Role of the Coach: How Model Youth Team Sport Coaches Frame Their Roles

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Similar to a belief system, a role frame acts as a perceptual filter that influences how practitioners define their professional responsibilities (Schön, 1983). The purpose of this article is to present the role frame components of model youth team sport coaches. The results are based on a two-year multiple-case study with six coaches. On average, the coaches' role frame comprised two boundary components and nine internal components. Boundary components are objective environmental conditions that can influence an individual's approach to coaching. Internal role frame components are personal views a coach holds regarding youth sport coaching. A discussion of how role frames can be examined and used by researchers, coaches, and coach educators is provided.

The role of a youth sport coach is complex and will likely vary according to a myriad of contextual factors and athlete personal characteristics. Unlike practitioners in most other fields, youth sport coaches often do not have extensive formal training or highly structured work environments that would provide clear examples of how they should frame their role (Gilbert & Trudel, 1999). For example, most teachers must complete several years of university-level preparation and have clearly identified performance outcomes. Most youth sport coaches, however, have few concrete role descriptions or performance outcomes for guidance.

This situation leaves youth sport coaches largely on their own to construct their approach to coaching. For example, some coaches may place a greater value on winning and technical skill development, while other coaches may be more concerned with fun and social development. Although not always practiced, it has long been acknowledged that youth sport coaches must consider more than physical skill acquisition as part of their role (Orlick & Botterill, 1975). Coaches

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of youth sport should broaden their view of a coach's role to include affective and cognitive consequences, ethical issues, and the goal of developing autonomous learners (Bergmann-Drewe, 2000; McCallister, Blinde, & Weiss, 2000; Thompson, 1995).

These role suggestions seem appropriate based on the participation and dropout literature in youth sport. Youth sport participants typically cite achievement/success, teamwork, fitness, energy release, situation, skill development, affiliation/friendship, and fun as participation motives (Gill, Gross, & Huddleston, 1983; Klint & Weiss, 1986; Weinberg et al., 2000). Conversely, reasons for dropout include too much pressure, time commitment, lack of fun, and injury (Gould, Feltz, Horn, & Weiss, 1982; Klint & Weiss, 1986). However, there are only a few empirical examples of how individuals actually frame their role as a youth sport coach.

Wilcox and Trudel's (1998) case study with a youth ice hockey coach revealed a complex belief system comprising at least 16 principles of coaching. The purpose of their study was to construct the belief system of an ice hockey coach while testing a new methodology for reliably documenting coaching beliefs. The methodology, referred to as verbal cueing stimulated recall interviewing and originally developed by Trudel, Haughian, and Gilbert (1996), is a variation of the stimulated recall method. Wilcox and Trudel interviewed the ice hockey coach after games and practices and asked the coach to explain specific behaviors. Verbal cues were provided to the coach to help stimulate recall. Only after the coach discussed the behavior was the videotaped segment shown to the coach. The coach then had an opportunity to clarify or expand on his response if needed. In this sense, the videotaped segments were used to validate the coach's initial response rather than stimulate recall of the event. This is different than the traditional use of stimulated recall interviewing and helps address some of the limitations of this method (Trudel et al., 1996). Using this method, Wilcox and Trudel (1998) found that winning and player development were the two central principles of the coach's belief system. For example, the coach may have claimed a belief in equal playing time but was influenced by the time left in a game and the score in the selection of players.

In a more recent example, McCallister and colleagues (2000) examined the values and philosophies of 22 youth sport baseball and softball coaches. Coaches were randomly sampled from two neighboring communities and then interviewed once each. The interview included sample questions such as "What types of values do you emphasize for the youngsters on your baseball/softball team?" and "How important is winning in the total realm of your coaching?" Using a content analysis procedure, the interviews were coded and summaries were prepared for each coding category. No mention of validity or reliability of the process or the interpretations was provided. The coaches espoused a wide range of values for youth sport such as sportsmanship, respect and support for teammates, sport skill development, equal treatment of all participants, and fun. However, many inconsistencies were found when the coaches were asked to explain how they implemented these values into their coaching behaviors. Most inconsistencies were noted between the espoused importance on equal treatment of all participants and the importance of winning. Furthermore, most coaches were unaware of the mismatch between their values and their behaviors.

Although similarities are evident between the Wilcox and Trudel (1998) and the McCallister et al. (2000) findings, the results provide only limited information on the components of a youth sport coach's role frame. One study was based on

a convenience sample of one (Wilcox & Trudel) and the other study was based on random sampling (McCallister et al.), with neither study using any measure of coach effectiveness as sampling criteria. Furthermore, McCallister and colleagues collected data via a single-shot interview with each coach, which does not address the many threats to validity inherent in a reliance on verbal self-report data when examining cognitive systems (Pajares, 1992). Although Wilcox and Trudel combined interviews and observations to address some of these limitations, their results are limited to one novice coach. Therefore, it is evident that very little is actually known about what an effective, or model, coach's beliefs looks like in action.

Why is it so important to study model coaches? If the ultimate goal of research with coaches is to improve coaching practice, a logical place to start would be to study effective, or model, coaches. Unfortunately, 90% of the coaching studies (n = 611) conducted between 1970 and 2001 did not use any criteria of coach effectiveness (Gilbert, 2002). This shortcoming may explain why coaching science has been criticized for its limited impact on coaching practice (Abraham & Collins, 1998). Although a consensual definition of an effective coach may never be attained, using some measure of effectiveness should be considered when sampling coaches for research. The study of effective coaches, whose tacit knowledge and experience can then be shared with young developing coaches, is critical to the application of coaching science. This is consistent with the sampling logic used in well-known studies of practitioners in sport (e.g., Bloom, 1985) and other domains (e.g., Schön, 1983).

A review of research in other fields provides empirical guidance for understanding and examining coaches' role frames. Schön's (1983, 1991) work is perhaps the most comprehensive example of research on role frames with model practitioners. For Schön, professional growth through experience is accomplished through a process of reflecting-in and on-practice dilemmas, referred to as a reflective conversation. Reflection is described as the cognitive process of reflecting-in and on-action while engaged in genuine activity. It is a dialectic process of thought and action with the objective of improving a dilemma of practice (Kruse, 1997).

