Master's thesis

Female African coaches in sport-for-development programs:

Making sense of empowerment of adolescent women

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Abstract

The sport-for-development and peace (SDP) sector claims 'empowerment of women' to be the main objective for their sport programs in post-conflict areas. However, how sport can contribute to this and what the mechanisms of impact are exactly in a context with influential gender/power discourses, are left unmapped. Key role in the empowerment process are the practices of the coaches, who are seen as the actual executors of the programs. The assumption is that how they make sense of empowerment, they subsequently give sense to their athletes. Therefore, this study investigated how coaches make sense of empowerment through their lived experiences and practices. Weick's (1995) 'sensemaking' allowed the researcher to capture micro-realities through the voices of grass-root practitioners. Six female African football coaches were interviewed through email and where possible face to face interviews. The results indicated that these coaches made sense of empowerment in sport programs for women in ways that were dissimilar to those on policy level in the SDP sector. The study ends with a reflection on these differences.

Key words: Sport-for-development, empowerment, sensemaking, coaches, gender inequity, post-conflict, decolonization.

Introduction

The purpose of this study was two-fold. The first goal was to critically examine and summarize the current evaluative research of sport-for-development programs. It provides an overview of the possible positive outcomes of sport that contribute to the empowerment of girls and women in post-conflict Low-Income Countries in 'the Global South'. It focused on the micro-level. The role of coaches, seen as key role models for life-skill development, was of specific interest as was the complexity and (unintended) power relations embedded in sport-for-development programs that shape implementation and research. Since there is relatively little qualitative bottom-up research that explores what actually happens in such programs that purport to empower women, the second purpose of this study was to investigate philosophies, strategies and practices of coaches in such sport programs. This grassroots knowledge is essential to the dissemination of practice-based knowledge for implementing gender equity, yet it seems to be neglected in research. The participatory empowering method of research that is presented in this study can contribute to the sustainability of social change, as well as to shape power relations within the SDP sector. A relatively new internet-based method of qualitative research was used to capture the local voices.

Literature research

Millennium Developmental Goals & Sport

There has been a growing awareness of global inequality around the world. Most confronting of all is the rising poverty rates and the growing polarization of Middle and High-Income Countries (MHIC) versus Low Income Countries (LIC). Poverty is an ongoing problem that affects large parts of the world. The consequences are bleak; extreme hunger and health issues affect the most vulnerable citizens who lack resources to establish a reasonable quality of life, particularly in post-conflict countries. This is especially the case for girls and women, who have to deal with additional gender inequality and gender-based violence. Consequently, the United Nations held a summit in 2000 where they announced commitments for women's and children's health and other initiatives against poverty, hunger and disease. This concluded with the adoption of a global action plan to achieve eight anti-poverty goals by 2015, the so called Millennium Development Goals (MDG) (United Nations, 2000). Sport has been denoted as a valuable tool to achieve these goals for its assumed positive psycho-social outcomes on the individual and community level. Catalyzed by the further lobbying for the use of sport by the United Nations (UN), in 2003 the 'Sport and Development' conference was held in Maggligen. This event was seen as "*the first step towards a better world through sport*" (United Nations, 2003). In addition, the UN declared 2005 as the "Year of Sport and Physical Education" in order to further advocate the so-called universal and social significance of sport. The UN's definition of sport is the following: *"All forms of physical activity that contribute to physical fitness, mental well-being and social interaction, such as play, recreation, organized or competitive sport and indigenous sports and games."* (United Nations, 2003) Another statement from UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace (2005) makes clear how sport is constructed by Western institutions, namely: *"Importantly, play, physical recreation and sport are all freely chosen activities undertaken for pleasure".* With this, sport has been defined as an acceptable and legitimate vehicle to work on the MDG's to achieve positive outcomes for development.

In debates on how sport can contribute, there has been a focus on the Millennium Development Goal three, gender. This goal is referred to as the right of women and girls to have equal opportunities in life without any gender-based discrimination. This basic human right is established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. It is also the subject of the UN's CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (United Nations, 1979). Equity between men and women is seen as a basic ingredient of development, yet

in many countries this is still not a reality as evidenced by, amongst others, the existing gender-based violence. "Hundreds were raped on Congo-Angola Border" is the headline that was announced to the world to confirm this fact (Gettleman, 2010). In harrowing detail it highlights that UN peacekeepers were nearby but could not prevent it from happening. The Economist has dedicated an article ("War's overlooked victims," 2011) to this brutal gender-based violence that is already known as inherent to war, but additionally now also occurring in post-conflict areas as an effect of the extreme instability. Women are referred to as the overlooked, silent victims of post-conflict where rape seems to become a customary evil.

Today, many sport-for-development programs exist in order to address this violence and promote women's rights and are usually initiated by grass-root organizations and financed by non-governmental organizations (NGO's). Women's empowerment is thereby seen as the key to enhance their possibilities and quality of life, as stated on UN policy level:

> *"Sport can be an important tool for social empowerment through skills and values learned, such as teamwork, negotiation, leadership, communication and respects for others . . . enjoy freedom of expression and movement and increase their self-esteem and confidence. Physical education can serve as a basis for 'positive embodiment' . . . requiring self-assertion and self-care which is the basis of a vigorous and satisfying sense of one's own body."* (United Nations, 2007).

Despite all the initiatives and practices, it has not been thoroughly assessed how sport makes a real contribution to the developmental goals or on gender equality in particular. We know little about the possibilities for change and real effectiveness of physical activities for girls or women within post-conflict, Low Income Countries. More specific, the mechanisms of *how* sports contribute to women's development or empowerment are left unmapped (Coalter, 2010a; Kay, 2009). However, a reasonable amount of Western research has been conducted that claims positive developmental outcomes for youth and girls. These also show a potential key role for the sport program coaches in the process of psycho-social development of girls and women.

Women's development & Sport

The fact that positive developmental outcomes through sport has been a well discussed topic in Western industrialized countries, is possibly due to the fact that sport is integrated in their societies. More specific, just as the UN definition suggests, sport is seen as a universal and neutral platform for several positive physical and psycho-social developmental outcomes (Giulianotti, 2004). For example outcomes that support a general positive youth development as part of their

socialization (Fraser-Thomas, Coté, & Deakin, 2005). Frequently mentioned skills that can be developed through sport are leadership, teamwork, fair play, dealing with win or loss and the regulation of emotions. Sport can in this perspective be seen as a place where education and socialization of life-skills can take place, with coaches in the role of socializers (Buisman, 2002; Goudas, Dermitzaki, Leondari, & Danish, 2006; Niks, 2009; Papacharisis, Goudas, Danish, & Theodorakis, 2005).

Self-esteem is one of the claimed outcomes that seems to be of particular importance to the positive development of women. Self-defense sports, like boxing and karate, are particularly seen as benevolent for women's self-esteem and self-assertiveness (Brecklin, 2008). The explanation is that there is quite a direct link with the main goals and the psychological, attitudinal and behavioral outcomes of the self-defense sports. By learning how to defend themselves, women gain knowledge of assertiveness, regulation of anxiety and perceived control. Moreover, it strengthens women's physical competence and coping versus avoidance behaviors (Brecklin, 2008). Coaches' strategies herein are experienced-based by letting women experiment with their control and power through role-play (Cummings, 1992). In line with the self-defense training outcomes is the 'sport protection hypothesis', as used in a study on USA college students (Fasting, Brackenridge, Miller, & Sabo, 2008). This hypothesis was based on the findings that women can become psychologically and physically strengthened through sport which makes them more resilient against sexual victimization. The study found some proof for the hypothesis, namely that athletic participation was associated with reduced incidence of reported sexual victimization. This is by no means a causal relation, though it indicates a correlation for which Brecklin and Ullman (2005) found empirical proof that supports it. A national sample of female college students were asked to fill in an anonymous survey on sexual assault and to add if they ever had any self-defense training. One result indicated that victims who have had training were more likely to fight back and could prevent the attack from further damaging them.

Not only individual or self-defense sports are assumed to encourage women's empowerment; team sports are seen as well as a potential site for positive psycho-social development and women's empowerment. They offer the possibility for a supportive peer network, internalizing positive group norms and positive identity development (Camiré & Trudel, 2010). Social character development can be achieved in all team sports where values such as teamwork, loyalty to the group and empathy are essential to being a team member (Camiré & Trudel, 2010). Pedersen and Seidman (2004) found that participation in team sports can increase levels of self-esteem in women and girls. They investigated the link between team sport

achievements in early adolescent and the perceived self-esteem in later adolescent years of girls in an at-risk situation. At-risk girls were those who are part of an ethnic minority and live in poor, urban areas. Additionally, adolescence was seen as a period of life wherein the self confidence and self-efficacy of girls declines. The results supported the fact that team sport elicits higher self-esteem in at-risk girls which subsequently had a long-term effect throughout adolescence. Why it is that (team) sports specifically carry a lot of potential for women's development is well discussed but not yet fully understood or supported by empirical evidence.

