

‘Silver Cups Versus Ice Creams’: Parental Involvement With the Construction of Gender in the Field of Their Son’s Soccer

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This study explores parents’ gendered meanings in their involvement with their son’s soccer participation. We use Bourdieu’s (1985; 1990; 2012) theoretical perspective of fields, positions, habitus and taking positions to examine the way in which parents in two Dutch soccer clubs reconstruct and negotiate gendered meanings through expressions, positioning and power relations within the field of their son’s soccer. The findings suggest that, within this field, a subdivision exists between the ‘main’ field, represented by masculine meanings, and the subordinated ‘serving-the- main’ field, represented by feminine values. The study contributes to a better understanding of the processes involved in the construction of gender in both subfields and highlights the way in which women who enter the ‘main’ field can be theorized as ‘space invaders’.

Cette étude examine les significations genrées de parents suite à leur engagement dans la pratique du soccer de leur fils. Nous utilisons la perspective théorique de Bourdieu (1985; 1990; 2012) des champs, des positions, de l’habitus et des prises de position afin d’explorer la façon dont les parents de deux clubs de soccer hollandais reconstruisent et négocient des significations genrées par l’intermédiaire des expressions, des positionnements et des relations de pouvoir au sein du soccer de leur fils. Les résultats suggèrent que, dans cet espace, il existe une subdivision entre le champ « principal », représenté par des significations masculines, et le champ subordonné « au service du principal », représenté par des valeurs féminines. L’étude fournit une meilleure compréhension des processus impliqués dans la construction du genre dans ces deux champs et met en évidence comment les femmes qui pénètrent dans le champ « principal » peuvent être perçues comme des « envahisseuses d’espace ».

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This paper presents findings from a study that explored boys' soccer in the Netherlands as a space for the reproduction of gender by parents, and also as a space for the reproduction of gendered family values. It also examined the way in which parents challenged the construction of soccer as a masculine space. The central question guiding this project was: How do parents construct and negotiate gendered meanings in the space of their son's soccer? The study is part of a larger investigation into constructions of meaning in the interaction between adults and youth in the space of youth club sport (see Claringbould, 2011; Janssen, 2010).

Soccer was chosen because it is the largest participation sport in the Netherlands (NOC*NSF, 2011). It is also a very male dominated sport, with nearly 1,070,000 male and 120,000 female members. Given that some 531,000 boys play soccer out of a total number of 970,000 boys who participate in a sports club, boys' soccer clearly plays a significant role in the lives of many families (NOC*NSF, 2011). We therefore assumed that the way gender is done in the space of soccer may inform the ideas and attitudes that boys develop toward gender in general.

Sport as a Space for 'Good' Parenthood

Parents are involved with their child's sport participation in many ways, not only through the provision of financial and practical support, but also in relation to the creation of values that youth develop through such participation. Most parents are convinced that organized youth sport contributes to young athletes learning positive physical and social life skills, including healthy life styles, self-esteem, self-knowledge, discipline, cooperation, competition and dealing with the experience of losing and winning (Coakley, 2011; Kay, 2009). Youth sport can therefore be seen as a particular space where parents negotiate these meanings, ideas and practices and thus shape the meanings of these spaces (Holloway & Valentine; 2000). Several scholars have described how parents' involvement in their child's sport represents important discourses of parenting (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Claringbould, 2011; Coakley, 2006; Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012; Harrington, 2009; Kay, 2009; Trussel & Shaw, 2012). This includes the reproduction of ideas and practices regarding gender (Coakley & White, 1992; Harrington, 2009).

In contrast to 50 years ago, the contemporary discourse of being a good father has been described as a combination of both traditional and nontraditional masculine values, including a greater involvement in the care and support of children. Sport has been recognized by scholars as an appropriate space for expressing these discourses (Coakley, 2006; Kay, 2009; Such, 2009).