The critical difference between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action is that the latter is a conscious process and the former is tacit and inseparable from doing. Reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action both include a cognitive and a behavioral component and are critical to the development of practical professional knowledge. Four themes are central to Schön's (1983, 1987) theory: (a) role frames, (b) problem setting, (c) experiments, and (d) professional repertoires. The way a practitioner views his or her professional role is referred to as role framing. Dilemmas of practice are then organized through a process of problem setting-determining which situation or events are problematic, and why. A practitioner's repertoire is the source of ideas and action strategies that are the basis of experiments. Experiments, or attempts to resolve the dilemma, are continually evaluated which in turn informs further problem setting.

A description of how these themes apply to knowledge development in youth sport coaching is provided elsewhere (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). Furthermore, readers interested in a detailed description of Schön's theory of reflection and how it applies to professional development, including critiques of his theory, are directed to other sources (Kruse, 1997; Munby & Russell, 1989; Schön, 1983, 1987, 1991). As the purpose of the present article is to examine how coaches frame their roles, only the role frame theme is discussed further.

Role Frames
and Reflective Practice

The common feature of role frames is that they are used to interpret situations. Bateson's (1972) analogy of a picture frame illustrates the idea of delimiting certain features of a situation based on an individual's frame of reference. The picture frame analogy is useful to interpret Schön's discussion of how practitioners frame their role. Schön (1983) defines role framing as "the ways in which they [practitioners] *construct* the reality in which they function" (p. 310). For Schön (1983), the way practitioners frame their role determines what information is most salient. Role frames act as filters through which problems are constructed and strategies are developed.

Role frames are considered relatively stable over time and tend to be self-reinforcing (Schön, 1983). In this regard, role frames strongly influence a practitioner's reflection because only those issues that are consistent with their role frame components will be addressed. Furthermore, role frames are often tacit; yet developing an awareness of one's role frame is critical to professional growth. Although role frames are somewhat fixed, Schön (1983) contends that role frames may be altered over extended periods of reflecting-in and on-practice.

Based on the importance of role frames in how one practices his or her profession, and in how one learns through experience, it would be useful to examine the role frame components of youth sport coaches. The purpose of the present study was to examine the role frame components of youth team sport coaches. The need to understand how coaches perceive their role is firmly grounded in coaching models, perhaps originating in the mediational model of coaching developed by Smoll, Smith, Curtis, and Hunt (1978). Their conceptual model provides a framework for understanding the coaching process and the variables that influence it, namely (a) coach and player perceptions, (b) coach individual differences, (c) player individual differences, and (d) situational factors. Key among the coach individual differences is what they label "perceived coaching norms and role conception." Smoll and Smith (1989) hypothesized that this variable would heavily influence behavioral intentions of coaches and concluded that "individual differences in role and norm conceptions hold heuristic promise for the study of coaching behaviors" (p. 1535). The present study, therefore, was conducted with the intent of making a much-needed contribution to this aspect of coaching science.

Research on how coaches frame their roles can make an important contribution to coach development programs. For example, youth sport coaches could be provided with examples of model youth sport coaches' role frames. These examples can be used as a guide to help coaches structure their own developing approach to coaching. Schön (1983) discussed this type of application as a way for practitioners to "try on" a way of framing their role: "it would help the practitioner to understand the competences he [sic] would need, and the kind of person he would become, if he framed his role in a particular way" (p. 315). In addition, this type of research can start to provide insight into the often reported discrepancy between coaches' attitudes/beliefs and their actual behaviors (Gould & Martens, 1979; McCallister et al., 2000). Studies that have examined this aspect of coaching have generally examined value systems out of context (i.e., questionnaire or interview). An examination of how coaches frame their roles, based on their explanation of their actual behaviors during games and practices, is needed to help identify barriers

coaches may face when trying to realize their roles in their particular coaching context. Lastly, an examination of how coaches frame their roles is critical to creating positive youth sport experiences given these values directly influence coaching behaviors, which in turn directly influence the quality of the youth sport experience (Smoll & Smith, 1989).

Methodology

A multiple-case study approach (Yin, 1994) was used with six model youth team sport coaches. A model youth team sport coach was defined as a coach who (a) demonstrated interest in learning about the theory and practice of coaching; (b) was respected in the local sporting community for their commitment to youth sport; (c) was considered a good leader, teacher, and organizer; and (d) kept winning in perspective and encouraged children to respect the rules of the game, competitors, and officials. Three ice hockey and three soccer coaches were selected based on a reputational case selection sampling procedure (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The cases were selected based on the recommendation of key informants who were highly knowledgeable about the local youth sport culture. The key informant for the soccer coaches was the technical coaching director for a local soccer association. The key informant for the ice hockey coaches was the vice-president of coaches for a local ice hockey association. Both of the key informants had been involved in their community sport associations for many years and had themselves been coaches in the community. Each informant was first contacted by telephone and was briefed on the purpose of the study. These two individuals expressed a strong interest in the project and were asked to suggest names of coaches that fit the criteria of a model youth sport coach. All six coaches who were suggested by the key informants agreed to participate in the study. The coaches were asked to participate in a study on youth sport coaching and were not informed that they were identified as model coaches.

The coach demographic profiles, five male and one female, were consistent with studies of other youth sport coaches (Ewing, Seefeldt, & Brown, 1996). All of the coaches were volunteers, four were dual parent-coaches, and they averaged 10.7 years of coaching experience ($R = 3$-20 years). The age of the athletes ranged from 10 to 14 years old, and all of the coaches had completed at least level 1 of a national coaching certification program. Participants provided informed consent, and pseudonyms are used throughout the presentation of results.

