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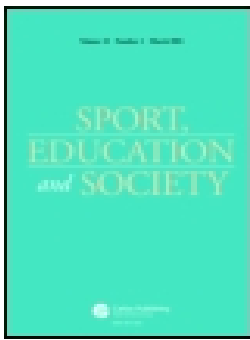
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Child-rearing in public spaces: the challenging dual-role relationships of parent–coaches and child–athletes of coaches in Swedish team sports

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine the challenges of being either a parent–coach or a child–athlete of a coach within the context of Swedish youth sport. Conceptually, this paper draws on educational and sociological theories regarding changing perspectives in child-rearing. The results are based on data gathered from interviews with parent–coaches and child–athletes (age 13–15) of coaches involved in team sports. The results indicate that a range of meanings emerged through these unique sets of interactions, resulting in both positive and negative experiences for both children and their parents. To manage the perceived challenges, four behavioural strategies were used including fairness, distancing, defence and quitting. Overall, this study provides a deeper understanding of the challenges of these unique dual roles in relation to contemporary child-rearing perspectives.

Parents play a key and influential role in children's sport, and scholars are paying increasing attention to the nature of parental involvement (Gottzén & Kremer-Sadlik, 2012; Haycock & Smith, 2014; Holt & Knight, 2014; Stefansen, Smette, & Strandbu, 2018; Tamminen & Holt, 2012). Parents have a positive impact: by introducing their children to sport, supporting their sport participation and by influencing children's beliefs about physical activity (Coakley, 2015; Tamminen & Holt, 2012). However, recent research also indicates that some parents are becoming more intrusive and protective of their children in the sport context (Holt & Knight, 2014; Stefansen et al., 2018). According to Stefansen et al. (2018), parents of children in sport want to be there for their children and relate children's sport involvement to future outcomes for their child. Moreover, a child's success or failure in sport may be seen as a measure of parenting skills (Coakley, 2015; Johansen & Green, 2017; Wheeler & Green, 2014). Further, Wheeler and Green (2014) noted that parents are 'investing earlier and more heavily' in children's sport activities today (p. 270). Collectively, parenting behaviours in sport may be understood as an opportunity for parents to enact child-rearing in public spaces (Trussell & Shaw, 2012). According to Trussell and Shaw (2012), organised sports for children are increasingly important to fathers' and mothers' parenting roles and responsibilities related to child-rearing. A wealth of research has been undertaken on coaching in youth sports and on parents on the side line separately (Holt & Knight, 2014). However, such a conceptualisation overlooks the fact that many parents are also coaches and, in turn, some team members are the children of their coaches. Thus this study examined the dual-role phenomenon of being a parent–coach or a child–athlete of a coach, in children's sport, which an emerging body of literature has been identified as being problematic (Jowett, 2008;

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Jowett, Timson-Katchis, & Adams, 2007; Schmid, 2014; Schmid, Bernstein, Shannon, Rishell, & Griffith, 2015; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). As previously noted, the lack of research into dual-role relationships is somewhat surprising given how common they are in children's sports in Sweden and elsewhere. This study makes an original contribution to our understanding of parenting behaviour and child-rearing practices in sports; a study of this dual-role phenomenon has never been undertaken in any Scandinavian country.

The Scandinavian sport context

According to Curtis, Baer, and Grabb (2001), the levels of volunteering in the Scandinavian countries are high compared to those of other nations, including the United States and the United Kingdom. It is therefore 'reasonable to speak of a specific Scandinavian way to organise sport in voluntary organisations' (Seippel, 2010, p. 199; see also Tuastad, 2017). Scandinavia is a homogeneous region and its shared historical, cultural and political traditions have shaped the way sport has developed in Sweden (Peterson, 2008). Organised sport in Sweden is collected under one, national volunteer organisation, the Swedish Sports Confederation; this organisation is a part of the Scandinavian sport model and has strong support from the Swedish government (Norberg, 2011; Seippel, 2010). This voluntary sports model results in almost no paid coaches for children in sport clubs affiliated with the Swedish Sport Confederation, which is why the clubs need to rely on parents to coach the children as well as to run the sports club.

In Sweden, 80% of children aged 12–16 participate in sports activities, which are mainly run by volunteers, many of which are the parents of the children playing (Seippel, 2010). In North America, 84–90% of coaches are parent–coaches (Weiss & Fretwell, 2005) and there are also numerous parent–coaches in the United Kingdom (Jowett et al., 2007) and in Australia (Elliott & Drummond, 2017). Parent–coaches are highly prevalent in Western countries; however, it is important to note that the exact number of parent–coaches and child–athletes of coaches in many countries remains unknown.