The discourses of good mothering, on the other hand, involves a child-centered attitude, primarily directed to the emotional support of children and the planning and organization of family activities (Trussel & Shaw, 2012). Contemporary motherhood, however, has extended from domestic spaces to more public spaces such as sports. It increasingly involves mothers in planning and organizing their children's sport and leisure activities (Trussel & Shaw, 2012). Other scholars (Harrington, 2009; 2006) concluded that the participation of mothers in the sport of their child was experienced more as 'being there' for the children, which the mothers tended to relate to an ethic of care. Fathers experienced it as 'being with' the children, they saw sport as a place for fathering, for sharing family values. The activities of

mothers were experienced more as work, while fathers predominantly referred to leisure. To differentiate between these discourses of fathering and mothering, means that not only ideas and values of good parenthood are reproduced in sports, but they reproduce gender values as well (Harrington, 2009; Trussel & Shaw, 2012).

Several scholars have described how parents tend to hold identical positive goals for their child's sport participation, but they differ in their involvement (Coakley, 2006; Dagkas & Quarmbly's, 2012; Harrington, 2009; Messner & Bozada-Deas, 2009; Ornelas, Perreira & Ayala, 2007; Trussel & Shaw, 2012; Wheeler, 2012). An American study (Messner & Bozada-Deas, 2009), for example, found that mothers tend to engage in tasks such as planning itineraries, and organizing parties and fund raising activities while fathers tend to undertake more formal voluntary work such as coaching and refereeing. These differences between fathers and mothers clearly express the gendered nature of the various tasks associated with their child's sport participation. Messner and Bozada-Deas (2009) described these differences as a process of 'sorting' the moms and dads. For example, head coaches approached fathers to become coaches and mothers to be 'team parents'. In terms of time investment, fathers are more involved than mothers in their child's sport participation and tend to spend more time with their sons' sport participation than with their daughters' (Coakley, 2006). Both parents, however, place more importance on their sons' sport participation than that of their daughters, and encourage their sons more than their daughters to be involved in sports (Messner, 2009). Research also shows that fathers report playing more roughly with their sons than with their daughters (Ornelas, Perreira & Ayala, 2007).

These processes indicate how sport as a public domain can be defined as a father's place for taking the more important positions in the space of their child's sport. Although several studies have focused on the father's role in their child's sport participation (Coakley, 2006; Harrington, 2006; Kay, 2009), studies that have included both parental ideologies in sport are rare. These studies tend to emphasize the educational role of parents in the process of bringing up their children (Shaw & Dawson, 2001; Trussell & Shaw, 2012). While they differentiate between the role of fathers and mothers, a focus on how parents reconstructed gender within the space of their child's sport is lacking. At the same time, research that emphasizes sport as a masculine space (Brown, 2006; Messner, 2007; Pringle & Hickey, 2010; Wellard, 2009) has failed to consider the roles of both fathers and mothers, and parental commitment/ideologies.

Theoretical Framework

Sport clubs can be seen as an important space for parents in relation to the cultural reproduction of gendered family values (Swanson, 2009; Trussel & Shaw, 2012). In his paper 'The good father: Parental expectations and youth sports', Coakley (2006) theorizes how parental ideologies and the role of sports herein has developed in the last century. Drawing on Bourdieu's work, Coakley extends Bourdieu's concept of a habitus to a particular 'family habitus' (p.160), that he connects to parental ideologies and the involvement of parents to their child's sport participation. Bourdieu's habitus refers to relatively lasting ways of understanding the world that contain clear, though often unconscious, ideological and normative assumptions and beliefs,

based on social experiences (see Bourdieu, 1985; 1990). The habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) is embodied and class related, in the sense that people create distinctions by positioning themselves within certain cultural fields. It can be seen as a 'generative grammar', with the potential of struggling with, challenging and/or reproducing the social world (Brown, 2006). The habitus not only shapes individual experiences and actions in a particular field, but contributes to the organization of structures and practices in these fields as well (Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff & Virk, 2012). As parent's habitus includes family expectations, thus the involvement of parents with their child's sport transmits the 'family habitus' into sporting cultures (Wheeler, 2012). Therefore the habitus of parents involved with their child's sport participation may encompass forms of cultural capital or power that are more relevant in specific fields or areas (Bourdieu, 1985; 2012).