Although five of the coaches were male, all of the soccer coaches have been assigned female pseudonyms. This raises issues of gender representation and implications for how the results may be interpreted, but after much deliberation the protection of the participants ultimately must override these issues (APA, 2001). The reason for this dilemma is because the lone female coach expressed that she did not want to be identifiable in the results. This only became known to the researchers as the study unfolded. Over the course of the season when the data were collected, the political scene surrounding the soccer league was highly charged. Given that she was the only female coaching a male soccer team in that league, the only way to disguise her identity was to disguise her gender, or that of other coaches so that she was not presented as the only female coach. Furthermore, all of the coaches and league administrators requested copies of the material disseminated from the present study. In order to respect the female coach's confidentiality requirement,

Table 1   Description and Purpose of Case Study Sources of Evidence

Source of evidence	Description	Purpose
1. Background interviews	One-time interview with each coach Structured interview guide 30-60 minutes	Obtain demographic information. Create natural conversational environment. Develop rapport and trust with participant.
2. Documents	Team newsletters, guidelines, schedules Local sport association publications Local media coverage	Validate factual information. Corroborate other sources of evidence. Increase researcher sensitivity to context.
3. Observations (video and audio recording)	Video camera across from coach Coach wore wireless microphone 3-5 events[1] per interval[2] per coach 60-120 minutes each	Gain insight into role frame components. Validate interview data.
4. On-site interviews	Pre- and post-event interview (2 per event) Semi-structured interview outline 5-10 minutes each	Obtain information on new or current coaching issues and coaching behaviors.
5. Interval summary interviews	Within one week of end of each interval Semi-structured interview outline Follow-up questions 45-90 minutes each	Explore coaching issues and behaviors in-depth. Complete missing data and update previously discussed issues. Test emergent propositions.
6. Member check interviews	Upon completion of data collection and preparation of case summary reports Semi-structured interview outline 20-80 minutes each	Validate the data and the interpretations. Complete missing data.

[1] A regularly scheduled game or practice.
[2] Each interval of data collection covered 7 to 12 days during the regular playing season.

coach gender has been disguised in all published reports (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001; Gilbert, Gilbert, & Trudel, 2001a, 2001b; Gilbert & Trudel, in press). When the study was completed and the issue of confidentiality became a serious issue for the lone female soccer coach, the decision to "change" the soccer coaches' gender was made and the two male coaches consented to this modification.

Consistent with case study design (Yin, 1994), multiple sources of evidence were used to collect the data (see Table 1). The combination of diverse methods of data collection is critical when examining cognitive structures, such as role frames, and therefore helps to address some of the limitations of relying on verbal self-reports (Pajares, 1992; Trudel et al., 1996). In order to obtain data representative of an entire playing season (5-6 months), while collecting data with three different cases at a time (3 in soccer season, 3 in ice hockey season), the playing season for each sport was divided into three intervals—early season, mid-season, and late season. Each interval covered a period of 7-12 days. In total, 59 events (games and practices) were observed, and 148 interviews were conducted (Gilbert & Trudel, 2001). All coaches completed one background interview, three interval summary interviews (one at the end of each interval of data collection), and one member check interview. Because of the need to react to each coach's particular schedule during the season, there was a slight variation in the number of events observed and hence the number of on-site interviews conducted. The number of events observed per coach ranged from 9-11, and the number of on-site interviews per coach ranged from 18-22.

Role frame components, like belief systems, are often tacit (Pajares, 1992; Schön, 1983). Therefore, role frame components had to be inferred through the coaches' use of language and their explanation of their coaching behaviors. Transcripts from all of the different types of interviews (see Table 1) were coded to identify potential role frame components. Using the youth sport coaching literature as a guide, a provisional start list of role frame codes was developed prior to initial coding. The list of role frame components was continually revised to fit the data throughout the analysis process. Tannen (1993) provided a list of 16 markers that can be used to identify role frame components. Markers used in the present study were coaches' (a) repetition of ideas and concepts; (b) omission of statements, especially valuable when compared to what is said by other coaches; (c) negative statements; (d) generalizations; and (e) evaluative language. The QSR NUD.IST qualitative data analysis software program was used to facilitate data management and data analysis (Qualitative Solutions and Research, 1997).

Starting with the first data collection interval, theoretical propositions and a tentative role frame were prepared for each coach. In each subsequent interval of data collection, the propositions and the role frame were tested for accuracy and comprehensiveness. For example, if a coach stated in an interview that fun was important, the coach's behaviors and strategies would be closely examined for consistency with this belief. When conflicting information was noted, coaches were asked to explain the inconsistency between their statements and their behaviors.

The validity of the role frame components was addressed through the use of multiple sources of evidence, prolonged interaction in the field, peer feedback, and member check interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Although not sufficient on its own, prolonged interaction in the field served several purposes: (a) to learn about the context, (b) to check incomplete or misinformation,

and (c) to develop rapport and trust with the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The primary researcher spent nearly six months in the field with each coach and met with each coach on at least 14 occasions (combination of all interviews and observations with each coach). Evidence to support that this prolonged interaction did allow for the establishment of good rapport may be seen from their willingness to openly share personal experiences and coaching weaknesses. In addition, many of the interval summary interviews were conducted in the homes of the coaches at their request, further supporting that rapport was established during the course of the study.

Soliciting feedback from others is consistently advocated as a critical strategy for addressing the quality (validity) of a qualitative research project (Culver, Gilbert, & Trudel, 2003; Creswell, 1998; Maxwell, 1996). This strategy, however, is referred to variously as peer review (Creswell, 1998), peer feedback (Maxwell, 1996), and peer debriefing (Schwandt, 1997). Regardless of the terminology used, the consistent message is to include feedback during the study both from individuals familiar with and unfamiliar with the project. In the current study, the feedback sessions conducted with colleagues familiar with the research were referred to as peer review meetings, and the feedback sessions conducted with individuals unfamiliar with the research were referred to as peer debrief meetings. Peer review meetings were scheduled twice per month over the 2-year study. Prior to peer review meetings, a written document with emerging propositions and methodological issues was prepared for the reviewers. Each peer reviewer served as a sort of "devil's advocate": "an individual who keeps the researcher honest; asks hard questions about methods, meanings, and interpretations" (Creswell, 1998, p. 202).

