options stated and made public, register or common area. Collective buy in from clubs to accommodate girls and their motivation to play.	
Grading		
Court time	Give everyone as much court time as you can. Strategic about subbing.	

Coach technical knowledge	Specific knowledge/ability for age groups based on their skill set. Access to drills and skill progression.	
Sense of belonging for CALD girls/families	Increase and retention in CALD women and girls playing. HCJBC has a welcoming environment.	Participation data. Assessing whether exec, coaches, team managers know their CALD members well

Appendix L: Strategies with Terri Running Sheet

Just us tonight Terri so we can get straight into it. We shouldn't be here too late or anything but all I want to do tonight is just get us back on track with the strategies if you are still happy to move forward with these. I was working with Fran but I haven't heard from her, hasn't replied to my emails so I'm not sure, she might just be very busy, I wouldn't be surprised.

But seeing as though it is just us two, we can focus on what you started to work on late last year in providing a welcoming environment for girls from CALD backgrounds. So from what we worked on before you were looking at the three words welcoming, safe and enjoyable.

The key part of welcoming was to do with communication whether it be through your tone, conversations, talking on the phone as well as finding the time during season as well at training and games. Safe you had that the girls and families feel supported and understand the expectations of the team and organisation. Lastly enjoyable, you had the words participation, progression and opportunities. So children should enjoy basketball through their participation, and then progression focuses more on the player development and opportunities sort of looks at the pathways of different levels and teams. Hopefully I captured everything that you previously spoke about so did you have a chance to look into or just think about this a little more?

Because I know we previously talked about a strategy that you implemented without actually knowing it from a story you told about the mum who became a team manager, and at the start she would call you all the time, and you always took the time to help her and now she's developed into a really great team manager. Well just like that we know just by putting in the extra effort by communicating you had a great outcome and that's something to be really happy about.

Spreadsheet:

So I don't know if you got a chance to look at it, but I worked on this with Fran in our last session last year, essentially the point of it is, going through our list of conditions that are important in creating an inclusive and supportive space for women and girls, and really clearly define what exactly we want to achieve in each one. So if you think back to the extinction exercise where we thought of the worst possibly outcome for women and girls, essentially we're thinking of the opposite now, what is the most inclusive and supportive version of all these conditions, ~~What~~what is it we want to achieve specifically for each of these conditions that are related to your strategy. So of course now we can just focus on that last point, sense of belonging for CALD girls/families.

So ideally, once we've implemented the strategy, we can then evaluate how successful it was based on our defined outcome. As I've said before, what happens a lot is that interventions for women and girls or any inclusion programs often implemented but there is no evaluation on how effective they are. If we really care about creating change, we have to be critical of our approach and see what works and what doesn't. So let's have a go at suggesting what it is we want to achieve.

Appendix M: Fran's Strategy Update

gender inclusion initiative
Wyndham Basketball Association

contact:

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
in British English ;   NOUN
language that avoids the use of certain expressions or words
that might be considered to exclude particular groups of people,

COLINS DICTIONARY https://www.collinsdictionary.com

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
for coaches

✔ Focus on the skill e.g dribbling
Point out the parts that the player is
performing well; the ball is waist height, in
front and to the side of their body
Inform/remind the player on the correct
way to perform the parts they are
struggling with: use your fingertips and
push, rather than palms and slap.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
for coaches

✖ I have shown you a hundred times
- how do you not get it?!
Everyone else can do this
-why can't you?!
What is your problem?
Why can't you just do it. Dribbling
is a basic skill!!
You do that like a 5 year old!

EVERYONE CAN PLAY :)

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE
for spectators

✔
- Applaud good play from both teams.
- Point out to your athlete players that show skill and discuss how they use it in the game.
- Admire players that show great sportsmanship.
- Encourage competitiveness at the ball NOT the player.

✖
- Abuse the players on the opposition team
- Boo at any time - this is kids sport : (
- Put down the efforts of the players on either team.
- Encourage your players to "get her"