For example, Dagkas and Quarmby (2012) used Bourdieu's theoretical framework to study how pedagogical practices embedded within the family are of crucial importance to the development of children's habitus. They argue that "the habitus is the embodiment of social values, dispositions, and tastes developed through the process of socialization in a range of situations but especially at a young age within the family" (p. 213). In addition, Swanson (2009) used Bourdieu's theories to show how mothers reproduced their upper-middle-class habitus through the involvement of their son's soccer play. Swanson's study expresses how the mothers tend to reconstruct a heteronormative and gendered habitus for their son. According to the mothers in her study soccer is an appropriate field for their son to become a 'good' boy.

Apart from the habitus, this study will use Bourdieu's concept of *fields* or 'spaces' as Puwar (2004) calls them. They refer to more or less restricted places that reproduce realities of cultural meanings, symbols and practices by those who participate in the area. They represent symbolic systems that are "characterized by their own particular relations of power and types of capital, and are bound by time and place into spaces of cultural reproduction" (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012, p. 214). Within these spaces, social dynamics and power structures are expressed and reproduced by those participating in the field (Bourdieu, 1990; Hunter, 2004; Kay & Laberge, 2002). In this discussion, we generally use the term 'space'¹ and reserve 'field' for direct reference to Bourdieu. 'Soccer field' refers to the physical playing area.

In addition, Bourdieu's (1990) perspectives on *positions* and *position taking* are of importance within the field. *Positions* can be understood as embodied (status) symbols, practices and meanings derived from the habitus. For example, parents assuming the role of coach or canteen assistant in a soccer club may symbolize different embodied meanings. Bourdieu's concept of *position taking* refers to the practices of the embodied participants in the field. For example, whether and how parents are involved with their child's soccer is part of their position taking. These concepts of fields, positions and position taking are contextual, both stable and dynamic and they may reflect changes and stability or in the habitus of those in the field.

Not until his later work Bourdieu (2001) included gender as an unquestioned structuring process of organized spaces. Gender as an embodied practice has originally been developed by Butler (1988) as a materialized performance that is recognized and 'matters' in the creation of privileges in social spaces. In her book

Space invaders, Puwar (2004) explains how spaces refer to gender and ethnicity and connect to bodies. As such, spaces tell us who the 'natural' occupants of the embodied positions² in specific spaces are. She describes the relationship between spaces and bodies as inevitable in two ways. "First, over time specific bodies are associated with specific spaces (these could be institutional positions, organizations, neighborhoods, cities, nations) and, secondly, spaces become marked as territories belonging to particular bodies" (Puwar, 2004, p. 141). In addition, Connell (2009) has described these patterns wherein men generally have the indisputable right to dominate positions within institutions as *gender regimes* or as *gender arrangements* (Connell, 2009, p.72). In line with these concepts of Puwar and Connell, Bourdieu (2001) refers to masculine domination as a form of *symbolic violence*, which he described as "A gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition, recognition or even feeling" (p. 1). Although discourses and practices of doing gender may be invisible, the entrance of those who are marginalized clarifies the invisibility and unmarkedness of the 'natural' bodies that occupy this space, since the natural body is fashioned after only one neutral (no) body—the white male body that defines and marks other bodies as the subordinate 'other' (see Puwar, 2004). For example, when a male athlete says 'you kick like a girl' to his teammate, this not only refers to how a man's body should behave, but stereotypes women's embodiment as well. While these norms (what is 'appropriate' male-kicking) remain implicit, they practice symbolic violence, since males kicking like a girl, or girls playing in a male space, may be treated as a threat or as an invasion of the space of men's soccer. This implies that social positions are not equally open to all bodies, since only certain bodies have the opportunity to remain invisible.

Puwar describes what happens if women and ethnic minorities occupy certain positions they have not occupied before. Although these women or ethnic minorities may never have meant to challenge the current symbolic spaces, they nevertheless disturb the institutionalized and normalized bodies by their presence in a certain space and therefore remain 'insider as outsider' (Puwar, 2004) or a person who 'differentially belongs' (Carrillo Rowe, 2005). As a result, they may expect symbolic violence, since both positive and negative comments are allowed to mark the invader and to legitimate the invisible norms and the status difference between the universal body and the space invader. Consequently, other bodies (such as women's) are under continuous supervision by this universal masculine body and are therefore forced to maneuver strategically. Bourdieu used the concept of 'regulated liberties', to refer to marginalized bodies negotiating and subtly maneuvering within gender regimes, they are both being involved with these regimes and troubling them at the same time (see Hills, 2006; Olive & Thorpe, 2011;).