Peer debriefing, a less formal type of peer feedback, was conducted at bimonthly research meetings with five colleagues. The purpose of the peer debriefing meetings was to solicit on-the-spot feedback and discussion on all aspects of the project. Neither the peer review nor the peer debriefing sessions were conducted for the purpose of calculating a percentage of agreement. Instead, consistent with the qualitative methods literature, the focus was to raise alternative conclusions and interpretations of the data and to share methodological insights. The result of this process is also sometimes referred to as consensual validation (Schwandt, 1997).

Lastly, two types of member checks were performed, on-the-spot member checks and post-data collection and analysis member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Interview techniques such as probes, paraphrases, and follow-up questions were used as on-the-spot member checks. During the interviews, coaches were also asked to elaborate on previously discussed material to test initial propositions about the data. Upon completion of each case study, a case summary report was submitted to each participant for verification. Each report contained a summary of (a) the demographic profile of the coach and the team, (b) the coach's role frame, and (c) the researchers' interpretations presented as within-case propositions. A member check interview was then conducted with each coach to discuss his or her views on the accuracy of the report. All of the coaches indicated that the case summary reports were accurate.

Results

The results are presented in two parts. In the first part, a composite role frame based on the six case studies is provided. A supporting example for each of the

role frame components is presented with a focus on allowing each of the coach's voices to be heard. In the second part, in-depth examples from two case studies are presented to illustrate the complex interaction between role frame components and coaching behaviors.

Composite Role Frame

The coaches' composite role frame comprised three boundary components and nine internal components (see Figure 1). Boundary components are situational factors that influence an individual's approach to coaching. Internal role frame components are personal views/attitudes regarding youth sport coaching that are "framed" by the boundary components. In this sense, the internal components of a role frame are dynamic; their organization is dependent on the status of the boundary components. Jackie supported this proposition in her member check interview.

> This [role frame] is very fluid. This would change depending on a lot of factors, like the players' age; if this was two or three years ago this would change substantially. Discipline is not really an issue for players at that age [13-14 years], they just want to get out there and do well and they will do whatever you ask them to do. A lot of it has to do with the makeup of the team. The level of competition would certainly affect this model.

The two boundary components that were found for all six case study coaches were the age group and competitive level of the athletes.
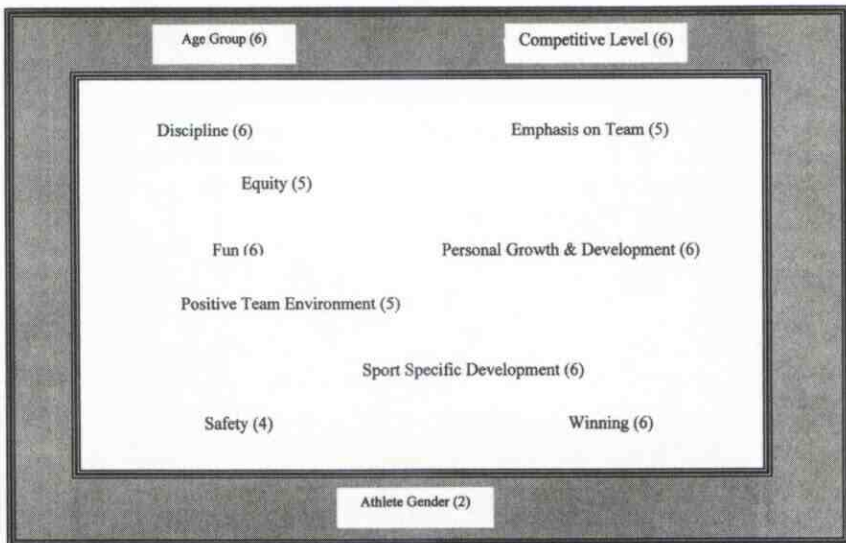
(n) = number of case study coaches in which component was found

Figure 1 — Composite role frame diagram.
(n) = number of case study coaches in which component was found.

Age Group. As a soccer coach, Jackie had to determine how much time would be adequate for a practice session because there were no time limits on the practice field usage. It is evident from the ensuing dialogue how her strategy was bound by the age group role frame component.

Researcher: Why did you decide on two hours?

Jackie: Well, as the kids get older, you can get into longer practices. When they are younger their attention span is less and the practices have to be more active, they have to be moving and going and doing something all the time, and you couldn't expect a kid that is 11 years old to go like that for two hours. That would just burn them out. I started out with half-hour practices when I first started with the younger kids, just slowly increased the length. With a two-hour practice, I am finding now that that is the maximum for kids this age. After about an hour and a half, that is when you have to give them a little bit of a treat at the end. (Interval 1 summary interview)

Competitive Level. Bren's ice hockey team was registered in the second highest competitive level in the region. As a result, he framed his role as a coach based on his expectations for athlete skill level in that competitive setting. In the first interview, he stated that "I look more at the team level, the tactical part now. At this level of competition we are pushing more tactical development;" however, he modified his expectations throughout the season when he realized that his team was probably more suited to a lower competitive level. As a result he reframed his role as a coach for that team.

It is "A" level hockey but I am still running a "B" level program. We can't progress into the more tactical part of the game that we want to at this level. Some of the kids I was hoping, like you could see the other team cycling and stuff like that. I would really like to do that, but they are still lacking the fundamentals. There was a practice and you weren't there, I tried some basic cycling drills. Some players enjoyed it, some thought it was great, but that is kind of where it ended, it meant nothing. Maybe later on we will reintroduce it again because at the "A" level you should be able to do this. (Post-practice 4 interview)

Although only two of the coaches had experience coaching athletes of the other gender, they both cited athlete gender as an important variable that influenced their coaching. They explained that they discovered, only through their experience, the importance of adjusting their role frame based on the gender of the athletes. For example, a soccer coach who had experience teaching a girls' team explained the need for prepractice social time and quick transitions between practice drills because of the different behaviors of girl soccer players compared to boy soccer players.

Nine internal role frame components were found with at least four of the six case study coaches (see Figure 1). Five of the internal role frame components were evident with all six case study coaches: discipline, fun, personal growth and development, sport specific development, and winning. Examples are provided for each of these internal role frame components.

Discipline.   Bren, an ice hockey coach, provides an example of how important discipline was as an internal role frame component. He would not tolerate disrespectful comments or actions by any of his players. If he noted a disrespectful act, he would quickly reprimand the player.