Previous research on dual roles

The few scholars that have specifically aimed to examine the dual roles phenomenon argue that, while such roles feature both positive and negative aspects, they are problematic in several ways. The next section will outline conclusions from previous research related to positive aspects of dual roles followed by the negative. Weiss and Fretwell (2005) examined the parent–coach phenomenon from the theoretical framework of psychological perspectives and development theories by interviewing six 12-year-old male soccer players at the competitive level, their parent–coaches and some of their teammates. The positive aspects for the young players included experiences of special attention, insider information, understanding and quality time with their parent–coaches. The parent–coaches in Swimming also reported positive aspects, including pride toward their children and opportunities to teach them skills and values. Jowett et al. (2007), using the framework of psychological roles and interdependence theory, explored how parent–coaches and their child–athletes interacted in an individual sport. By interviewing six parent–coach and child–athlete dyads, Jowett et al. (2007) found that both the parent–coaches and the child–athletes of coaches experienced close relationships and positive interactions. In a narrative and retrospective psychological study, Jowett (2008) interviewed a father and his daughter, who were formerly active at a national level in track and field in the United Kingdom, revealing that their relationship became very emotionally close in a positive way.

The negative aspects according to parent–coaches include problems with their children's rebellious behaviour and/or that they either place higher expectations on their child or give them limited recognition (Elliott & Drummond, 2017; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). From the children's perspective, the dual-role relationship brings negative treatment from the parent–coach resulting in criticism regarding mistakes and pressure to perform (Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). One explanation for the

challenges is the difficulty of separating the parent–child relationship from the coach–athlete relationship (Jowett, 2008; Jowett et al., 2007; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). According to Schmid (2014), there are blurred boundaries between these roles, which he concluded from a retrospective, narrative, social-constructive study on experiences of eight female tennis players in the United States. Similarly, Jowett (2008) showed that parent–coaches had the greatest difficulty in limiting the coaching role to the sport site.

Due to the dominance of the psychological theoretical framework (Jowett, 2008; Jowett et al., 2007; Schmid, 2014; Schmid et al., 2015; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005), it is critical to draw further attention to this phenomenon by applying an educational and sociological framework. Most of the previous research used a retrospective design, focussed on individual sports and athletes who participated at the elite level (Jowett, 2008; Jowett et al., 2007; Schmid, 2014; Schmid et al., 2015). By contrast, this study focussed on young non-elite participants with ongoing involvement in two team sports that no previous researchers have focussed on. This design will add to the prior knowledge about team sport (Elliott & Drummond, 2017; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005).

To date, most research on this topic has been conducted within the context of the U.K. or the U.S. However, Elliott and Drummond (2017) reported on parent–coaches in junior Australian football; though, the results were only a 'by-product' from a study of parenting in the sport (p. 69). This research will expand the knowledge of the dual roles, within the Swedish context, using a unique design that focuses on the strategies that the child–athletes of coaches and parent–coaches use to deal with their challenging experiences with regard to the dual roles. Holt and Knight (2014) offered recommendations to parent–coaches about how to manage the dual roles in relation to effective coaching. However, Holt and Knight's recommendations are based on previous empirical evidence and do not include the children's perspectives about how children can manage dual-role problems. This study fills this gap by also including the experiences and perspectives of children. In sum, this study is important due to the dearth of research on the phenomenon of dual roles in children's sport, as well as the limited evidence on how parent–coaches and (especially) child–athletes of coaches deal with the challenging aspects of the dual-role relationship.

The aim of this interpretative phenomenological study was to examine the phenomenon of being a parent–coach or a child–athlete of a coach in the Swedish children's sport context and how this may be understood from a child-rearing perspective. The research questions were as follows: (a) What does it mean for a child–athlete to have his or her parent as a coach, and what does it mean for a parent to coach his or her own child in a team sport, in terms of advantages and challenges related to the dual roles? (b) What strategies do parent–coaches and their child–athletes use to deal with the challenges that arise due to this relationship? (c) What might changing child-rearing conditions mean for the interactions among adults and children in the sport as far as parent–coaches and their child–athletes are concerned?

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that informs this study is based on the educational and sociological theories of contemporary changes in child-rearing practices and on the cultural logic of parenting behaviour (Lareau, 2011; Smeyers, 2010; Vincent & Maxwell, 2016). For sake of clarity, the term 'child-rearing' (n.d.) is defined as 'the process of bringing up a child or children'; 'parenting' (n.d.) is more narrowly defined as 'the activity of bringing up a child as a parent'.