In the end, discourses and practices of gender regimes, symbolic violence and space invaders are inextricably linked to both the habitus and specific spaces, since its practice is based on the recognition, belief and acceptance of symbolic systems that reproduce gender inequalities (Crossley, 2005). Although studies have used the work of Bourdieu to understand and emphasize gender habitus within sports (Brown, 2006; Cushion & Jones, 2006; Hills, 2006; Mennesson, 2012; Olive & Thorpe, 2011; Taylor & Garratt, 2010; Wheeler, 2012), these studies hardly paid attention to the habitus of both fathers and mothers in creating the gendered space of sport. Since the habitus of parents has the potential of—unwittingly—reproducing

gender in a transitive sense, this research provides new insights in how the context of boys soccer gives space for parents to reproduce gender as part of their family-habitus. Hence, the main focus of this inquiry is on how parents' habitus may reconstruct and negotiate gender meanings by taking positions, and how mothers may be constructed as space invaders as part of a gendered structure, in the specific space of their son's soccer fields.

Methods

Data were collected through 12 semistructured interviews³ and three observation sessions. Interview participants were six fathers and six mothers, all of whom were white and heterosexual. They all had at least one son, aged 8–16 years, who played soccer. The interviews were conducted in a location of the interviewee's choice—at the club, at their home or in a quiet cafe. The topics covered were: characteristics of soccer in general, including voluntary positions of men and women in the club; the roles of fathers and mothers in the club; fathers' and mothers' ideas on parenthood and their own role as a parent; and the involvement of their partner with their son's soccer.

The observations took place at the same soccer clubs where the interviewees were recruited. The first author watched several matches, two of these in the company of two mothers. Only matches were observed, since these were more often watched by parents than were weekly training sessions. The observer made field notes of the parents' behavior during the match, and she spoke with both mothers about their involvement with their son's soccer. Field notes were recorded during and immediately after the observations.

Interviews were seen as an appropriate way to collect our data, since they expose thoughts, meanings, concerns and attitudes through which the habitus of parents can be understood. Observations were purposively added to the data collection, since they offer more reliable insight in the positions of parents in the field of their son's soccer. The observations took place in the weekend, when all the soccer fields were occupied with matches; including several observations during training sessions could have contributed to a better understanding in the ways parents behaved in the space. We tried to forestall this problem by asking the parents how they and their partner behaved at the soccer field.

Sampling and Recruitment

Both the observations and the interviews were conducted in 2010 at two (mostly white and upper to middle class) soccer clubs in the city of Utrecht. With more than 315,000 inhabitants, Utrecht is one of the largest cities in the Netherlands.

The interviewer used the snowball technique to recruit participants, and all parents who were invited, agreed to participate in the study. This purposeful sampling strategy was adopted to ensure that interviewees were prepared to speak about the issue of gender in the space of their son's soccer. Our main goal is to understand the construction of gender within this specific space. No claim is made that the findings can be generalized to a wider population, but since the two soccer clubs involved in this study are average upper to middle class clubs, recognizability of our results to similar soccer clubs is plausible (Rubin & Rubin, 2012).

Data Analysis

A systematic qualitative analysis of the interview data were performed using the program MAXQDA. Open coding (Boeije, 2005) of each transcript began with a focus on gender, femininities, masculinities, fathering, and mothering. This gave us diverse impressions about how gender was done and challenged differently—even by the same person—in different positions (for example, as a coach or a supporter). We then searched for a theoretical framework that suited these different positions and meanings, and reorganized our data according to Bourdieu's ideas about the field, positions, habitus and taking position. Finally, selective coding refined our core categories and themes. We added the perspective of 'space invaders', since we found that meanings and positions within the space of boys' soccer were sometimes challenged by mothers who took positions that were originally occupied by men. Thus, during the analysis, we allowed for a continuous interaction between theory and data. This approach reflects the observation by Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) that "Even the most minute empirical operation.... involves theoretical choices, conscious or unconscious, while the most abstract conceptual puzzle cannot be fully clarified without systematic engagement with empirical reality" (p. 35). The continuous interaction between inductive and deductive approaches may create new empirical and theoretical insights (Amis, 2005).