Social cognitive theories can provide an explanation for the processes that take place in team sport (Pedersen & Seidman, 2004). These theories emphasize the interrelatedness and transactional relationships between individuals and their environment. As a consequence, being part of a team can provide an environment in which these transactions and interrelatedness can occur. Another possibility is that team sport allows exposure to 'important others', such as peers and coaches, who can influence ones self-efficacy on evaluations positively through feedback, reinforcement and coach-guided reflections (Hellison, as cited in Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005). The impact of these important others can also be negative since sexual harassment and abuse occurs in the context of and by authority-led activity (Brackenridge & Fasting, 2002). Moreover, women are seen as particularly vulnerable within the coach-athlete relationship with regard to these risks (Fasting, Backenridge, & Walseth, 2002).

The previously cited Western-based studies agree that the coach plays an essential role in positive and negative developmental outcomes since he or she becomes a 'significant other' (Camiré & Trudel, 2010; Fraser-Thomas & Coté, 2009; Smith & Smoll, 1997). Most studies indicate that coaches can contribute to the moral and social development of their athletes by being proactive in explicating the link with sport (Camiré & Trudel, 2010). Second, coaches can support the transfer from learned life-skills on the field to off the field, something that does not occur by participating in sport itself (Gould, Collins, Lauer, & Chung, 2007). Furthermore, coaches can have influence on the perceptions of athletes by modeling (Fraser-Thomas & Coté, 2009; Smith & Smoll, 1997). As a role model, coaches can support the autonomy of their athletes which in turn stimulates the internalization of learned life-skills (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2007; Gallucci, De Voogt Van Lare, Yoon, & Boatright, 2010; Jones, 2006). However, few scholars have looked at the actual strategies and practices of *how* coaches try to reach positive developmental outcomes such as empowerment. Yet such understandings could give insight into the complex but meaningful process in the coach-athlete relationship and its possible impact on women's empowerment (Jones, 2007).

One reason for the lack of research in this area is that coaching is a complex, ongoing, social process (Cushion & Jones, 2006) in which many variables have an impact. This makes it very difficult to capture coaching in a positivist or quantitative way (Rodgers, Reade, & Hall, 2007). The use of an interpretive approach for such studies could be the more appropriate alternative (Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2006). As Potrac et al. (2002) emphasizes, investigating the individual interpretations and experiences of coaches can enhance the insights into how and why coaches make sense of given strategy guidelines. Furthermore, a focus on female coaches could yield insight into the empowerment process and the role gender plays since female coaches have received relatively little attention in such research. Norman (2010) has argued that gender is a discriminatory issue in the world of coaches. He assumes that women may have a different perspective on the coaching process of young women within their community compared to their male counterparts who currently dominate policies and curricula development.

Post-conflict context & Sport

The aforementioned Western research gives some indication of the value of sport for young women and the role of coaches herein. The extrapolation of these results and insights into post-conflict developing countries seems inappropriate since they are based on Western values and definitions of adolescence, empowerment, gender and sport. These may not be applicable in contexts where the social-economical, political and cultural realities substantially differ from the West, especially in post-conflict areas (Ansell, 2005). Women living in these countries face different challenges compared to women and girls in Western, industrial high-income countries. First of all, women in post-conflict countries have to cope with structural gender-based violence, as Heise et al. (2002) put it:

> *"Violence against women is the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights*
> *violation in the world. It also is a profound health problem, sapping women's energy,*
> *compromising their physical health, and eroding their self-esteem. Women with a*
> *history of physical or sexual abuse are also at increased risk for unintended*
> *pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and adverse pregnancy outcomes." (p. 1)*

This violence can be explained by factors such as the cultural ideology, social position of women in the community and/or the lack of a rights-enabling environment as a result of war and poverty (Pavlish & Ho, 2009). In developing countries 'feminization of poverty' plays a significant role since women have less opportunities or access to resources compared to men (Burnett, 2002). With the knowledge that most wars in the world currently take place in

developing countries (UNHCR, 2006), women from post-conflict areas are considered to be in a setting of extreme disadvantage (Sideris, 2003).

Second, most post-conflict countries are patriarchally organized. As a consequence, women face a great deal of gender inequality in all aspects of life, mostly in decision making and property rights (Felker, 2010). Access to all sorts of resources and public services is also characterized by gender inequity. Sport, as a public resource, is likewise seen as exclusively designed for men and boys and therefore not accessible to women (Huggins & Randell, 2007). Based on evidence from South Africa, Burnett (2002) claims that sport is significantly gendered. There is a lack of feminist research on gender issues in sport and women are not represented or involved in the sport sector on any level. This gender discourse implies that sport has a strong link with masculinity and is therefore seen as inappropriate for women. Through long-established traditions that are rooted within African communities, women are portrayed as weak and less physically capable of doing any kind of physical activity. Additionally, they are condemned to do domestic chores all day which restricts them from participating (Ansell, 2005). Marxist feminists attribute this inequality to the reproductive role of women as opposed to the productive role of men (Burnett, 2002). Western interventions that try to eradicate gender inequality fall short because they do not connect to local practices. They encounter resistance, even from the women themselves. This resistance suggests that discriminatory practices are constructions of a community and are not so easy to eliminate (Smet, 2009). Therefore, an intervention can only be effective when sport leaders thoroughly understand the gender discourse within the context of post-conflict areas (Smet, 2009).

This gender/power discourse in sport is also historically rooted in Western civilization. In the 19th century this reached a peak, whereby women's bodies were seen as distinct from their male counterparts and needed to be protected from high levels of activity for health reasons. This medicalized view of humanity, with its knowledge and high status in society, constrained women from doing sports (Mewett, 2003). This link between power and knowledge is well described by Foucault (as cited in Wagg, Brick, Wheaton, & Caudwell, 2009) who defines the use of power through a body of knowledge to legitimize certain beliefs and practices which can result in highly conformable structures in societies. Later in time, in the 20th century, second wave Western feminists still viewed sport as a patriarchal site in which male values and attributions dominated the sport setting (Wagg et al., 2009). This puts women in the role of victim and intruders within a male territory. Sports

organizations are for this reason still accused of discriminating against women: *"While women are underrepresented in leading positions, in mass-media and in high performance sport"* (Pfister, as cited in Hackl, 2009, p. 29).

However, some nuances can be made about gender inequality in sports when women's agency is taken into consideration (Mewett, 2003). The arena of sport could also be seen as one full of opportunities poised to challenge these dominant discourses on gender in sport. Harris (as cited in Hackl, 2009) argues that "*Women in sport are both a social reality and a social anomaly. This results in confusion with regard to roles and perceptions of women in sport*" (p. 29). This means that the position of women can be negotiated within the realm of sports. Mewett (2003) describes how female athletes in Western countries gradually constructed new realities and discourses around their bodies by being physically active in public. However, this fight against patriarchal constructs can also have negative effects on the self-evaluation of athletes due to the pressure of existing discourses of acceptable femininity in a community (Cockburn & Clarke, 2002). The same can be said about female coaches in their typically male-dominated profession which quite often entails unequal attitudes on race, disability and gender (Donnelly, 2011). They thus have to negotiate gender roles and power discourse in the sport sector. Even in Western societies their appearance is still not a normality; therefore female coaches have to cope with existing masculine stereotypes (Norman, 2010). Since most coaches of gender oriented sport-for-development programs in post-conflict areas are young African women, it is assumed that they like no other have to challenge the gender discourse within their community (Women Win, 2009).

Sport-for-Development & Complexity

The sport-for-development movement builds on the aforementioned power/gender discourses first of all by using sport to empower individual women and second to challenge community beliefs on gender, violence and inequality in post-conflict countries. A further look into the sport-for-development sector or movement is necessary to understand the organization and structures on which this research project could make a complement. There is no universal definition for the movement, however Coalter (2010a) speaks of a continuum where sport is defined somewhere between goal and means for development in the Global South. Moreover, Kidd (2008) classifies three approaches that underpin the activities of sport-for-development programs that shift between needs-based and rights-based; 1) the

traditional sports infrastructure-focused approach, 2) the humanitarian aid assistance approach and 3) the most recently defined sport-for-development-and-peace (hereafter SDP) approach. This research focus specifically on the SDP approach because it is the most prevalent and the most applicable to this study.

Descriptions of SDP programs and UN statements claim women's empowerment as the overall desired outcome, as already described (United Nations, 2007). The previously mentioned UN definition is based on the assumption that by building assets through sport, women can achieve a violent-free life full of future possibilities. Self-efficacy, self-esteem and positive embodiment are lauded as the empowerment mechanisms that can assess the impact of the sport programs on girls and women in the Global South (Brady, 2005). However, I agree with Franzblau and Moore's (2001) critique of Bandura's self-efficacy theory: "*This conception depoliticizes social mechanisms of control, internalizing them within individual cognitive processes . . . which perpetuates blaming the victim approach to social problems*" (p. 1). A focus on self-efficacy or on self esteem as goal of a program may reinforce inequality by ignoring where the power lies in post-conflict countries. Such power is usually not in the hands of the women who lack access to resources to empower themselves. Constructs of empowerment such as self-efficacy may thus be products of the power discourse, since their use implies that women lack power and are less able to cope (Banyard, & Graham-Bermann, 1993). Coalter (2010b) warns us about a similar power/race reproduction in what he calls the 'deficit' approach in sport-for-development. This implies that women are dis-empowered and positioned on a clinical range of abnormal development. Banyard and Graham-Bermann (1993) plead therefore for a sensitivity of these power inequities in race, class and gender in the design of women's services. By doing that, the actual coping mechanisms and power can be truly understood within the context of post-conflict areas.