Within educational theory, Smeyers (2010) argued that some radical societal changes have taken place recently, leading to changes in the relationship between parents and children that have seemed to cause considerable difficulties related to child-rearing. One aspect of this change is the radical pluralism that has swept the world and led family members to increasingly behave according to individual interests (Lareau, 2011; Smeyers, 2010). Furthermore, Smeyers (2010) discussed how worldwide initiatives in child-rearing have contributed to a tendency to increasingly hold parents accountable for child-rearing within society. Vincent and Maxwell (2016) also argued that parents

today are moving towards a normalisation of the parenting strategy of cultivating talent in a concerted fashion to offer adequate child-rearing and to provide children with the best possible childhood and future. Lareau (2011), explained: when parents worry about how their children will get ahead, they 'are increasingly determined to make sure that their children are not excluded from any opportunity that might eventually contribute to their advancement' (p. 5). According to Lareau (2011), the emerging cultural logic of parenting behaviour is framed by two types of behaviours. The first type involves planned strategies for concerted cultivation; this includes fostering children's talents through organised leisure activities. The second type involves behaviour regarding the accomplishment of natural growth, which includes ensuring that the children's basic needs, including being loved, are met.

This discussion is also growing among sport scientists. Coakley (2015) described an emerging neoliberal view in which parents feel solely responsible for controlling and socialising their children and for the children's future opportunities (cf. Johansen & Green, 2017). According to Trussell and Shaw (2012), parents clearly believe that giving children opportunities to participate in sports may help prepare children with basic skills and behaviour needed for their adult years. Parents today often spend a great deal of time and money on this task, which is seen as an appropriate investment (Stefansen et al., 2018; Wheeler & Green, 2014). For this, some parents are willing to make financial, physical, and emotional sacrifices, even when this influences their family life negatively (Trussell & Shaw, 2012). Fathers (and increasingly, mothers) use organised sports for parenting in public, beyond the home environment. This public parenting process includes possibilities to evaluate and criticise other parents' actions or non-actions in relation to good parenting as well as to children's opportunities and future. In the Swedish context, it is also shown that parents highly value their own children's best interests in the outcomes of team sport participation (Eliasson, 2015).

Furthermore, the study is ontologically and epistemologically grounded in interpretative and phenomenological research traditions with qualitative methodology (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Jones, 2015; Ryba, 2008). In this research, knowledge is seen as the subjective experiences of participants that are constructed at the individual level in a societal context, rather than as a fixed objective 'thing' that can be measured (Jones, 2015). Instead, the complexity and multiple realities of the subject are in focus. This means that the perceptions of the participants are seen as evidence that can answer the research questions. According to Jones (2015), this stance of interpretivism uses words, statements and other non-numerical measures collected from the viewpoint of the participants.

Ryba (2008) advocates for the use of phenomenology when researching children because this method stems primarily from the unique view of lived experience. This philosophical approach allows the researcher to gain an insider's perspective to uncover explanations through interpretation of the research; this is why qualitative data was deemed appropriate to collect.

Method

The research approach is empirical, and the result is based on data from individual interviews with children and parents. The research design is aimed at including the child's dual-role experiences (child and athlete) as well as the parent's (parent and coach), all with regard to a dyadic sport-and-family relationship. One argument for this design is that it enables giving reciprocal attention to social interactions, as well as to the various participants' experiences and their consciousness of what the phenomenon brings to their lives (Creswell, 2003; Ryba, 2008). For this phenomenological stance, this means that the participants necessarily needed to consist of both child–athletes and parents who acted as their sport coaches. Another argument is that the analysis of data from the dyadic sport-and-family relationship is relevant to a discussion in relation of contemporary child-rearing theories.

Selections of participants and ethical considerations

This study's purposeful sampling technique of criterion sampling works well for phenomenological studies that are limited to participants who have experience with the phenomenon under study

(Creswell, 1998). One criterion was that the participants had to have been part of the sport activity in a dual-role relationship for at least 3 years to ensure that they had enough experience to reflect on their strategies for dealing with the challenges. Another criterion was that the parent–coaches and their child–athletes actually had to be involved in those roles at the time of the research, so as to avoid retrospective limitations and therefore strengthen the originality of the study. A third criterion was that they all had to provide informed consent. Fourth, the parents and children had to come from the same family in a dyadic relation.

This research project's sample included 13 participants, 7 parent–coaches and 6 child–athletes of those parent–coaches. The coaches who participated had coached their 13- to 15-year-old children for 3–8 years.

Table 1 shows the ages of the children, the gender of the participants and the years in which they have held the dual roles. The participants were from 6 teams at 2 well-established sport clubs in a city with 120,000 inhabitants in the north of Sweden. For this research project, the selected sports were ice hockey and floorball because they are common for both children and parents to be involved in (Swedish Research Council for Sport Science, 2017).