Results

Results are presented in the following order. A description of the space of boys' soccer is followed by an account of the formal positions in this space. Subsequently, we consider findings in relation to the habitus and positions of both parents, by presenting gendered parental values and masculinities in the space. Finally, we examine the ways in which these meanings may be contested.

The Space: Constructing Borders

Both fathers and mothers acknowledged the different roles they played in the space of their son's soccer play. For example:

A mother is standing on the sideline, watching a soccer match. She is cheering her 15-year old son. She has supported her son's soccer competition every Saturday for the last seven years. Apart from me (the observer), she is the only woman among 10 or 12 fathers. "That's the way it is, when these boys grow older, the mothers tend to withdraw, while the fathers tend to show up more often", she explains. When the boys were smaller, they even had a small group of 'soccer mothers', but nowadays she is generally the only mother watching her son. Further, she explains that her own husband, like most fathers, is invited to act as linesman in matches. "They never ask mothers for these positions but it frees me from any kind of obligation." And, she adds, she would never want to be the only lines (wo)man. (Mother 6, Club 1) (*Fieldnotes, Feb. 2010*)

Other findings confirm the suggestion that, when children are young, mothers generally attend the soccer space more often. At games involving the youngest group of boys (the F-division, children aged 7–8 years), many mothers were present,

sometimes even outnumbering fathers. The mothers stood along the sidelines ready to minister to their children with a towel, a banana, or a kiss. Children tended to cross the lines and run to their mothers if they were hurt, sometimes even during the match. Such behavior, however, had to be unlearned. As one father explained:

I remember [that] mothers accompanied their children during the first years [of his son's membership]. I suppose these mothers felt that their child was still so small and vulnerable that they wanted to be there for them. But they disappeared after the F-division. Anyhow, from then on boys' soccer is concentrated around the fathers and mothers appear only rarely. (Father 1, club 1)

Another father suggested that, when children become older, they no longer need the care and emotional support of their mother.

The 'main' play took place within the boundaries of the soccer field. This competition between two sides could be characterized as tough play that needed to be learned. The borders of the soccer field were strictly controlled by the fathers-as-linesmen. Outside these lines, however, was a safe space dominated by meanings about care and support for the boys. Since the borders were relatively easy to cross, these young soccer players could feel somewhat protected. In other words, the space was divided in subspaces by these lines, which represented the boundary between the 'main' field and the 'serving-the-main' field. These subspaces represented meanings of, respectively, 'competitiveness and winning' (in the more important core soccer field) and 'care and support' in the surrounding field.

Nonetheless, the 'serving-the-main' field changed, since mothers disappeared as spectators when the children grew older:

I must say, at this age, only very few women attend [their son's] matches, and if they do they are only interested in their own son and not in the team. For me... even if my son sits on the bench, I still enjoy the match and love to watch them win. (Father 2, Club 1)

This father is suggesting that the meaning of the 'serving-the-main' field is different when the spectators are mostly men, since fathers tend to place more emphasis on the achievements of the whole team. In other words, the presence of the mother may mean that there is a main interest in the son's wellbeing, while the father generally represents interest in the son's or his team's achievements. At the same time, there is a disparaging tone in his voice when he speaks of 'only' attending a match for your own son.

Positions in the Space: The 'Natural' Gatekeepers

In the two participating soccer clubs, few women occupied positions as linesman, referee, coach or board member (see Table 1).

These figures indicate that the 'main' field of soccer in these clubs was primarily controlled by men, while canteen work was predominantly done by women. In addition, mothers performed informal club work, such as planning rosters for driving children to away games at other clubs or organizing fundraising activities. These differences in the positions that fathers and mothers took in the space of soccer became visible at competition days.