Another critique of the empowerment mechanisms comes from Coalter (2010b) in his impact study of several sport-for-development programs. There was no significant or consequent sport effect found on the self-efficacy-based empowerment variables. Coalter suggested that this lack of effect could be caused by the choice of using these particularly Western-based variables. This problem of measuring impact is typical for the sport-for-development movement and it is accused of lacking evidence of its effectiveness (Nicholls, Giles, & Sethna, 2010). The movement does not seem to invest in research and has difficulties finding methods that result in credible practice-based evidence (Levermore,

2008). This presents a small glimpse of the complexity of the sector on which it is criticized, mostly written from a critical feminist perspective (Darnell, 2007; Hayhurst, Wilson, & Frisby, 2010; Nicholls et al., 2010).

The second critique is that the SDP sector reproduces neo-colonial or imperialistic attitudes in its organization (Nicholls et al., 2010). Again, Foucault's (as cited in Wagg et al., 2009) power discourse is applicable, whereby the West is accused of labeling themselves as 'knowers' who can bring about change and development to the 'helpless' South. This way, Western knowledge and values on development and women determine the ideology and desired outcomes for the communities in the South. Darnell (2007; 2010a; 2010b) showed that this colonial thinking is as well reproduced in the narratives of volunteers who are sent from the West to the South. However, the existence of some power relations is inevitably felt by the inherent donor-recipient relationship that creates a form of dependency. Besides that, sport-for-development NGO's have to be accountable for their funders and need to compete for its grants. Through new media strategies they have to put themselves on the map to legitimize and make their work even possible (Wilson & Hayhurst, 2009). These methods are criticized for reproducing *"neo-liberal, market-driven approaches to dealing with social problems"* (Wilson & Hayhurst, 2009, p. 1). Wilson & Hayhurst question the actual effective contribution and whether the Global South will at all benefit from it since the use of Western methodologies can polarize instead of establish equivalent knowledge. Hayhurst et al. (2010) also ask to what extent sustainability of real change (from the inside) can be reached in a situation where sport-for-development does not challenge these power relations.

Reproduction of the neo-colonial power discourse in the SDP sector is furthermore visible in the way research is done by mainly Western academics. Kay (2009) points to the inherent risks of privileging quantitative, positivist forms of building knowledge. With this method, the local context within its cultural, social, economical and political reality can be overlooked. The use of quantitative indicators tends to ignore the contextual mechanisms of sport and the impact of it on women and their communities (Kay, 2009). Nor can community impact or even wider peace-building impact on societies be claimed (Coalter, 2010b). Nicholls et al. (2010) found evidence of this neo-colonial power in their discourse analysis of interviews with mostly female, African grass-roots practitioners. The women profess that they feel ignored at a research and policy development level. They also believe that they are treated unequally due to the non-transparent communication of donors. They say there has not been enough consultation or dialogue. The conclusion of Nicholls et al. (2010) is that the

lack of evidence for sport-for-development can be explained by the subjugation of local knowledge. They claim that if real change is to occur then knowledge needs to be co-produced. Therefore local knowledge has to be recognized as valuable and essential for gaining evidence for the sport-for-development movement.

Although the intentions of SDP's theory of change are beyond a doubt very well situated to achieve an enabling situation for women's rights, there seems to be a lot of complexities that are left unsolved. It questions if there is any benevolence at the 'receiving end' and subsequently sustainability of the programs (Levermore, 2008). To overcome this there is a need to look for alternatives to our Western methodologies and terminology, or at least implement adaptations that represent local reality (Kay, 2009). A possible answer comes from Fraser's et al. (2005) ecological perspective in which he calls for the need for sustainability in developmental work. They criticize top-down practices whereby donor-driven quantifiable indicators provoke a mismatch by ignoring local relevancy: *"...this top-down process may alienate local community members and fail to capture locally important factors."* (Fraser et al., 2005, p. 115). They conclude that sustainability will only occur if indicators come from using empowering bottom-up methods, whereby local voices take the lead from a sense of ownership. Incentives for alternatives to the terminology within sport-for-development have not yet been made, since the mechanisms of the sport aspect are still not understood or defined (Levermore, 2008). Qualitative research and data collection, as Kay (2009) says, could give the opportunity to understand complex social processes, such as women's empowerment in the sport programs. One way to understand what is happening on the playing field that contributes to women's empowerment is to zoom in at micro-level on the coach-athlete relationship (Jones, 2007; Potrac et al., 2002). An alternative terminology could arise from the coaches themselves, deduced from how they give meaning to the process of empowerment and its mechanisms. Also, valuing grass-root practices and voices as subject for research is in line with what Nicholls et al. (2010) claims is the solution for filling the gap of evidence in the sport-for-development sector.

Theoretical framework

As said, the positivistic approach that dominates the sport-for-development research, as well as the research on the impact of sports and coaching, requires an alternative theoretical framework. Interpretivism offers this by providing an epistemology that assumes 'truth' is not fixed but is a construction of factors in context and time. Social phenomena cannot be captured in causal

relations since it is dynamic and subjective, constructed through human interaction (Wagg et al., 2009, p. 149). This research project uses this philosophical approach as well as the related post-structuralism that likewise exists as a reaction to positivistic perceptions of social science. Post-structuralists *"claim that the constituent elements of a 'sign'- the 'signifier' and the 'signified'- are independent of each other"* (Wagg et al., 2009, p. 39). In sum, meaning or truth is constructed through interaction and no absolute truth can exist. This research project used a theory that provides an arena to explore the actual context of women within sport programs through the eyes of the coaches, namely Weick's (1995) 'sensemaking*'*.

Weick (1995) first introduced the concept of sensemaking in organizational studies. Now it is widely used to indicate the process of individuals making sense of their situation: *"sensemaking involves the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing"* (Weick, Sutcliffe, & Obstfeld, 2005, p. 1). sensemaking can be defined as the connection between a cue and a frame that together form the guidance for acting. This implies three elements, namely a frame that is derived from past experiences, a cue or present experience and the connection between those that translates meaning; putting the cue in a frame (Weick, 1995, p. 111). Furthermore, the process of sensemaking contains seven characteristics, called properties (see table 1). This distinguishes sensemaking from other forms of explanatory constructions like interpretation or attribution (Weick, 1995, p. 17). In existing research on Western coaches, sensemaking has been used as a frame for interviews on their lived experiences and socialization *"to access their retrospective rationalizations of the team's performance and to better understand the intentional change processes that they may be facilitating"* (Smith, 2009, p. 204). Smith uses a sensemaking approach to define coaches as change agents who determine their strategies on their construction of meaning; the way they make sense. Related is the process of sense giving in which coaches try to (de)construct or influence the meanings of their athletes. I have applied this sensemaking frame and its seven properties to the specific context of sport and its coaches.

Table 1: The seven properties of sensemaking (Weick, 1995).

1. Grounded in identity construction	This property assumes that the identity of coaches as coaches is in part constructed through interaction with their athletes (as well as with other coaches, programme directors and all those involved in sport programs). The descriptions of coaches of their role therefore will represent at the same time their identity.
2. Retrospective	It is assumed that people rationalize and give meaning at hindsight, by the "meaningful lived experience" (Schutz, 1967; cited form Weick, 1995, p. 24). This assumes therefore that coaches use their socialization, training and education and all other forms of experience to determine

	their practices.
3. Enactive of sensible environments	This property assumes that coaches are not passive recipients of the environment. Instead their agency determine the construction of 'truth' and meaning as well. Coaches self-evaluations, interpretations and reflection influences their strategies and practices.
4. Social	The role of coaches depends on their interactions and intersubjectivity of other parties, such as coach peers, program administrators, community leaders, and the athletes. This variety in social interactions means that constructions/meanings may vary per coach.
5. Ongoing	sensemaking is a continuous process that never starts or stops as the reality has a continuous flow of actions. When this flow is interrupted due to difficult, uncertain, unexpected or new situations, coaches sensemaking becomes even more evident.
6. Focused on and by extracted cues	Coaches make sense of specifically the cues that they extract or initially notice. What cue gets extracted depends on the frames of coaches. Knowledge of the process by which coaches extract cues gives insight in how they construct these strategies as opposed to solely knowing the strategies as a product.
7. Drive by plausibility rather than accuracy	Coaches will explain their strategies and role on what works in a pragmatic, relative way. The narratives on the justification of their practices gives insight in how they reach plausibility. Stories are in that sense indicative 'templates' for their sensemaking.