> I caught him [athlete] last night mouthing off at the opposition. Our door was open and the player from the other team went right by. I don't have patience for that stuff, I am right there. I caught him plus the other player. I told them "You should be good sports." They have to learn respect. I am very quick to make sure they understand that if they do these things, mouth off, it only reflects on them and their team, they are poor sports. (Interval 1 summary interview)

Fun.   The concern with creating a fun learning environment was discussed and modeled by all six of the coaches. Richard, an ice hockey coach, clearly described this aspect of his role frame when asked about his expectations before the season.

> What I expect to do, well my number one priority is to make sure that every kid has fun. Like I told the parents at the beginning of the year, if your kid learns how to shoot, how to deke, how to skate, how to pass, but doesn't have fun all year, then I haven't done my job. So my number one priority for all the kids is that they have a good time and then the skating skills and the hockey aspect of everything comes after that. I won't be satisfied until every kid has fun. I want to give them a year that they will always remember even when they are 30 years old and they think back and say "Yeah, I remember playing that year, that was a great season." (Background interview)

Personal Growth and Development.   This component relates to the promotion and development of non sport-specific skills such as life skills, social and moral development, confidence, and individual responsibility. Two quotations are provided from the dialogue with the soccer coach Jackie. The first quotation is her description of her role as a coach at the beginning of the season.

> I'm trying to turn them into young men. I'm pretty strict with what I will and will not allow, on or off the field, whether we are going to a tournament and they are in a hotel, there is still a standard of behavior that I would expect from them. So I don't just, I'm not there just to teach them the skills and send them on the field to win the game. (Background interview)

The second quotation is from an interview later in the season, in which she was explaining her decision to reward work ethic and attitude over ability.

> I will go with the best 15 if all 15 are working hard in practice, then all 15 will play. I will go with kids who have the right attitude and the work ethic and want to improve their game over somebody who has the natural ability that is out there just floating through. (Interval 1 summary interview)

Sport Specific Development.   This component of the coaches' role frame relates specifically to providing opportunities for the participants to learn the

techniques and tactics of the sport. A great example of the importance of skill development is found in the soccer coach Jennifer's explanation of how she handled a canceled game late in the season. Her team had a very difficult season in terms of their win-loss record and there was significant external pressure from parents and administrators to increase their win total. Late in the season, an opposing team informed Jennifer that they couldn't play a regularly scheduled game. According to league rules, Jennifer's team could take the win by default. Despite the external pressure to grab the two points for the win, Jennifer chose to reschedule the game because it was more consistent with how she framed her role as a youth sport coach. The opportunity for the athletes to play and develop their skills was more important than the win.

> We had a game scheduled for today and we had a practice scheduled for tomorrow. So because the other team was unable to come to today's game, they sent us a fax saying they will default and give us the points. We would prefer to actually have a game because that is why our kids registered in soccer, to play, not to win by default. (Prepractice 3 interview)

Winning. The ice hockey coach Richard provides a clear example of the importance placed on winning, at least in some situations, by all of the coaches. For example, Richard believed in playing the most skilled players in critical game situations such as tournament games, playoff games, and the final minutes of close games. It was clear from his statements and behaviors throughout the project that when it was a critical game situation, decisions were made with a concern toward winning the game.

> Researcher: Will you have a powerplay line in the tournament?

> Richard: In a tournament, when needed to score a goal or to win, I already have my specific line.

> Researcher: And do you anticipate any problems with that, with parents complaining?

> Richard: No, no, because I told them at the beginning of the year. Powerplays and penalty killing, everybody gets a play, I just go straight down the bench. But when we are in a tournament where it is a must win situation or we have a chance of going to the semi-finals, I will put my best players on, and they have no problems with that. I told the same thing to the players and they have no problem with that. And when we make the playoffs, I am thinking positive here, I will have a meeting with the parents and tell them that this is the playoffs. I am not going to say the best players because I think all my players are excellent, I am just going to say the players that come out to play and show me that they are ready to play will play. We are not going to take the chance; we worked hard to get to the playoffs; let's do something about it. I think the parents, in their right mind, will understand that this is the playoffs and that this is big, so I don't think there will be a problem with that. (Interval 2 summary interview)

Although athlete development (both sport specific and personal), equity and winning are all situated as internal role frame components, their sometimes

diametrical nature often created a psychological conflict for the coaches. On the one hand, the coaches espoused the benefits of sport participation for athlete development and fair treatment of all players, yet at the same time they frequently tried to balance that objective with team success (i.e., winning). Model coaches develop coaching strategies that balance the complex interaction of multiple, and sometimes conflicting, role frame components. For example, although winning was important for Jackie, one of the senior soccer coaches, she also realized the importance of treating all athletes equitably. This is supported by an example of how Jackie distributed playing time for her two goalies. During a local tournament, her team was scheduled to play against a visiting team from another country. Because each team is typically only guaranteed a few (3-4) games, the outcome of every game in a tournament is critical for proceeding to the next round of play. However, instead of only playing the more skilled goalie, Jackie allowed both of her goalies to play one-half of the game because she realized they both wanted to have an opportunity to play against a foreign team. In this example, equitable treatment of the athletes, which fosters a positive team environment, personal growth and development, and greater opportunity for development of sport skills, was balanced with a consideration for winning.

Case Study Examples:
Barbara and Duane

Barbara.   Barbara coached a girls' competitive (10-11 years) soccer team and one of her daughters played on the team. She had 5 years of coaching experience and 3 years of experience as a soccer player. She also had completed the first level of certification through a national coaching certification program.

Barbara's approach to coaching comprised the three boundary components and eight internal components illustrated in Figure 1 (excluding safety). Barbara was one of only two coaches who cited athlete gender as a boundary role frame component. Barbara did not use certain coaching strategies, particularly related to discipline and distribution of playing time, because of her concern for the young age of the athletes. For example, she was not comfortable with the common strategy of "benching" players during games. She felt that this strategy was inappropriate for the young athletes on her team.