Table 1 Division of Men's and Women's Voluntary Work in Both Clubs

	Soccer club 1		Soccer club 2	
	men	women	men	women
Board members	7	0	6	0
Coordinators/administrators	8	1	11	1
Coaches	41	2	127	16
Referees/linesmen	24	1	unknown	
Canteen personnel	unknown		3	7
Total	80	4	147	14

At competition days men are more visible than women. They move more, they take different positions, not only as supporter, but as linesmen, referee, coach or board member. You can see it in the ways they move. They literally 'control' the field. (*Fieldnotes, Feb. 2010*).

The habitus of parents naturalized the different positions fathers and mothers take up in the space. As one mother commented: "The role of coaches, referees, etc. is naturally a men's job. Soccer is men's business and men are more ambitious." (Mother 1, Club 2) When the interviewer asked a father why the voluntary positions were divided like this, he reflected: "I think they do not even think about the possibility to ask the mothers for coaching positions." (Father 5, Club 2). Male gate keeping was seen as a normal and enduring situation: "Soccer is a man's world. The coaches are generally fathers and they always like to interfere with the technical aspects of the game. Probably because they have all played the game themselves." (Father 6, Club 2). The field of soccer as a space where men are seen as the natural gatekeepers, however has impact upon the mother's position in the field. When the interviewer asked a woman why she did not want to become a referee, she answered:

In my head I hear them shout 'stupid bitch', I don't even know if it is true, since I have never been a referee. But these are returning fears in my head... that women do not understand soccer. These notions about the ignorance of women's knowledge about soccer were pumped into my head in one or another way. (Mother 4, Club 1)

However a few women have taken up positions as coach or referee. As a space invader, they may challenge this image of the natural gatekeeper. We will discuss these few challenges in the section 'Contested meanings; Space invaders'.

Habitus and Positions: Gendered Parental Values

Parents commonly talked about the similarities between themselves and their partner in their support for their son's participation in sport. For example:

We [partner and I] agree on the fact that our son does some kind of sport. We haven't spoken much about it, but we have the same thoughts about it. Of course I arranged it for our son, although my husband would have done it if I hadn't. (Mother 2, Club 2)

At the same time, parents identified important differences between men and women in relation to the sport participation of their child:

Oh yes, there are differences... as spectators. If fathers watch the match, they know exactly what the score is and what happens. They naturally know. While mothers are engaged in matters like 'how is he feeling' and 'how is he developing socially'. (Father 6, Club 2)

The fathers were clearly involved in expressing their 'knowledge' about the 'main' field, not only in the positions they took, but also in their habitus as a man who has knowledge about soccer. As one father put it: "I try to contribute to the content, to increase my son's performance, because I have the knowledge to do so. And that is a big difference between my wife and me." (Father 2, Club 1)

The image of the knowledgeable father and ignorant mother was often presented by the interviewees. Such an image distinguishes the roles of fathers and mothers, and represents fairly traditional family values.

Fathers were also said to be more emotionally involved with the performance of their son and/or his team. For example, some parents described how fathers tended to assume a dominant and visible position in the space: "Fathers are excited and heated, and mothers are calm. If the son is successful, a father shouts out loud, and he gets enraged if some of the other players kick his son." (Father 3, Club 1)

In contrast, mothers—if they were involved at all—supported their son's attendance at training and matches and were the ones who cared about the physical and emotional wellbeing of their children. As one father remarked: "If women are chilly they know their son is too. Women know these things, and they put an extra shirt in his bag... and I don't feel responsible for these kinds of things, that is his own business." (Father 1, Club 1)

This example also illustrates how the mother's positions are marginalized by fathers. Mothers kept an eye on their son's (emotional) experiences and developments. One mother described how she sometimes tried to 'be' there for her son after he lost a match. She related how she tries to put his performance into perspective:

I express my sympathy and tell him he did a good job anyhow. But he does not want to hear my voice and says 'shut up' or something.

Interviewer: How do you feel about that?

Eh... let me think, in a way it is a normal situation if a boy of 15 tells his mother, 'well what do you know about it?'... But he has a different look in his eyes if his father says something, [then] he is more impressed.

Interviewer: Why is that?