The use of sensemaking as the theoretical framework fits with the mentioned interpretative and power sensitive approach and moreover, it can be used to fill the mentioned gaps in the SDP research. sensemaking can furthermore contribute to a decolonized way of research since it does not offer a fixed frame or perspective. Instead, it provides a set of tools for an exploratory in-depth and as well empowering way of doing research (Weick, 1995). Through its emphasis on interpretative, dynamic and continuous character of sensemaking, this frame creates more flexibility to understand the complex social and change process of empowerment through coaching (Smith, 2009). It can offer a deeper understanding of what coaches say they do and give meaning to the empowerment of women through their practices and strategies (Potrac et al., 2002). And also, what precedes this, how do they gain these strategies and on which beliefs, knowledge, experience and values are the practices based (Nash, Sproule, & Horton, 2008). This qualitative research could possibly result in new terminology of the process of women's empowerment in the post-conflict sport programs, derived from the voices of the grass-root practitioners (Nicholls et al., 2010). Last, this bottom-up or empowering interpretative, qualitative method can subsequently empower the coaches as well, which can contribute to a sense of ownership of the programs and thus to a higher level of sustainability (Fraser et al., 2005).

Research Question

However, the role of coaches, let alone female coaches, in the sport-for development movement

seems to receive little attention, even though they are the actual executors of the program and thus a very vital link between the program goals and desired outcomes. What happens on this implementation level is not well described in program descriptions, nor has it been a subject of research. Thus, how the process of women's empowerment looks and how it is encouraged on the sports field is yet unclear. This implicit knowledge is in the minds of the coaches, who are therefore the most valuable source for research. This research project therefore tried to strengthen coaches' voices by exploring how female African coaches make sense of their role and practices. It also examines how they have learned this in their years of working with young women in post-conflict areas who have experienced gender-based violence or other forms of inequity. The goal is to tell the stories of these coaches as well as to look for sensemaking patterns in their answers to gain a better understanding of the empowerment process in post-conflict areas.

This gives rise to the empirical part of the research project, based on the following research question: *"How do female African coaches in post-conflict areas make sense of womens' empowerment through their experiences and practices?"* There were three sub-questions that structured the data collection: 1) How do they frame their coaching philosophy? 2) How do they make sense of empowerment through sport? 3) How do they make sense of their role and practices in the empowerment process? These three questions engender narratives on *why* they do what they do and *how* they determine their practices on implementing the program objectives linked to gender inequity and *what* the translation is into concrete empowerment strategies.

Method

This research project has used a relatively new internet-based method of qualitative research, called online asynchronous in-depth interviewing. This method is *"semi-structured in nature and involves multiple e-mail exchanges . . . over an extended period of time"* (Meho, 2006, p. 1284). It is known for its advantages that make it as valid as other forms of in-depth interviewing, such as face-to-face or through telephone. It allows researchers to get in contact with individuals in hard–to-capture contexts, due to geographical distances or political sensitivity in war zones (Meho & Tibbo, 2003). Furthermore, communication can be done in own time and place which makes it time efficient for both interviewer and interviewees. It is empowering for participants as well, since the power or control over the interview process is shared. The unique advantage is the anonymous character of e-mail together with the time to over-think and edit the answers which subsequently increases the level of self-disclosure. Therefore it is assumed that one gets closer to

the actual sensemaking of participants, demonstrated by the fact that e-mail interviewees provide *"more reflectively dense accounts than their face-to-face counterparts"* (Meho, 2006, p. 1291).

In sum, it fits with the theoretical framework of this research project through its interactive, empowering way of revealing coaches experiences, memories and thoughts, produced in own chosen time, place and words. Of course there are limitations for this method as well, for example the access to internet, level of literacy, internet costs, long time frame, high drop-out rates, loss of visual and non-verbal cues and also the dependence on individual skills of reflection and self-explanation. Some of the limitations can be compensated, for example, the loss of non-verbal cues by using abbreviations and emoticons or capitulation and underlining. Others need to be taken into account as factors that possibly lower the quantity and quality of the data. For two of the six participants not only email dialogues were conducted since they were in the Netherlands at the time of writing this research project. They were additionally interviewed face to face at their place of residence. I promised anonymity and confidentiality. They are identified in the results and text only by a letter that cannot be traced back to them.

Context & Participants

I conducted this research within the context of an internship at Women Win, a women's rights organization that envisions sport as a vehicle to empower women in the 'Global South' (Women Win, 2009). Women Win supports sport-for-development programs around the world that address women's' rights through sport in, amongst others, post-conflict countries. I got connected with their program partners who provided me the participants for this research. For this research it was essential to get in contact with the female coaches since they are the actual executors of the sport programs. These coaches are the local voices who represent the actual reality which are, as already stated, needed to bridge the evidence gap of the sport-for-development movement (Nicholls et al., 2010). The assumption was that these coaches give sense in the field as to how they make sense of the empowerment process. In line with Fraser's et al. (2005) bottom-up approach to reach sustainability, this also contributes to a decolonization of the sport-for-development research. Lastly, these women negotiate the gender discourse within their patriarchal community by operating in a male dominated sector and corresponding position.

All six participants were female, African, football coaches of sport-for-development programs in post-conflict areas with at least 2 years of experience. I used a convenient sampling because of limited program partners in post-conflict countries with subsequently limited number of coaches that partners could propose for participation. Eventually I got connected with one

coach from both Liberia and Sierra Leone and additionally two coaches from both Kenya and Rwanda, six in total. The selection was based on coaches' access to internet, level of 'online literacy' and their ability to communicate in either English or French. The proposed coaches that met the selection criteria received an introduction e-mail with a one-pager of the research, the informed consent form with all the details of the purpose and process of the research, the topic list and some of my background information that pointed out my own relatedness, involvement and affinity with the subject (see appendices I, II, III). Only after the coaches had sent back the signed informed consent form, which also included the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality of all the gathered data, the e-mail interviewing could start.

The two coaches who were interviewed face to face in the Netherlands were receiving training to become 'world coach(es)', a program of the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB) that reaches out to coaches from developing countries to train them in life-skill based coaching. This makes them different in the procedure of interviewing but as well in their educational background. One other coach received training abroad, in Germany. This was a technical course from which she derived her UEFA license. The other three coaches did not have any training abroad but were educated in their own country and/or community, ranging from a 2 week workshop to a 1 year program at the local University.

Instrument & Procedure

Half structured interviews, based on a constructed topic list, were conducted through e-mail from mid-February until the end of May. The first e-mail was the same for every participant and included some general structured questions on the coaches' background information. Furthermore it gave an introduction of the three main topics that were derived directly from the research sub-questions. From there on, every online dialogue went differently, based on the unique input of the given answers. All the data was kept confidential by saving the e-mail conversations on my personal computer. Data was not shared with anyone else during the whole process. The names of coaches and other identifying information were transcribed into codes to assure anonymity.

The topic list was constructed from the literature that is presented in this research project and covers as well the three sub-questions. The main topics, or constructs, that were addressed were coaches' philosophy, definitions, learning processes, meanings and interpretations, decision making and last, their concrete strategies. Weick's (1995) sensemaking was used as the theoretical frame for the constructs to support the underlying question of *"How are meanings and artifacts produced and reproduced in complex nets of collective action?"* (Czarniawska-Joerges, as cited in

Weick, 1995, p. 172). Weick's properties were represented in the topics and thus interwoven in the e-mail conversations. The exploratory character of the in-depth e-mail interviewing resulted in a flexible and dynamic method which produced more of a cyclic process of gathering data.

The email dialogues with the coaches were imported into MAXQDA, software for analyzing data for qualitative or mixed methods research. Through coding and weighing quotes by their value of content richness, whether it contained sensemaking aspects, constructions of the narratives were identified and sensemaking was uncovered. The challenge was to go a step further than just the explicit information that the quotes held, but instead look for underlying meanings and constructs. This meant questioning the obvious for its content and meanings and especially being mindful of the frames that form the sensemaking which could color my interpretation as a researcher or even the extraction of certain cues within the data in the first place. The process was therefore circular, starting by coding and analyzing the quotes that addressed coaches' frame and the perception of their role. Second, the data was analyzed with a focus on coaches' constructed definitions of the two central terminologies, namely, the empowerment process and sport as a tool. Thereafter, propositions were formulated to structure the data, for example all quotes that supported 'coaches use sport to challenge physical boundaries' were put together. This process resulted in more implicit interpretative information on how coaches make sense of their experiences as the executors of the sport programs.

Results

All the coaches stated that they were very pleased to be part of this research and more importantly that they were able to share experiences from their perspectives. The delivered data was very rich and valuable, not exclusively or limited for purposes as presented in this research project. The results are presented in two parts. The first is an account of how coaches make sense of empowerment through their lived experiences. The second is how coaches subsequently conceptualize the empowerment process of their athletes through their practices and strategies.