The study followed the Swedish Research Council's ethical guidelines (2011) and was conducted with ethical sensitivity and with regard to the importance of creating good relationships with the participants. Alderson (2004) argues that it is important to be aware of power relations between the researchers and the participants throughout the research process. This includes careful consideration of power relations between adults and children when planning the research, collecting data, interpreting data and reporting results (Alderson, 2004). The research design was carefully developed to reduce the risk of any negative consequences for the informants. To obtain participants and their consent to conduct the study, the chairperson of the sport club board for one floorball club and the youth sport manager of one ice hockey club were approached by email. Second, the suggested coaches from teams in the clubs, with children between 13 and 15 years old, were contacted by email and telephone. All participants were informed about the study's aims, research procedures and ethical guidelines which included that their answers would not be shared with their parent–coaches, their children or anyone else. The parent–coaches who all agreed to participate were asked to inform their children about the study and ask if they would like to participate or not. Due to the power relation between an unknown researcher and children (Alderson, 2004), the parents were given the opportunity to be the first to ask their child to participate in one interview, which all but one of the children were willing to do. All of the participants were given additional verbal information about ethical rights in easy and respectful ways before the interviews were conducted. The design did not allow parents to exert influence or control over children's responses during interviews when conducted separately.

Data collection

In line with the phenomenological design, semi-structured life world interviews were used to obtain data to answer the research questions. The aim of this method was to obtain 'descriptions of the life

Table 1. Data on parent–coaches ($n = 7$) and coaches' children ($n = 6$) participating in the study.

Sport	Parent–coach	Gender of coach	Coach's child	Age of child	Gender of child	Parent–coach and coach child experience/year
Floorball	Parent–coach 1	Female	Coach child D	14	Son	7 years
Floorball	Parent–coach 2	Male	Coach child E	15	Daughter	4 years
Floorball	Parent–coach 3	Male	–	15	Daughter[a]	3 years
Floorball	Parent–coach 4	Male	Coach child A	13	Daughter	6 years
Ice hockey	Parent–coach 5	Male	Coach child B	15	Son	6 years
Ice hockey	Parent–coach 6	Male	Coach child C	14	Daughter	7–8 years
Ice hockey	Parent–coach 7	Male	Coach child F.	14	Son	7 years

[a]Corresponding coach's child–athlete not participating.

world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena' (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015, p. 6). All participants were interviewed individually, in places of their choice: at a sport grounds, at a parent–coach's workplace, at a family home or at a university. I, the main researcher, interviewed all participants from the ice hockey club, and an assistant interviewed the participants from the floorball club. We asked the parent–coaches and their child–athletes a series of similar key questions, each of which was adjusted to the informant's role and age. Questions were developed in relation to five themes. The themes were (a) background, (b) advantages and challenges, (c) strategies to deal with the dual roles and relationships on the team, (d) meaning and influence, and (e) final questions.

The parents and children came together to the site for their interviews, but they were always in separate rooms during the interviews. We conducted the interviews on a one-off basis that was suitable to the research design, with prepared questions that could be answered all at once; the questions did not build on a longitudinal approach which may have limited the possibility of eliciting in-depth descriptions of experiences. However, according to Dickson-Swift, James, and Liamputtong (2008, p. 8), it is not possible to state whether 'one-off encounter' interviews are better or worse than multiple-encounter interviews. Dickson-Swift et al. did argue that the quality of the data collected instead depends on 'the researcher's ability to develop an intimate and ongoing relationship with the participant' (p. 8). It was therefore important for us to develop a relationship based on reciprocity, trust and personal involvement (Ryba, 2008).

We took these possible limitations of one-off interviews and power balance into consideration from the first contact and throughout the whole interview process. To ensure we collected rich experiences from the participants, we discussed the approach in advance and determined how to best build relationships and neutralise the power hierarchy (Jones, 2015; Ryba, 2008). For example, we clearly informed each interviewee about the study's ethics, aims and approximate time frame, weeks before the interviews in an easily understandable manner. At the beginning of each interview, we pronounced that we were interested in his or her own experiences and that there were no right or wrong answers; to make the participants feel relaxed and open by understanding that we were not going to judge their answers. During the interviews, we used easily language and expressed an interest in the interviewees through alert listening and expressions of understanding (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008). At the end of the interviews, we made it clear that they could contact us at any time if they had any questions. Each interview lasted between 15 and 60 min, and a third party transcribed the audio recordings verbatim.

Thematic analysis

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis may be used to 'report experiences, meanings and the reality of participants' (p. 86). Further, thematic analysis 'is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79) that involves six phases of analysis in a recursive process. The analysis of the data followed the inductive thematic analysis guidelines offered by Braun and Clarke (2006) and was based on meaning condensation and meaning interpretation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). An inductive approach means that the themes identified were strongly linked to the data.