> I had a boy once who had the best ball control skills, but the problem was he would never pass and he would get himself stuck. I didn't get him to change his way of play so I failed in that way and yet I refused to sit there and say bench him because they are still young kids. You have to learn and I don't think by punishment is the way to learn, at least at this age. Maybe at 13 or 14 years of age, but that will be a different story. (Background interview)

There were eight internal components of Barbara's role frame (see Figure 1—excluding safety). Barbara's explanation of the coaching strategy used to assign a team captain supports the role frame components of equity and emphasis on team. Although other coaches selected one player as a team captain for the entire season, Barbara disagreed with that strategy because it was inconsistent with the equity and emphasis on team components of her role frame. Her decision was also bound by the age of her athletes (age group boundary component). Barbara preferred to allow each athlete on the team to experience being the captain for at least one game.

My understanding, and it is also part of my belief, that at this age the concept of being part of the team is more important [than assigning one captain for the entire year]. Their concept of the game from my experience is different at this age than it is at 13 or 14. At this age it is far more important for them to be part of the team that plays and everything in my approach has always been team oriented. So if I elect one captain, automatically I am singling out a person as being a step above everyone else and my goal for the next couple of years is that it is the team first. That is why I rotate the captains, the same way as I don't keep track of who scores goals because that means it sort of elevates someone, saying well that person is scoring goals so they are more important on the team. Anyway, that is why the captaincy is rotated, because everyone gets a shot at it. (Interval 1 summary interview)

The winning component of Barbara's role frame is complex and was initially very difficult to interpret. Based on an analysis of the first few interviews, it did not appear that winning would warrant consideration as a component in Barbara's role frame. She made very strong statements deemphasizing winning in youth soccer. As the season progressed, however, Barbara struggled with how to balance athlete development and winning. There were times when winning seemed to be more of a central component in her approach to coaching. Halfway through the season, she was questioned about this contradiction.

I like to think that development is my key issue, but I have to admit nagging in the back of my head is I would really love to win. Like the game last night, they played a great game. It will take me a day or two to get over the fact that mistakes were made. So yes, it is a balance. The key for me, I would like to say that development is the key but there are nagging voices in the back of my head that say it is nice to win. It is human nature, but development is the reason and next year I might coach younger children. Everyone is under pressure to win more and I still don't believe that is the right thing. I want to say "No, winning doesn't matter," but there is a part of you that says "Yeah, you have to win!" (Barbara, Interval 2 summary interview)

Barbara also commented at length in the final interview about the constant struggle between winning and athlete development. Although she tried to focus on athlete development, winning or team success was an ever-present component of how Barbara framed her role as a youth soccer coach. The issue of balancing athlete development and winning is also an example of how multiple role frame components interact to guide coaching behavior. This issue was framed in at least six components of Barbara's role frame: emphasis on team, equity, positive team environment, personal growth and development, sport specific development, and winning. Each of the following quotations illustrates a different component of her role frame used to interpret this coaching issue.

Everybody has to get the practice, so I mean, you can't always just play your good ones. (Equity)

As you see, I tried to get Andrea to play forward but I don't want to force someone if they are going to be really uncomfortable. I will try again to get her up to play forward, maybe against a weaker team. Same with Erin, she

likes playing defense but I would like to get her to play forward more just to learn the position. (Positive team environment, Sport specific development, Winning)

Not only do you want to win, it is also getting units of players that work well together. If you start mixing that up then it takes something away from them because they don't feel as good about themselves. (Emphasis on team, Personal growth and development, Winning)

Duane.   Duane coached a boys' competitive (13-14 years) ice hockey team. Although Duane had a son, he did not play on Duane's team. He had 20 years of coaching experience and 10 years of experience as an ice hockey player. He also had completed the second level of certification through a national coaching certification program.

Duane's approach to coaching comprised two boundary components (age group and competitive level) and nine internal components (see Figure 1). Both of the boundary components were mentioned frequently as influences on his approach to coaching. For example, he preferred not to spend time teaching the players individual skills because that should have been taught to the athletes when they played in a younger age group and lower competitive level. Instead, he believed his role as a coach for the age and competitive level of his team was to focus on team tactics.

Duane also believed that at this level of competition he should be permitted to use certain players only for special team units during games. This would mean that some players would receive more playing time than others. However, some of the parents angrily questioned him when he attempted to implement this strategy, so he reverted to coaching as though he were at a lower competitive level.

Now I know that there are some parents talking behind my back saying I am not coaching competitive hockey, I am more coaching the style of recreational because I am just opening the door and sending three [players] out and three back. The reason I am not doing it [special teams] is because I don't want to get accosted again. So at this level I am not allowed to coach the way I would like to coach. (Pre-game 5 interview)

There were nine internal components of Duane's role frame (see Figure 1). The internal role frame components were constant but their importance fluctuated. For example, fun was generally considered a key component, yet if a player displayed unacceptable behavior, he would be disciplined. Another example is Duane's concern for equitable treatment of all the players, particularly related to the distribution of playing time. However, if one of the goalies was playing poorly, he would lose his playing time for the rest of that game because of Duane's concern for the rest of the players who were working hard to achieve success (emphasis on team and winning). Therefore, the internal components were always present but their importance was tied to the specific conditions at the time.

Disciplined behavior by the athletes and enforcement of team rules was frequently cited as a primary concern: "I am very, very strong on discipline, maybe it is my upbringing" (Interval 2 summary interview). This is supported by the fact that the team had the lowest number of penalties in the league. Another example of the importance of discipline relates to player self-discipline on the ice. Although

Duane didn't like to remove playing time as a form of punishment, he felt it was warranted if a player showed a lack of self-discipline.

> If you take a retaliation penalty, you are benched, and one kid did. He was benched for the rest of the period, but he knew. He came right away. I told him, I said, "You know where you are going." And he said, "Yeah, I know." (Post-game 4 interview)

The emphasis on team role frame component was also evident in many of Duane's comments and behaviors. A primary objective for the coach was to get the players to work together as a team. This meant each player had to understand his role on the team and learn to sacrifice individual goals for the betterment of the team.