1. Coaches experiences & empowerment

Coaches' frame
All interviewed coaches claim to act based on their lived experiences. The coaches are auto-didactic in their approach. They were either lacking in extensive training or had to rely on personal

experiences. Or even when they were trained formally, they just placed more value on the informal lessons of past experiences. *"You have learned these maybe through university, but we learned it through experience, practically . . . The more we do it the more we learn also."(B)* For example, when asked about their knowledge sources, the two coaches who were trained in the Netherlands referred consistently to their experiences as being part of a community sports program when they were young. *"Yeah, and for us we are advantaged, because we know what we have to do with the girls because of our background. We already learned it at MYSA."(A)* Another coach argued that reading manuals and having a high formal education was most essential for forming a coach, but in later descriptions of her becoming a coach, she tended to refer retrospectively to informal learning experiences.

> *"I had had the opportunity to attend coaching workshops, and as captain of my team, I at times take over my team training when the coach is away. Moreover, I as a player; I also use my experience when I coach as a player."(D)*

Coaches stated that their social-economical background in the context of living in a post-conflict community has been an important factor in shaping their frames. They themselves were once young women growing up in the same or similar reality of the athletes they train now. Coaches have transcended this reality and became economically independent through sport.

> *" . . . for me being poor is like a challenge, it is just a challenge. And, like in the slum area, this is where you find a lot of girls and boys going through this puberty stage and going through these things* [poverty and violence]*, so for me that is a learning process for both of us because when I am talking to that girl and showing her the way I am putting it to practice;, what I learned about life."(B)*

Furthermore, they say their socialization played a distinctive role in forming their coaches philosophy, for example, how they were raised by parents and other important others in the community.

> *" . . . we grew up in the slum; we faced these challenges which turned into learning experience. I personally growing up, I couldn't talk about things to my mother through the stages of poverty and life skills in general, that is normal in our society."(B)*

When asked about their philosophy, they explicitly addressed the gender and power discourses they experienced within their community. They rely on what they see happening within their community right now, but also on what they have experienced themselves as a girl.

> *"Somehow, girls are getting neglected in our communities. Because, ok, growing up as a child, my place was in the kitchen with my mother. Helping or doing other chores. Fathers*

and brother's don't do anything . . . it's all a girls duty that's why it has been challenging for a girl to be accepted in the world of sports especially football since its seen as a man's game."(A)

The coaches want to challenge these community gender discourses to increase the value of women as a collective.

"In our post conflict Sierra Leone, girls and women face a lot of major issues that is worth mentioning. In the first instance, our cultural and traditional beliefs and practices and gender stereotypes of the abilities of our women and girls serves as a limitation to them rising up and exhibiting their God given talents and potentials."(H)

Other experiences that seem to form the frame of reference for the coaches are their experiences with coaching, both as being coached and as being a coach themselves. First of all, being a former athlete and/or to have been part of a sports program in their youth seems to have influenced their frame of wanting to become a coach. *"Being a member of* [name program] *contributed much for me to like and become a coach. I was also motivated by colleagues who did sports at university and also watching football matches have incited me to like coaching."(S)* Second, the coaches also refer to their own role models from their experience of being under the supervision of a coach and how beliefs and knowledge were instilled by their examples. *"I was actually influenced along the way by my former physical education teacher and coach. Her style of imparting sports training to me was very remarkable, and full of motivation and inspiration to me."(H)* Another coach told in detail what strategies she had learned from her trainer and how it formed her as a coach nowadays *"He led me well and I should do just that".(A)* Last, as a coach of a women's team, the coaches value the coaching sessions they have with their athletes. The coaches emphasize that athletes learn by doing so the more sessions they get, the better they become. This gives insight into how the coaches give meaning to their retrospective learning processes.

"It is rewarding dealing with athletes as a coach because you learn from them new life experience while you give them basic training. These players come from different backgrounds and you have the opportunity listen to their stories to be able to deal with their situation and make up your experience as well."(D)

Coaches role

Descriptions on how coaches exactly make sense of their role to stimulate the empowerment process are rather scarce in the interviews and quite unilateral. *"Well, I always encourage them to* [play] *the game by giving examples of people who have played soccer and became successful and*

also tell them about my own success, etc."(D) Being visible as an example, building good relationships with their athletes and as well participating on the field are the three mentioned strategies.

> *"Besides building personal relationship, we all play together and I participate in the practice as a key point for the drill so they will know that I am not just giving them impossible and difficult drills. I myself am involved."(D)*

Or, as another coach describes: *"They see you as the mentor, be a strong leader. They see you as the role model, guide them well and set that good example for them to follow."(B)* Some of the coaches make sense of this relationship as ongoing, for it needs to happen off the field as well since it is crucial for the performance of their athletes.

> *"As a trainer, if you can achieve that on the field, when you can set a good example for them on the field, than they feel comfortable with you off the field as well. Show interest not only in the player but the person. The happier your players are off the field the happier they will be on the field, and this way they will perform."(A)*

This demonstrates the didactic approach undertaken by certain coaches, however an explicit preference for a collective approach is discussed by all coaches *"...the one who can build up cooperative group relations to accomplish the team's objectives".(S)* In contrast, the coaches were clear about the fact that they see themselves as the role-model or the example for young women in their community.

> *"I have participated in international women football competitions and you find that most of the women's teams are being run by women, with this, I have been inspired to be a coach to serve as role model for other young women in my community."(D)*

Based on their lived experiences they have decided to become a coach to reach out to the women and show them the way to survive and progress in life. *". . . I said that I cannot give it up, so, I decided myself to be oriented in coaching so that I can get a chance to meet young women and help them to develop their potential as well."(H)* Coaches refer to their own personal decisions and additional struggles within the reality of everyday life when growing up. *"Like in my case, my parent did* [not] *spend any money for my high school and even in college, it is through sports I am being sponsored."(D)* Through sport they have become empowered, as they have enjoyed the benefits of being a good athlete themselves.

> *"My drive to coach is grounded in the fact that I needed to help women and girls . . . As a past record holder in sprinting, I thought I could reach out to more women and girls by coaching them in the various sporting skills."(H)*

It is evidenced through their narratives that the coaches push themselves to their physical limits and are persistent in their performances. Therewith evidencing the sensemaking through their constructed identity. *"I make sense of my role as a model and hence would want others to imbibe in them the culture of self discipline, dedication to achieve success and become models in the society and communities."(H)* Also mentioned is how the coaches give meaning to women's added value within the community and thus raising their collective socio-economical status. As one coach puts it: *"I need to show the Rwandese that the women can do everything, can do the same as men."(G)* Lastly, coaches give meaning to their role as adding value to women's economic independence. *"I am important to them in that I give them football skills which help them in their life because they get school fees through football* [or] *else they can become the professional* [paid] *players in future."(G)*

Coaches see themselves furthermore as agents of change within their community. They empower and challenge the gender stereotypes of women in the realm of sports. Most of all they create a safe space where women can come together and play the game.

> *"I was born with the talent, just as that talented boy in the neighborhood. This makes me eligible to play the game and be part of a team as I get the chance to nurture my talent . . . The same goes to that young girls who's talented, motivated and wants to play, I let her play."(B)*

Furthermore, they facilitate the development of a variety of skills that enhance women's agency. But they do not feel they have the power to change every girl in every situation.

> *" . . . when a girl already has the idea in their head to become a commercial sex worker, then it is not easy to make her stop because you have no option for her and you cannot make her stop on an empty stomach. She needs to put bread on her table, a meal to share with her family at the end of the day."(A)*

Poverty and gender-based violence is something that they see as out of their control and thus limits their role in stimulating empowerment.

> *"But then there is also the government that has to come and do somethings with rules. If a girl gets raped justice must be served, the rapist must face the law and be prosecuted. That is a big problem still. To that extend, we cannot do anything much, we need the governments help. Sometimes the rapist is even a policeman or even the father. That for me I will never understand."(B)*

The lack of good governance is one of their main concerns; in this regard coaches negotiate and challenge traditional practices and politics within their community.

"Again, there is the issue of lack of women and girls interest and participation of women in politics and major decision making processes, due partly to gender disparity and gender stereotype. There also strong traditional norms and customs. All these challenges require a sustainable and effective change at all levels...Again there exists the issue of policies that are obsolete and outdated."(H)

Resume

Explored now is coaches' frame and how cues get extracted to make sense of coaching and empowerment. It is clear that coaches rationalize and give meaning at hindsight, retrospectively, as a result of growing up in their communities. They draw mostly from informal learning and education, lived experiences from being part of the community, being a former athlete and last, of being a coach since several years. Their frame though, is in a continuous development by the simple fact that new experiences are gained again every day. Coaches' sensemaking is in essence a continuous process of constructing meaning from putting cues of things they see happening in the field or community in their frame of all past experiences.

In conclusion, the interviewed female coaches draw from a very rich source of diverse lived experiences, mostly from growing up as a member of the community and being a good athlete when they were young. The results show that coaches make sense of empowerment through sport very pragmatically based on their frames as the ones who are the living examples of actually being empowered through sport. First of all, coaches state that sport in itself can bring women further in life since it gave coaches economic independence. Second, through sport the coaches got physically stronger so they could cope better with their daily realities to survive. Third, a multiplicity of skills and strategies in- and outside the field are seen as necessary to challenge the existing power/gender discourses. And last, coaches believe that sport adds value to women as a collective within their communities, because together they are stronger.