The first phase was to carefully read the complete interview transcripts to get a sense of the whole and of the important details. During the second phase, initial codes were generated by assessing the natural meaning units of each sentence in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, and then compressed each sentence into a shorter statement on the transcripts. The third phase was about searching for potential themes and gathering all the statements relevant to each of the themes. During the fourth phase, all of these themes were reviewed to check if they worked in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set. The fifth phase included to generate clear definitions for each theme. Final themes and representative quotes were collected in the form of tables related to the research questions specified by advantages, challenges (difficulties), interactions and

Table 2. A part of a table generated by Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis of challenges experienced by parent–coaches.

Thematised meaning of experiences by parent–coaches	Description and variation of meaning within themes	Quotes by interviewee
Difficulties in relation to their child	Children may have difficulty taking feedback and criticism from parent–coaches Stronger demands from own child	'I can really see how they think – "you can forget that, I will do exactly the opposite"'. (5)'She will have a tougher time'. (4)
Difficulties in relation to other children's parents	Wants to avoid accusation of favouritism. Conflicts and even attacks on their child through other parents	'Nobody should accuse you of favouring [my child]; in my case, it may be the other way around' (6)'Some players got money from their parents if they attacked a coach's child–athlete [physically on the ice] … it's been the worst'. (7)

influences of the dual-role relationships and of strategies the participants used to deal with those dual roles (for example, see Table 2).

The sixth phase included to conduct deeper interpretation to interrogate the meaning of the units in terms of the broader context of changing child-rearing condition and in response to the previous research on dual roles in sport. The last step involved sorting out the themes of the results and writing the report.

Results

Advantages of dual roles

To socialise and have fun with their child and with other children is one central advantage expressed by several parent–coaches. Sport seems to give parent–coaches opportunities to spend time with their children on a regular basis, within an organised structure, which leads to a certain quality of their relationship. One coach expressed, 'I can be with my child – quite simply, it is quality time … I have chosen to socialise with my children through sports' (Coach 4). Coaches also describe how it creates valuable life memories with their child: 'We share many memories together, very positive memories, which I carry with me. This is what we have done together' (7). The role of a parent–coach also brings feelings of contributing to the child's development: 'You can follow their development both as humans and as athletes; that's what I think is great fun' (3) and 'It is a privilege, I would say, to be with the kids and see their development and get to rejoice in their success and progress' (5).

Some of the advantages of children having their parent as a coach include the feeling of safety and support, that they have fun together with their parents, and that sport gives them opportunities to be close with their parent. One child said, 'Maybe you feel safer when you are younger, if you have your parents with you' (A), and another said, 'It is also fun: You can, like, talk a lot about the team and such, you can discuss after the games, and that is fun. Thus we become closer to each other' (E). Practical support from parents is also appreciated: 'If you are at an away game, it might be nice to have him with you, because you do have a lot of bags – he can also carry things' (B), and 'She has an eye on things' (D). One child also thought coach–children may become better players due to this relationship:

> Yes, I actually think that I have become a better floorball player with my father as my coach, because he puts higher demands on me. … He tells me to sharpen … and I give my best and I become better. (A)

Challenges of dual roles

Parent–coaches experience challenges in relation to other parents as well as in relation to their child. One of the most obvious problems for parent–coaches is dealing with issues of fairness. It seems to be highly important for them to clearly display fairness and to prove they are not

giving their child any advantages: 'Nobody should be able to accuse me of favouring [my child]; in my case, it may rather be the other way around' (6). One coach added, 'I have fears that people will think I favour my children; that's what I'm really trying to be clear not to show, which is why I treat my children much tougher' (4). Some parent–coaches also reported they give their child less praise to avoid suspicions. This shows that when parent–coaches fear accusations of favouritism from the other parents, they may exaggerate their behaviour towards their child, which may make it even harder for the parent–coach's child, especially regarding the social behaviour. One parent–coach explained, 'If they behave badly against one teammate or continue to play after the referee blows the whistle or just say stupid things, then I am a bit harder on my own child' (6). On the other hand, there are also parent–coaches who confess they sometimes give their child advantages: 'You don't go to a tournament without your son, so of course he has been rewarded this season. Blood is thicker than water' (5). This problem is obvious in interactions with other parents. One parent–coach said, 'They have comments on everything we do … , and the worst of all, some players have got money from their parents if they attacked a coach's child–athlete [on the ice]' (7). This interaction seems to have led to physical assault by another child towards the coach's child–athlete where the assault was explained to be set up by another parent. One coach said that coaches are conscious when they give their child advantages and indicated that this may be the normalised cultural logic of parenting today: 'Today I think it is [done] consciously, because it is my child who should get ahead' (5).