> Winning is important, but I think having them play together is more important for me because I tell them, if you do that, winning will follow. So I think our emphasis is on our game plan. Like our pregame plan is hit, positional hockey, triangulation in the offensive zone, let's play as a team, let's pass. And if they do that well, the wins will come. So it is team gel and team play systems, to me that is more important because everything else will fall after. (Interval 1 summary interview)

Duane also stressed the importance of creating a positive and supportive environment for the athletes at all times. Although he intervened often with the athletes during games, he never berated the players in front of their teammates, unless they committed a serious infraction. In addition, Duane preferred to wait after a game or until the next practice to give the players feedback on their performance because he realized that emotions are often high after a game and comments may be misinterpreted.

> I don't try to tell them immediately after the game what they did wrong or right. I let them cool down and then the next game, before the game or practice, then I tell them what we did right or wrong. I think that right now it is better this way because in the heat of the moment you might say something bad or wrong and it might be taken out of context and you might hurt their feelings more. (Pre-game 2 interview)

The personal growth and development component of Duane's role frame included references to social and moral development, life skills, confidence, work ethic, and keeping sport in perspective. For example, commitment to the team was important, but Duane also realized that youth sport was only one activity in his athletes' lives.

> What I said at the very first meeting of the year with the parents, I said, if the boy cannot come to the practice you have to phone me to tell me. I said, if it is a family related thing, just tell me and I will be the judge of it. I said, if it is a very good excuse, then fine, I accept that. Hockey is not the end of the world, there are priorities, family comes first, school comes first, things like that, I understand that. (Interval 2 summary interview)

Although winning was very important to Duane, he placed qualifiers on the centrality of winning. For example, he always stressed winning to the players, but

within the context of cooperation with teammates and giving the effort to win, or striving to win. He described winning as a means for players to develop sport skills and confidence.

> My approach is to try and touch as many kids as I can to make them enjoy the game of hockey. If we can win, then that is sugar on top. We try, and I stress, we try to win at all costs, but within a structured scenario, and we can do that, great. But my pleasure out of it is when I see a kid that has improved, when he gets a goal or makes an assist or he makes a play that before he said he couldn't do. (Interval summary 2 interview)

An example of how multiple role frame components influenced coaching behaviors is evident in how Duane attempted to resolve the issue of fundraising. Before Duane would consider experimenting with a coaching strategy, it had to be consistent with his role frame. One of the more popular and successful fundraising events in his community was known as road blocks. Typically, a team would solicit funds from motorists waiting at a traffic light; however, Duane did not endorse this strategy because it was incongruent with at least two of his role frame components: age group and safety. He considered this strategy unsafe, particularly for the age of the athletes on his team. He preferred a strategy of selling raffle tickets for prizes that were donated or purchased by the club. Duane also frequently discussed the physical safety of the athletes as a consideration for how he structured his practice sessions.

Discussion

Boundary Components

The age group and the competitive level of the athletes were revealed by all six of the case study coaches as boundaries on their approach to coaching. A consideration of the age group of the athletes is commonly discussed in coaching texts and coaching programs (Coaching Association of Canada, CAC, 1988; Martens, 1997; Thompson, 1995). The age group role frame component included consideration of the various developmental characteristics associated with athletes in an age category (e.g., Peewee hockey = 12-13 year olds). For example, the way age group is used in the present study is analogous to the stages of development presented in coaching theory manuals (e.g., CAC, 1988).

The possible influence of the competitive level, however, is seldom made explicit in coaching materials or clinics. Community-based sport is often divided into recreational and competitive levels. For each age group, the recreational level emphasizes mass participation regardless of skill level. The competitive level typically restricts participation through skill tryouts and the environment is very different from recreational sport. In ice hockey, for example, competitive leagues usually play more games (average of 65 versus 37), use different rules (body-checking), and the players are taller, heavier, and stronger (Bernard, Trudel, Marcotte, & Boileau, 1993; Roy, Bernard, Roy, & Marcotte, 1989).

All six of the case study coaches indicated that the competitive level of the team they were coaching was a major determinant of how they framed their role as a coach. This finding raises the obvious question: How and why do coaches bracket their role according to the competitive level of the athletes? The results of

the present study clearly show that there is a common implicit assumption in the youth sport environment that competitive sport requires an approach very different from recreational sport. Support for this proposition is found in a study of youth football coaches in which the verbal behaviors of the coaches during games differed by competitive level (Dubois, 1982). A fruitful avenue for research in youth sport can be the exploration into how and why coaches view recreational and competitive youth sport differently and the impact of this view on their coaching behaviors.

In addition, there is evidence in the present study to suggest that the boundary components of a coach's role frame may include more than only the age group and competitive level of the athletes. For example, two of the coaches cited the gender of the athletes as an influence on the structure of their internal role frame components. This is a phenomenon that also requires further exploration. Men have traditionally comprised the vast majority of youth sport coaches (Gould & Martens, 1979; Weiss & Sisley, 1984). If a male coach who teaches a team of female athletes does not modify the internal components of his role frame, what impact will this have on the athletes? Although participation in youth sports by boys still outnumbers that of girls, the gap has decreased in recent years because of increased sporting opportunities for young girls (De Knop, Engström, & Skirstad, 1996). However, at the same time there has been an increase in the number of girls dropping out of organized sport (De Knop et al., 1996). Could it be that one reason girls drop out of youth sport is because male coaches don't adjust their role frame to coaching to fit athlete gender?

Numerous studies of youth sport athletes show important athlete gender differences in terms of coaching preferences. For example, female adolescent athletes tend to prefer coaches who emphasize fun, excitement, competition, and democratic behavior, whereas male adolescent athletes tend to prefer coaches who emphasize fitness, achievement, and competitive challenge (Martin, Dale, & Jackson, 2001). Numerous studies of young female athletes and their coaches also indicate that female participants place a greater emphasis on the social aspect of sport (Boyd, Trudel, & Donohue, 1997; Gill et al., 1983; Gould, Feltz, & Weiss, 1985). However, the impact of how coaches frame their role based on the gender of the athletes has yet to be fully explored. Additional research is needed to examine how gender differences (physical and psychological) of youth sport participants influence coach role frames.