2. Conceptualization of Empowerment

Economic independence

Already indirectly revealed in coaches' definition of empowerment is the idea that sport is seen as a goal in itself. Sport is a vehicle for development since it offers women the power to be independent and survive in life. *"Sports participation is important as it is being used as a gate way for their future. Through sports players can earn scholarships to go to school."(D)* Therefore, the

ability to play sports on a high level and have a dedication to achieve success is meaningful to get the women further in life. *"The talents of women and girls when utilized can be exhibited and showcased. And such talents, if harnessed, will be most beneficial to these women and girls."(H)* As a logic consequence, the training sessions are focused on the sport itself, to achieve a high level of performance, without specific strategies on social themes for example. *"I have not learned of any special drill for design for anyone who has been affected by gender-based violence."(D)*

The main finding regarding how coaches construct empowerment, is that they all implicitly refer to a pragmatic way of defining the concept. Empowerment is conceptualized, amongst other things, as being productive in an economical way. One coach puts it in the context of the gender discourse within their community. *"I would like to promote gender equality through football by showing the communities how football can be a source of income or profession job for their girls."(G)* Furthermore, the pragmatic added value was mentioned with regard to their socio-economical status, mostly through education, which would give women the power to be self-sufficient within their communities. "*I motivate girls who dropped out of school to come back to school and I motivate women to be self dependent by searching out what they can do in order to survive."(S)*

Physically strong

Coaches often refer to physical strength and power in their strategies which gives the indication that coaches construct empowerment quite tangibly. The meanings that underlie this are evidenced by their descriptions, whereby pushing physical boundaries and being tough and persistent to get technically further are recurrent. "*Empowerment in this context refers to building the physical strength of the women and girls trained. As you are aware there are very vast strength differences between men and women."(G)* In the same vein with pushing boundaries are the performance-based statements that the coaches make in which disciplining the body is one of the issues.

> *"So through the game and our trainings we like to give them the chance and stimulate or show them, that if they try they can make it, just push up push up and push up. If we can empower them to this level* [of performance]*, I believe that a lot of girls behind us can also get to this level or even higher than us."(B)*

Lastly, survival is mentioned as one of the meanings underlying their definition of this physical aspect of empowerment. As one coach described it with regard to gender-based violence, one of the daily realities their athletes have to face:

". . . women and girls in post conflict Sierra Leone community, are at great risk of been
physically brutalized. Accordingly, because of this physical disparities between men and
women, I tend to use coaching in sports to build their muscles, speed, and confidence,
which invariably can become effective for their empowerment . . ."(H)

Therefore, the main finding here is that the coaches focus on the actual sport skills, the technical aspects of sport. In their descriptions of their strategies and practices they say this very explicitly. *"I focus on physical condition, techniques & tactics and coordination in my athletes. The women need the same as with the men need."(G)* This is in line with what was said about how physical strength is seen as one of their empowerment strategies. The technical training contributes to this objective. *"I teach physical fitness besides playing the ball because when you are fit you can do a lot of things beside football."(D)*

Multiplicity of skills

All of the coaches use the word empowerment when describing their objectives as a coach; some see it as the predominant process but others see it as being one of a broader spectrum of life skills. *"I also train these women and girls in various life skills such as reproductive health, HIV/AIDS best practices skills, hygiene, women empowerment and environmental issues."(H)* These life skills are not aimed at enhancing specific moral or social development, but much more on a broad range of practical survival skills. More specifically, all coaches refer to skills that are needed to enhance the opportunities to survive within a context of poverty, disease and violence: *". . . through the game we address various life skills affecting us, and other young girls in our daily lives towards keeping off the streets and leading healthy lives."(A)* This demonstrates that the coaches make sense of life-skills in line with and contributing to their pragmatic definition of empowerment.

"In addition to coaching them football they are also thought to know their rights and how
to prevent themselves from being sexually abuse. They are also counsel to help them forget
about bad things that happened to them in the past."(D)

The multiplicity of skills on offer seems to be key to their construction of empowerment, such as practical crafts, health literacy, economic skills and of course the sport and coaching skills.

Overall there is a very clear distinction to be made between the two coaches who have received the training in the Netherlands and those who have not. The coaches who did receive the Dutch training describe life-skills as being an integrated aspect of their training-sessions.

" . . . discuss a topic of your choice with players on life skills linking it with the game and just
to make sure that your players are educated well enough and can help each other through

certain occurrences based on their encounters on their daily lives."(B)

These two coaches talked in detail about how they organize this integration of life-skills into the sports training whereby they state that coaches need to bring it to the women very explicitly.

> *"Then you have to bring it out in a life-skill, you have to explain, translate. And that is where we have to make it clear to them what the game was all about . . . .the discussion afterward helps a great deal, to ensure that they understood it."(B)*

Though, the emphasis is still on the latter, the coaches' main objective is still bringing forth good players or potential coaches. In contrast, the other coaches also talk about life-skills, albeit to a much lesser extent, but more importantly, they apply it differently. When coaches talk explicitly about life-skills practices, they explain that these are trained off the field in separate workshops that are part of the bigger development program. *"We do different activities apart from participating in different football competition. We do a course on HIV aids awareness, prevention of unpredicted pregnancy."(S)* It cannot be discounted that the coaches would like to see life skills integrated more through sports on the field and even if they do, they do not disclose this fact.

Women as a collective

Women's empowerment is referred to in daily-life issues whereby adding practical value to the women for their community seems to be the overall agreement. *"My dream is to have a team where everybody will be able to develop her talent and become productive for herself, her family and the society as a whole."(S)* Challenging the underlying gender/power relations is referred to more often, as a cue of significance that is extracted by the coaches. Some of the previous quotes as well contain sensemaking about the gender discourse within post-conflict communities in general and how coaches think that sport can bridge the gap between men and women. *"Their training to a larger extent help to diffuse the concept of gender stereotype, and help them develop the notion that what men can do, they also can."(H)* The emphasis within the negotiation of empowerment on the position and value of women as a group within a certain community shows that women are seen as a collective social construct.

As a logic consequence, coaches emphasize the role of the team, as being more than the sum of its individuals. They state that sport brings the girls and women together to form a cohesive and self-supporting group.

> *"And if they have good team work, they can apply the same off the field . . . this way they can use the same team spirit to work together, productively within their community or in the neighborhood. They can use each other to get out of certain situations or solve certain*

issues or problems . . . so with unity and support from each other overcoming

challenges."(A)

Sport is therefore considered a place where strong collectives are formed and where women are capable of creating their own definition of empowerment. *". . . you can encourage her to join a girls group involved in doing small businesses, explore with them ways of how they can get a capital, maybe by borrowing or applying somewhere for small micro finance savings."(B)*

Resume

The empowerment process is seen as the main outcome in sport-for-development programs. However it is also perceived as a construction of meanings from a sensemaking perspective. This means that the definition of empowerment is not pre-existent. It is negotiated by the coaches in the field. So, coaches are not the passive recipients of terminologies or doctrines predetermined by scholars, theorists or administrators. Coaches' self-evaluations, interpretations and reflections are all guiding principles that reveal their definition of empowerment. However, also the interaction with their social environment is mentioned as being influential, such as being part of their community. Above all plausibility is the driving force, rather than accuracy or ratio. So what works in their training sessions in a pragmatic way is considered to be the guiding principle.

In conclusion, the coaches make sense of the empowerment process by extracting cues from the community with regard to what they see is essential to empower women. The need for women to be productive, self-sufficient, physically strong (like men) as a group, all in respect to their value in and for the community, is part of their pragmatic sensemaking of empowerment. All coaches therefore focus on the technical aspect of sport since it gives women power and survival skills. Coaches thus see sport as a tool of empowerment in itself. Furthermore, the coaches construct sport as a means to develop a broad range of pragmatic life-skills beyond the actual sport skills.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was first of all to understand how the actual process of empowerment through sport reveals itself from the perspective of female African coaches living in post-conflict countries. This research has tried to uncover the actual methods and terminologies that are currently used in the field, representing local reality. To do this it has been examined how coaches make sense of the empowerment process through their experiences and practices. The results give

rise to three visible discrepancies between policy level and the actual executors of the SDP movement, namely, that of definition, objective and practice.

Definition discrepancy

The main goal of sport-for-development programs is the empowerment of women. The coaches, being a product of their socialization and local reality, define empowerment as a pragmatic construct of what strengthens women in their specific community. Empowerment is made sense of by what they themselves have experienced as being beneficial for their own development within their community. Their philosophy therefore is that gender equity can be reached by adding value to women in and for the community. Four mechanisms are mentioned; economic independence, physical strength, multiplicity of skills and the collective approach. These mechanisms come from how they frame women based on their lived experiences, namely as a collective that needs to be productive, self-sufficient and physically strong (just as men) to survive as a group.