Challenges related to interactions between parent–coaches and their child–athlete were about the difficulties for the child–athlete to follow parent–coaches' instructions or to accept corrections of their behaviour without becoming irritated, angry or defiant. One coach explained, 'I really can see how they think: "you can forget that, I will do exactly the opposite"' (5). Another explained, 'He easily gets irritated towards me, and he doesn't listen to me as he does to my coaching colleagues' (1).

The challenges that children experience highly correspond to the challenges reported from the parent–coaches. For example, fairness is also a challenge related to the dual roles from the child's perspective. Mainly, this concerns what others think about the potential benefits the coach–child might experience and obtain. However, this is denied by many children: 'If you would have asked someone else, … then it would certainly be "yes, he gets more time to play or something", but it is not like that. Others believe it, but it is not so for me' (B). On the other hand, one child (F) explained that he might have the benefit of taking part in a few more ice hockey games during the season.

Children also express that they find it difficult to deal with instructions from the parent–coach without getting angry:

> Yes … I may think that I was right, and he may not think that … then I get mad at him. But if another coach would have said it, then I would certainly not have been as angry. It becomes a different thing when one's father tells you. (B)

A boy said about his mother–coach, 'I can yell at her more than I do to other coaches' (D). The children's way of talking back to the parents may be understood as a response to the fact that they perceive that the parent–coaches are unfair to them. One coach–child said, 'If my friends on the team are joking around … It's very easy to follow them, and then dad gets very mad at me … [not the others]' (A). Another child said, 'He argues with me more often than he does with the others, then I get irritated … and it feels like you are worse than the others' (C).

The dual roles may have more or less severe negative consequences for the child depending on how the relationship evolves. It was evident from a child's statement that the child's sporting development stagnated because of the unsolved problems with the dual roles:

> I was probably the best on skates on my team, I had quite a good technique, and then when I realised I could argue with my father, I stopped kind of making an effort. It affected me after a while … I just messed around and did not care when my father said something. At that time, it was like that; we did not have a very good relationship. (B)

Despite the negative aspects expressed, most of the participants want to continue as parent–coaches or as coach–children because of all the positive experiences. One coach concluded, 'I would really recommend doing this, because it is a fantastic experience to have the opportunity to be with youngsters and watch them grow and see their happiness' (3).

Strategies to deal with the challenges

There are four behavioural strategies found which the participants use to manage the challenges described. The strategies are (a) the *distance strategy* for parent–coaches and coach–children, (b) the *fairness strategy* for parent–coaches, (c) the *defence strategy* for coach–children and (d) the *quitting strategy* for parent–coaches.

The only shared strategy used by both the parent–coaches and coach–children was the distance strategy. This strategy is based on parent–coaches and coach–children trying to distance themselves from their roles and each other by separating their roles of being a parent and a child from being a coach and an athlete. The participants explained how they try not to mix the roles in the sporting context and in family life. One coach explained, 'When taking on the equipment, well, then you are the coach, then it's not dad anymore' (6). A child discussed what advice to give other coach–children: 'Think, "it's not your father", when you are at training; think he is a regular coach' (F). It may seem most unnatural, especially for younger children, to pretend they do not have this relationship, which made me ask how they manage to think like that:

> I try the best I can, but sometimes it can slip out, 'Daddy'. For, it is like a little difficult anyway. … Now, I have learned quite well to try to 'not think' of him as my dad. I regret that I didn't think like this back then. (B)

This quote highlights that it is also a learning process to understand how to deal with the situation, which may take years. Parent–coaches also use the distance strategy when they communicate with their child. One way to avoid negative reactions from their child is by using other coaches as mediators for messages to their child: 'We have solved it so that if I see something during a match or training, which I think he must correct, then I go past another coach and say, "Can you talk to him about this?"' (5).

Children also distance themselves physically from their parent–coach to deal with their own reactions:

> Sometimes, dad wants us to talk. … I get just annoyed, and then I go away towards another direction … But he shouts at me, so I must show that I am interested and listen to him. (A)

This may also be one way for children to deal with feelings about the parents' sometimes exaggerated demands on them. Distancing themselves from the roles is difficult, for both parties, which may be explained by their innate relationship, which they will always have.

Another strategy used by coaches is the fairness strategy, which means they try to express equal fairness towards all children. Other parents and children seem to blame the familial relationship for unfair treatment towards other children on the team. To deal with the opinions of other parents and children, parent–coaches express their strong need to display fair behaviour towards all children on the team. With this strategy, parent–coaches try to minimise any accusation of being unfair. However, this strategy leads to another problem that must be dealt with, which is that the parent–coaches sometimes use tougher behaviour towards their child, as described earlier. Therefore, this strategy may lead to the opposite of its intention, where unequal behaviours are reinforced and the challenges are increased for the coach–child. The parent–coaches were aware of this and expressed that they must restrain themselves: 'I must bite my lips at times … or other coaches can tell me, "Now you are too tough with her, you have to cool down"' (4).