Internal Components

The second level in a coach's role frame is the level of internal components that is surrounded by the boundary components. Although the terms role frame and internal components have not been used in the coaching literature, a review of suggested approaches to coaching reveals many similarities to the findings of the present study. For example, frequently cited characteristics of a competent youth sport coach include an emphasis on fun, sport specific development, athlete personal growth and development, competition, and perspective of sport in relation to other activities (Gould & Martens, 1979; Martens, 1997, Martin et al., 2001). The abundance of diverse components in a coach's role frame supports the proposition that youth sport coaching is complex and challenging. Yet, most of the coaching literature related to how coaches should frame their roles is opinion based and prescriptive. The present study makes a unique contribution to the coaching literature by providing

an empirically based portrait of the role frame components of model coaches. Furthermore, the results are grounded in the coaches' behaviors as well as their statements, thereby reducing the threats to validity inherent in a reliance on verbal self-report data (Pajares, 1992; Wilcox & Trudel, 1998).

One internal role frame component in particular warrants further discussion: winning. Coaches of youth sport often model their approach to coaching on elite or professional sport where winning is emphasized (Gilbert, Trudel, & Haughian, 1999; McCallister et al., 2000). Although winning is seldom discussed as the only component of a coach's role frame, youth sport coaches including those in the present study, typically place winning at or near the center of their approach to coaching (Chaumeton & Duda, 1988; McCallister et al., 2000; Wilcox & Trudel, 1998). For example, in a recent study of competitive youth ice hockey coaches, it was found that their decisions during games were often guided by a concern for winning (Gilbert et al., 1999). The coaches in that study frequently used the more skilled and physically developed players during critical times of the games (e.g., last few minutes of a close game).

In another example, Wilcox and Trudel (1998) mapped a competitive youth ice hockey coach's approach to coaching and also found an emphasis on winning. However, the coach also believed in athlete personal and sport specific development. These two beliefs often resulted in an internal role conflict for the coach. McCallister et al. (2000) also found an inconsistency between what youth baseball coaches stated was their strong commitment to fun and athlete development and the emphasis they placed on winning. This was particularly evident in important game situations when the score was close, which mirrors the findings of Gilbert et al. (1999) with ice hockey coaches. Comments from coaches in the present study provide additional support for the struggle between conflicting role frame components such as winning and athlete development. Although youth sport coaches often report a difficulty in balancing development and winning, it appears that youth sport participants and their parents prefer coaches who emphasize these two components (Martin et al., 2001). Therefore, coach education programs and coach consultants should facilitate the development of coaching strategies that incorporate both athlete development and winning. A unique approach to helping coaches address this issue is through in-service meetings for coaches, parents, and administrators using a communities of practice approach (Trudel & Gilbert, in press). A communities of practice approach provides real-time opportunities for all partners in the youth sport league to negotiate shared visions and coaching strategies. In this sense, a communities of practice approach moves youth sport coaching from an individual enterprise (my team versus your team) to a joint enterprise (communal goal of helping young people develop skills through competition).

Application and Summary

Although all of the role frame components were validated in member check interviews, none of the coaches were fully aware of their role frames. It is important to note that the role frames were constructed by the researchers based on interviews and observations of the coaches over an entire season of play. Role frame components, like belief systems, are tacit and therefore are difficult to verbalize (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985; Pajares, 1992; Schön, 1983). Coach education

programs and coach consultants could include exercises to help coaches bring their tacit role frames to the forefront of consciousness, thereby permitting review and analysis. Role frame analysis has been cited, under various labels and across domains, as a critical step in personal and professional development (Argyris et al., 1985; Kruse, 1997; Schön, 1983). Role frame analysis allows an individual to critically examine the underlying components that guide and influence his or her behaviors. Simply lecturing to coaches about the importance of certain role frame components (e.g., equity, fun, personal growth, and development) will likely have little or no effect on a coach's approach to coaching.

Argyris and colleagues (1985) have discovered that role frames can surface by interrupting practitioners while they are in the process of addressing a challenging issue. They concluded that by "directing individuals' attention to what they are doing, thinking, and feeling at the time" (p. 283), a practitioner can critically evaluate and possibly restructure his or her role frame. Similarly, coaches could be asked, individually and in small groups, to address a series of typical coaching issues. While engaged in the process of thinking about how to resolve the issue, coaches could be asked to respond to questions such as "Why is this considered to be an issue?" and "What strategies could be used to address the issue?" Another alternative, and perhaps more effective, would be to have coaches reflect on coaching issues they had just recently experienced or were presently experiencing. In either case, coaches could then be asked to create a visual display of their approach to coaching (role frame diagram). For the final step in the exercise, time would be allotted to allow the coaches to critically evaluate their role frame diagrams. Critical incident analysis, a similar approach, has been advocated to foster role frame analysis with teachers (Francis, 1995).

Although these types of exercises were not completed with the coaches in the present study, support is provided for the value of creating and reflecting on one's role frame. In the member check interviews, each coach was presented with a portrait of his or her role frame prepared by the researcher. The coaches were then asked to evaluate the perceived accuracy of their role frame diagrams. For all of the coaches, the role frame diagram reinforced their perceptions, even though at first glance they were unfamiliar with the graphical representation. All of the coaches expressed that this was a valuable learning experience for them.

Although each coach validated their role frames, the role frame diagrams cannot be considered exhaustive portraits of possible role frame components for a model youth sport coach. For example, only two coaches cited athlete gender as a boundary role frame component. It is possible that this may have also been an influential component for the other coaches but did not emerge in the analysis. A study of model youth sport coaches across a more diverse range of sports, competitive levels, and age groups may provide a more comprehensive role frame template that could serve as a foundation to share with beginning coaches.

To conclude, because of the myriad of environmental and individual athlete differences each coach experiences, youth sport coaching is too complex to suggest one all-encompassing model role frame. However, there does appear to be common components of a role frame for youth team sport coaching as described by the case study coaches. The objective should not be to strive toward one prototypical role frame, but instead to provide opportunities for periodic role frame analysis to evaluate the tacit role frame components that influence practice.

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