In contrast, the definition of the SDP movement, as described by the UN, seems to be an expression of a different kind of sensemaking. Self-efficacy, self-esteem and positive embodiment are mechanisms of their construction of empowerment (United Nations, 2003). The philosophy behind this is that women's power resources are located in the spheres of psycho-social development and self-realization. Empowerment through a Western lens is furthermore characterized by individualistic values, whereby women are seen as individuals who have their own unique needs and goals.

The mismatch lies in the fact that the definition, as constructed on policy level, with a focus on psycho-social development, does not seem to represent or reflect coaches frame of lived experiences. Poverty, violence and gender inequity are part of coaches' lived and actual reality, which in turn are part of how they extract the cues as input for their coaching. This frame results in a view of women as an undervalued collective that need the power to survive within the limits of the existing gender/power discourses. Weick's (1995) sensemaking framework gives a clear explanation for the discrepancies, showing them to be a logic consequence of having different frames. To illustrate, the SDP policymakers in contrast to the participants in this study are based in Western societies with a whole other context and realities that have made up their meaningful lived experiences. They live in high income countries and find themselves generally in safe circumstances with a relative high level of gender equity. In sum, the overall conclusion seems to be that the sensemaking and conceptualization of empowerment depends strongly on the context.

Objective discrepancy

Similarly, there is a parallel with coaches' sensemaking of sport as a tool for empowerment. They construct sport in line with the four mentioned mechanisms of empowerment. They see sport participation as an objective in itself and therefore as the main focus of their trainings since it empowers women as described above. It gives women economic independence, physical strength, a multiplicity of skills and added value and power as a group. Furthermore, most of these coaches construct sport as a refuge to develop practical skills beyond and separate of the actual sport skills. Overall, these coaches' focus on the technical aspect of sport since they assume it gives women power and survival skills. They see the sport practice in itself as powerful enough to have the desired impact on their athletes.

On the contrary, the SDP movement has defined sport as a tool to develop social and moral life-skills, instead of a goal in itself. So again, a difference in sensemaking is visible, as evidenced by the UN statement that sport-for-development is conceived initially as a leisure activity and for pleasure only (UN Inter-Agency Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace, 2005). Another difference is that sport in general has a different meaning in the West, since it is seen as a form of recreation instead of a source of livelihood. Therefore, it is not surprising that administrators at the policy level see sport as a vehicle to stimulate assets that fit with their philosophy.

The mismatch is how coaches and policymakers frame sport as a result of their lived experiences and local reality that result in a discrepancy in definition. This indicates that sport is a social construct that is negotiated in a community. Or as Wagg et al. (2009) states that sport is a field of social significance, mirroring or representing issues of social class. Furthermore, since sport is for both parties a tool in the process of empowerment, it is logical that it fits with their definition of this process. It is therefore as well not surprising that differences in sensemaking of sport as a social construct exist. African coaches do not see sport as a psycho-social tool and Western administrators do not see sport as a tool for survival. The conceptualization of sport depends, once again, on the context.

Practices discrepancy

Coaches practices are in line with above mentioned sensemaking of empowerment and sport. In short, they make sense of their role as being the instructor of the technical aspects of sports by being physically there, so by setting and being the good example. They see the sport practice in itself, accompanied by a coach that represents a lived example of empowerment through sport, as the main strategy to empower women in the field. However, they mention few concrete strategies;

it seems like they do not use any kind of planned approach. Western academics have written extensively about coaches' practices and some show connections with how the coaches in this study make sense of their role and practices (see for example, Cushion & Jones, 2006; Jones, 2006; Jones, 2007). For instance, Western coaches see their role as being a change agent by using the relationship and interaction as an arena to transfer their sensemaking of empowerment through sport. Western scholars (see for example, Camiré & Trudel, 2010; Fraser-Thomas & Coté, 2009; Smith & Smoll, 1997) describe the relationship between an athlete's development and the position of the coach to the latter being a 'significant other'. The complexity of the social and ongoing aspect of how coaches' build their frame on lived experiences therefore cannot be written into guidelines is also acknowledged (Cushion et al., 2006; Jones & Wallace, 2005; Rodgers et al., 2007). Lastly, it is recognizable that coaches conceptualize what they learn in their own unique way and they do not articulate themselves in a theory-based manner. (Jones, 2009).

However, there is an obvious discrepancy between the ways the coaches participating in this study make sense through their practices and how the SDP claims what happens in the field. The SDP assumes there is a focus on training psycho-social life-skills in the field (United Nations, 2007). The movement furthermore states that coach's role is to socialize their athletes into these psycho-social life-skills. So, coaches have to facilitate the learning transfer explicitly and support this with their athletes by articulating the objectives for the desired learning outcomes and make constant links with them in the field. This statement is based on already discussed Western studies on how coaches can contribute to the moral and social development of young women (Camiré & Trudel, 2010; Goudas et al., 2006; Pedersen & Seidman, 2004). These studies always incorporate some kind of instructional methodology or didactic tool to teach the desired life-skills.

It is quite understandable that most of the coaches in the current study make sense of themselves as sport instructors without the articulated didactic and reflection strategies on how to instill skills within their athletes. Possibly they were never formally trained in specifically teaching psycho-social life-skills based on the Western assumptions. Exceptions are the two coaches who received training on Western ground and consequently learned the matching vocabulary and methodology. The current state of affairs is that the coaches base their definitions, practices and strategies on their sensemaking. They extract cues from what they see is relevant from their own frame and sensemaking of the local reality. That said, coaches seem to give sense as to how they make sense. The differences between policy makers and coaches in their understanding of empowerment and how it is transferred into their practices can be attributed in part to differences in context. The gender issue plays a role of significance as well, since the coaches in African post-

conflict countries have to work around gender inequity and gender-based violence. The discourse is furthermore that sport is seen as inappropriate for women which directs their focus to how to deal with these issues of constraints. As a result, their practices address the local gender issues as a precondition for their strategies, which seems to be overlooked by policymakers.

Recommendations

The foregoing has shown a mismatch between UN definitions on which policy in SDP is based and the experiences of those who work in programs that are the target of such policies. The implication of these discrepancies in objectives, definitions and practices is that goals that are set at policy level can rarely be achieved at the micro-level. The UN, as the authority that legitimizes the SDP movement, has created a truth with their definitions of sport and empowerment which are based on a construct that may not always be congruent with local reality. Also, the actual mechanisms through which sport may empower or bring change continue to be unclear. Although such incongruencies as shown in this case study may have ideological roots and are aligned with power relations that may be impossible to change at the micro level. Nevertheless I propose several solutions that are not comprehensive but suggest possibilities for policy developers, practitioners and donors. In the end, both share a common purpose of enhancing the quality of life of young women. Similarly, the goal of using sport in SDP is to empower regardless of the framework used to make sense of that empowerment.

The findings in the current study suggest that the SDP movement needs to implement empowerment through sport within the sector on policy level as defined by practitioners in the field (Wiersma & Sherman, 2005). This asks for a bottom up approach (Fraser et al., 2005) which recognizes the agency of coaches. Policymakers need to view the relationship with partners in the field as a reciprocal partnership, whereby coaches' strengths and expertise is needed as an input for their work. Such reciprocity can lead to convergence in sensemaking of objectives, terminologies and methods. This requires a collaborative approach to developing methodologies and indicators that are acceptable to both parties , that is, they make sense for both parties. Lawson (2005) defines this approach as a new way of distributing power by sharing knowledge and resources and collaborating together as equal partners of action. According to Lawson (2005), sustainability will transpire from this approach since it gives ownership to the local community.

Policymakers thus need to strengthen the actual executors of the programs by connecting to actual practices of the coaches (Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2002). So, to facilitate the empowerment process from the perspective of the coaches, programs would need to be designed

that focus on how to teach the technical sport skills to create good and physically strong athletes and on life-skill programs that meet the objectives of economic independence and the need for the multiplicity of pragmatic skills to enhance the survival possibilities for women within their specific community. The collective approach needs to be integrated as well, since it reflects the local reality of how to challenge gender/power discourses. Special attention needs to be paid to this gender discourse and how the coaches negotiate it through their role within sports. The results show that the coaches link their definition of empowerment directly to the gender issues in their community. So to strengthen them in this fight, policymakers need to align closely with the gender issues the coaches face within a male dominated arena and patriarchal community.

Finally, to really connect with the objectives of the female African coaches with respect to their empowerment strategies, there is the need for the co-production of some kind of program to facilitate an increase of female African women who will become the future coaches. As already acknowledged these female coaches challenge the gender discourse within their patriarchal organized communities and even more so within the sport sector. Since this multiplicity of oppression is very symbolic for the fight for women's' rights and gender equality, those involved in SDP need to explore how young women within the community can be trained and taught the coaching skills that the women in this study have gained through their rich lived experiences. An important issue is how to bridge the gap between these experience-rich women who were former top athletes but do not have the opportunities to be educated in sport.