The parent–coaches' child–athlete seems to end up in an exposed or vulnerable situation due to the parent–coaches' difficulties dealing with the two roles and their relationship with third-party parents. A specific strategy for coach–children to deal with the exposed situation is to apply the defence strategy. When the parent–coaches are working with their child giving sport-related

instructions or behavioural admonitions, which may be exaggerated compared to their interactions with other children on the team, the coach–child may defy or be angry with the parent–coach. One interpretation is that the parent–coaches may be too hard, unfair, or give too much attention to the child, which makes the coach–child want to defend himself/herself. The defence strategy may be enacted by doing the opposite of what a parent says or by responding to the parent angrily. One boy explained, 'I can be quite angry with him, because I think differently, so it is much easier to talk to another coach' (B). A parent–coach said, 'He defies [me] just to show me "be quiet, mom"' (1). Children seem to want the parent–coach to 'back off': 'I tell him, "I already know that", and I become angry' (C). The defence strategy may result in long-term negative consequences. When B, a 15-year-old boy playing ice hockey, reflected over his use of this strategy, he found that he defied his father as the coach during many of his younger years at the rink. He explained that he regrets that he did not understand this complex situation when he was younger and that he now understands that it is better to use the distance strategy instead of the defence strategy:

> Then, when I realised that, I would stop focussing on that he was my dad, so it went much better again with hockey. I regret that I did not think like this before, but now there's nothing I can do about it. So I've actually lost a lot. (B)

A third strategy for coaches to deal with dual-role challenges is to quit coaching their child, referred to as the quitting strategy. One coach explained when interactions among children, coaches and other parents became too negative for him as a parent–coach and for his child. The situation refers to when the other parents asked their children to attack the coach's child–athlete physically on the ice. The parent–coach explained, 'It's been the worst … I will quit; it is not worth it anymore' (7). The parent–coach highlighted that the dual roles are not something that can be hidden, forgotten or distanced from completely, and he revealed that the child might be in the most vulnerable situation when he said: 'He has not chosen me as his father' (7). The quitting strategy seems to be applied as the last measure when the situation has gotten out of control, when the disadvantages may not be understood, or when the situation due to the dual role relationship is perceived too difficult to deal with, especially for their child. The situation has become unmanageable for the parent to continue being involved as a coach.

Discussion and conclusion

The findings offer important insights into the challenges experienced by the dual roles. In particular, the findings reveal new knowledge regarding children's experiences and what strategies they use to deal with negative situations compared with parent–coaches.

According to the results, there are positive aspects for both children and parents of being involved together in team sports. The children of coaches generally feel that they are positively supported by their parent–coaches. Both children and parents argue that sport gives opportunities to socialise and have fun together which creates positive memories during childhood. Further, the parent–coach has the possibility to create good conditions for their child's development providing them both short-term and long-term benefits. The positive interactions of close relationship are also evident from previous studies in other contexts, especially in individual sports (Jowett, 2008; Jowett et al., 2007) and among male athletes and their fathers (Elliott & Drummond, 2017; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). Sport is a place where children may get the chance to enjoy performing, receive attention and have their athletic skills 'publicly assessed' (Lareau, 2011, p. 113). Due to the fact that there is also growing evidence that sport is an arena in which parents are becoming increasingly involved (Stefansen et al., 2018; Wheeler & Green, 2014), this also may mean that parents will be willing to take on volunteer work. When it benefits parents with respect to their responsibility of child-rearing (Coakley, 2015; Johansen & Green, 2017; Trussell & Shaw, 2012), parents' interests in coaching may be strengthened. Taken together, having parent–coaches in children's sports in Sweden has positive effects for parents and children with some exceptions, and therefore, it would be unwise to deny parents the

opportunity to be coaches. However, due to parents' increased individual interests and priorities for cultivating the talents of their children, it is important to be aware of the risk of a range of challenges related to changing child-rearing practices, of parenting and the dual roles in organised leisure activities (Lareau, 2011; Trussell & Shaw, 2012; Vincent & Maxwell, 2016).