Limitations & Future research

The research on sport-for-development is still developing and so the knowledge of the practices has large gaps. This is inherent to relatively new subjects of research. Furthermore, the many layers of stakeholders within the SDP sector make the gap between the policymakers and practitioners almost inevitable. Blaming the colonial power discourse only on the SDP policymakers ignores other contextual factors and societal forces. SDP should be seen as a complex system of which those involved need to engage in continual self reflection in order to overcome the inherent power relations. Sensemaking offered in this study opportunities to overcome the gaps in knowledge and the power issues within SDP. However, it has to be kept in mind that sensemaking as a method in itself will not automatically lead to a decolonized way of research. A well discussed limitation of sensemaking is that it lacks the ability to address gender, power and context (Mills, Durepos, & Elden, 2010, p. 855) The extracting of these social constructed issues and sensitivity for these discourses need to be added by the researcher him/herself. Therefore it would be best to

conduct further research within a team with at least one researcher who originally comes from a post-conflict area. Second, this study showed that face-to-face interviews are good supplements.

Another limitation of this study is that narratives are used from a very small selected group of female coaches that do not represent all the sport settings and/or communities situated in post-conflict areas. Because of the convenient sampling, generalizations and assumptions cannot be made for other sport-for-development coaches, since they are not a homogeneous group. All six coaches only represent their individual way of how they make sense based on their unique lived experiences. Yet their insights do produce incomparable understandings that can be used in SDP. In this study, the sensemaking of those interviewed has yielded understandings of the process of women's empowerment in the post-conflict sport programs, derived from the voices of the grass-root practitioners (Nicholls et al., 2010). However, a range of still unmapped issues within sport-for-development could be addressed by using the empowering bottom-up approach. A further implementation of this approach could be to use the voices of the female athletes, assuming that their sensemaking can further inform the sector with regard to impact mechanisms.

Conclusion

This research project has revealed that the coaches' sensemaking gives insight into how these female African coaches retrospectively make sense and subsequently give sense of empowerment. From this it can be concluded that a gap still exists between SDP's policy level and the actual executors of the programs as evidenced by the discussed two main discrepancies; the definition mismatch of empowerment through sport and second, what actually happens in the field as a logic consequence of coaches' frame of lived experiences. The coaches give meaning to their role and practices in a locally relevant, more pragmatic way than is proposed by the sector and UN's accompanying statements. This makes sense with the discussion of sport and empowerment being contextual constructs. But most of all this makes sense from the perspective of the gender discourse that was explored in the literature research section. Therefore, as stated earlier, the extrapolation of Western based policy and practices into post-conflict developing countries seems inappropriate and does not reflect local realty. The use of the voice, knowledge and sensemaking of grassroots practitioners offers opportunities for the sector that have not been fully explored. There's a challenge for the future to bring SDP to the next stage by becoming a practice-based sustainable movement that gives the appropriate ownership to practitioners and strengthens local voices; sharing power to challenge issues of gender inequity.

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Appendix I – Topic list

The following topics will be touched during the e-mail interviews to make sure the research question can be answered in the end. The theoretical frame is that of Weick's (1995) sensemaking. How does coaches sensemaking and sense giving processes look like; how do they give meaning to the program and translate it in to practices and strategies for coaching the young women.

- Coaches philosophy; beliefs, ideology, attitudes, ideas, opinions, values on their work/role.

- Coaches learning; frame of reference through socialization, sports career, (in)formal education, role-models, influence peer coaches or other stakeholders, all past experiences.

- Coaches meanings and interpretations; vision on goals and objectives of the program, implementation of the program, developmental needs of the young women, role frame.

- Coaches decision making; how to address GBV or other forms of gender inequity, how to handle in complex situations, issue setting, creative thought, use of reflection.

- Coaches strategies; how to strengthen or develop women, how to use the relationship, what to do in interaction, use of power, how to create a good climate or safe place.

Informed Consent Form – Women WIn

Informed Consent Form for _____

This informed consent form is for coaches of sport-for-development in post-conflict areas who we are invited to participate in the international research of Women Win 2011, titled "*Coaches expertise in practices and strategies*".

The research is executed by the University of Utrecht (Netherlands) in collaboration with Women Win.

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:
• 	Information Sheet (to share information about the study with you)
• 	Interview Procedure (practical information on the interviewing)
• 	Certificate of Consent (for confirmation if you choose to participate)

Part I: Information Sheet

Introduction

How the process of women's empowerment looks like and how it can be encouraged on the sports field is yet unclear. This implicit knowledge is in the minds of the coaches, who are therefore the most valuable source for research. The role of coaches in the sport-for development movement gets relative little attention. Even though they are the actual executors of the program and thus a very vital link between the program goals and desired outcomes. There is a need for qualitative bottom-up research to really understand what happens in the sport programs. This grass-roots knowledge is essential in the dissemination of the practice-based knowledge for the higher cause of MDG3.

Purpose of the research

Aim of the research project will be to explore and explicit the tacit knowledge and skills that coaches have gained in all of their years of experience with young women in post-conflict areas who have experienced gender-based violence or other forms of inequity. Strengthening the girls/women is the main objective of the sport programs, but little is known *how* this actually occurs. Coaches are the needed experts for this knowledge. The goal is to tell the stories of these coaches as well as to look for general patterns in their answers to gain a better understanding of the role of coaches in the empowerment process in post-conflict areas.

Research question

"What are the practices and strategies of coaches in sport-for-development programs to empower adolescent women in post-conflict areas?" There will be three sub-questions that will structure the data collection: 1) On what is the coach philosophy based? 2) How do they make sense of their role in their choice of practices? 3) What are their empowerment strategies? These three questions will lead to answers on what coaches say *why* they do what they do and *how* they determine their practices on implementing the program objectives linked to gender inequity and *what* the translation is into concrete strategies.

Part II: Interview Procedure

Participation
This research will involve your participation in in-depth e-mail interviews. You are being invited to take part in this research because we feel that your experience can contribute much to our understanding and knowledge of coaches practices and strategies.
Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. It is your choice whether to participate or not. If you choose not to participate all the collaboration with Women Win will continue and nothing will change.

Dialogue
Attached is the topic list and example questions that will give you an idea of the interviews. You do not need to prepare yourself in any way. You can see these interviews as a digital dialogue with me, the interviewer. I will send you the questions in an e-mail which you can answer in your own time and place. You may use your own words and please do not worry about any grammatical errors! I also want to encourage you to use abbreviations or even emoticons :) :(;) to express yourself. This gives some depth in our dialogue since we cannot see each other's faces, or hear the tone or emotions.

Duration
You will be asked to answer the e-mails in approximately 2 weeks, of course there can be exceptions, but let us just be open and let each other know when we need more time to answer. The intention is to make it as time-efficient as possible for us both. The research takes place from February until the end of April. So the dialogue is spread over several months. Occasional access to Internet is needful of course.

Risks
There is a risk that you may share some personal or confidential information by chance, or that you may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. However, I do not wish for this to happen. You do not have to answer any question if you feel the question(s) are too personal or if talking about them makes you uncomfortable.

Benefits
Your participation is likely to help us find out more about how to make the sport-for-development movement better informed on the actual practices on the playing field. Women Win can use it in strategies, program strengthening and advocacy. We will provide you with an extensive report on the outcomes that can be used for own reporting and fundraising. For you personally it can be contribute to your expertise for sharings and learnings of peer coaches around the world who are as well working with young women in post-conflict areas.

Confidentiality
Our conversations will not be shared with anyone and will kept private. I save them on a locked computer at the Women Win office. Even your name will be transformed in a number code so anonymity will be secured. I will always give you the opportunity to review our e-mails and you can ask to modify or remove portions of those, if you want to leave it out.

Who to Contact
If you have any questions, you can ask them now or later. You may contact me any time:
Paulien Taken, p.taken@womenwin.org, Skype: paulien.taken.

Part III: Certificate of Consent

I have been invited to participate in Women Win's international research 2011:
"*Coaches expertise in practices and strategies*". I will participate and commit to the needed time investments for the e-mail interview/dialogue between February-April.

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Name of Participant _____

Cross to accept

Date   _____
                              Day/month/year

Women Win – International Research 2011

It will zoom in on micro level aspects, what happens in the actual field of the sport programs. The role of coaches, seen as key role models/actors for women's empowerment, will be of specific interest.

Objective	**Goal**	**Method**
The role of coaches in the sport-for development movement get relative little attention. Even though they are the actual executors of the program and thus a very vital link between the program goals and desired outcomes.	How the process of women's empowerment looks like and how it can be encouraged on the sports field is yet unclear. This implicit knowledge is in the minds of the coaches, who are therefore the most valuable source for research.	There is a need for qualitative bottom-up research to really understand what happens in the sport programs. This grassroots knowledge is essential in the dissemination of the practice-based knowledge for the higher cause of MDG3.

Interviews

E-mail interviews are planned from February-April. We look for 8-10 coaches around the world who are working with girls/young women in post-conflict areas who want to share their knowledge and expertise.

"What are the practices and strategies of coaches in sport-for-development programs to empower adolescent women in post-conflict areas?"