This study showed several challenges with the dual roles based on the experiences that parent–coaches and coach–children expressed. The pressure from interactions among children, coaches and parents concerning fairness is obviously problematic regardless of team sport context, which might become even stronger due to the child-rearing changes taking place in society (Smeyers, 2010). The pressure from all parents may increase when they become protective and seek to ensure a pathway for their children to succeed within sport and more generally with respect to acquiring skills needed for future possibilities. Moreover, this pressure may be exacerbated when parents assume increased responsibility in child-rearing (Coakley, 2015; Lareau, 2011; Wheeler & Green, 2014). Where this is the case, one can expect parents to be at the sport site to monitor their child's opportunities according to personal child-rearing interests (Lareau, 2011; Smeyers, 2010) as well as to take the public opportunity to criticise other parents for poor actions towards their children (Trussell & Shaw, 2012). It can be expected that parents will use sport more explicitly to position themselves as offering adequate child-rearing in public spaces through concerted cultivation (Lareau, 2011; Vincent & Maxwell, 2016).

Turning to what strategies the participants were using to deal with the challenges, the analysis showed that the coach's child–athletes used two strategies (distance and defence), and the parent–coaches used three (distance, fairness and quitting). There is, however, not one straightforward strategy which solves the challenges; instead, the analysis reveals complex behavioural patterns from a learning process continuing over years to understand how to deal with the innate relationships and challenging interactions regarding the dual-role situation. However, the distance strategy seems to be the best available strategy for both parents and children and was the only one in common. This dual-role relationship is especially difficult to handle, though, for the coach's child–athletes when they rely on the distance strategy. As a result, it means they need to temporarily suspend or ignore their innate parent–child relationship and only act from an athlete's perspective (and, therefore, not from a child's perspective) when at the sport site.

The results of the study show difficulties with separating the roles between being a coach, a parent, a child and an athlete. The distance strategy and the demands on separating the roles lead to interactions which may certainly be unsynchronised in time between adults and children, which may be especially confusing for a younger coach's child–athlete to understand. Schmid (2014) and Jowett (2008) also pointed out similar problems.

One important consideration is the risk that the child's perspective may be supressed in sport with use of the distance strategy given that the child is not allowed to acknowledge their dual role as both child and athlete. Children who strongly value having fun with friends in a sport environment may tend towards behaving in line with the role of the child than the role of an athlete. This discussion can be related to what Schmid (2014) discussed as the blurred boundaries. However, the distance strategy seems to work well when parent–coaches use this approach to forward messages to their child mediated by other coaches. This means the parent–coaches and coach–children distance themselves from each other physically and not only in relation to their roles; this has not been shown in any prior research.

The defence strategy, which children use when they need to act against the parent–coaches' behaviour, seems to be less effective for the child to use than the distance strategy. The data indicate that the parent–coach will not accept the opinions of the coach–child easily without arguments. This imbalance of power and subordination of children in sport complicates the situation (Eliasson, 2015) and reinforces the importance of reducing adult power and control in order to stimulate positive relationships (Jowett et al., 2007; Schmid et al., 2015).

The fairness strategy, which parent–coaches use to show that they are treating all children fairly, is also problematic. Fairness seems to be important when coaching a group of children. However, as shown in the study, it is difficult to reach the goals of fairness for parent–coaches behaviour,

which sometimes ends up being much harder and therefore unfair towards their own child which is also a problem in other sport contexts (Elliott & Drummond, 2017; Weiss & Fretwell, 2005). One particularly problematic situation is when parent–coaches' perceptions do not match how others perceive the results of their behaviour in the matters of justice and fair treatment of the children. Fairness is a complex concept, and if there is no shared understanding of how to assess fairness neither the coach, nor others can assess if he/she is being fair. Parents on the side line may exaggerate their interpretation of unfair treatment by parent–coaches as part of a strategy of concerted cultivation in order to ensure their children get the most out of their time in sport (Vincent & Maxwell, 2016). However, there is also a risk for parent–coaches to fall into the use of their power to favour their own children because they are also parents under the pressure of being able to provide the best possible childhood to their child (Lareau, 2011; Vincent & Maxwell, 2016).

To conclude, there is no final solution to the challenges with the dual roles. Parent–coaches and coach's child–athletes try their best to use some strategies to deal with the challenges; however, the strategies may lead to new problems and a need for new strategies. Unlike the results from the U.K. swimming context where parent–coaches and coach–children agreed on contracts about how to manage the dual relationships (Jowett et al., 2007) – there seems to be more unconscious trial-and-error management behaviour in the interactions in the Swedish context. It is vital to educate and support parent–coaches in the challenges they may encounter due to these dual roles to increase the quality of children's sporting experiences and to reduce any damages that may occur to the familial parent–child relationship (Schmid, 2014). Finally, it is of major importance involving children in learning about the challenges they may encounter due to these specific dual roles rather than only viewing these situations from the adult perspective. For future research, there is a need to balance limited data from female coaches and female children, which also is a limitation of this study.

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