I think because his father has played soccer himself. (Mother 2, Club 2)

This exchange illustrates how the son marginalizes his mother's input by dismissing her care because she lacks knowledge about the 'main' field. Strikingly, the woman defines her son's derogatory behavior toward her as 'normal'. In other words, boys in a public and masculine space, such as soccer, may need to withdraw from their mothers.

It is evident that fathers and mothers both privileged the idea of having their son participate in sport, but they embodied a different habitus and took different positions in their involvement with their son's sport. Gendered parental involvement, however, may also interact with gendered characteristics in the space. This is discussed in more detail below.

Habitus and Positions: Meanings Given to Masculinities

Most parents agreed that many fathers believe that soccer is unique in relation to other sports. One mother, for example, remarked:

I don't mind whether he [son] plays tennis or soccer... but my husband is crazy about soccer, so he urges my son to participate....It is like...he would be very disappointed if Sam played korfbal instead. He thinks korfbal is nothing, it's a sissy sport. I actually do not understand what's wrong with it. (Mother 4, Club 1)

In other words, this father reproduced the boundary between 'real' or dominant versus 'sissy' or subordinate masculinities as symbolized by different sports. Here, soccer represents the sport for 'real men'. The example also shows the commitment of this father to the son's development of a 'real' masculinity through soccer. The mother highlighted the consequences for her son's relationship with his father if he did not conform to the desired masculine practice of playing soccer—the father would be 'very disappointed'. By adopting such a position, fathers may not only increase the pressure on sons to perform as 'real' men, but may also create possibilities for parent and child to bond or to drift apart.

A different perspective was provided by some fathers who were quite critical about other fathers' involvement and its possible negative impacts. For example:

Generally speaking, I would say that mothers encourage their sons, while fathers criticize.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Because fathers emphasize performance, they want their son to do better than they have done. They experience their son's failures as their own failures.... That is my conclusion, they project their own expectations onto their son, and want him to be better than themselves. (Father 2, Club 1)

The meaning of bonding through soccer as a typical 'masculine' value among men was a recurring theme in the interviews. For example: "During a match you need to be tough on each other, but after the match you shake hands. I enjoy that. That is manly" (Father). This father not only defined 'fighting' and 'bonding' as

typical masculine meanings expressed in the space, but he also identified a border between these meanings (before and after the match). In other words appropriate masculinities not only depend on the spatial context, but also on the event taking place in the space.

At times, mothers also loudly cheered for their sons on the field. One mother said she had a strong emotional bond with her son's soccer. She did not, however, focus on her son's achievements but on their shared interest and enthusiasm for the sport.

In contrast to stories about the emotional involvement of fathers (and some mothers) with their son's soccer, parents also described mothers' emotional withdrawal from their son's soccer:

Soccer is the ultimate enemy of feminists and my wife is one. They are disgusted by the language used at the soccer club, the riots and aggression. And she is right, since it is embarrassing and reprehensible sometimes. But in my opinion it's still fun... so to her it must be quite horrible to have four men playing soccer in the family. (Father 4, Club 1)

One father even explained that his wife had left the club, due to his behavior: "She dislikes the language I use on the field. She cannot cope with that. I spoil her pleasure, so she prefers to go somewhere else." (Father 3, Club 1) It was not only mothers, however, who tended to withdraw from the hyper masculine behavior of some fathers on the soccer field. Some fathers provided a more critical perspective on the masculinities done in the space of their son's soccer:

I try to keep some distance from my son's matches, to offer him possibilities to enjoy the match. He plays in a selective team, and other fathers continuously judge the achievements of all the boys, the coach and the referee... aloud... This attitude, it makes me feel sick. I see these boys looking at their father, thinking 'shut up, you'. So, I now distance myself from other fathers and am not involved in these discussions anymore. (Father 4, Club 1)

These examples show that some forms of hyper masculinity continue to dominate in the space of soccer, while femininities and alternative forms of masculinities remain subordinate.

Contested Meanings: Space Invaders

Although most fathers and mothers believed it would be better if the involvement of parents in positions in soccer was more equally divided between men and women, they were convinced that changes would be hard to realize. Nonetheless, a few mothers challenged the stereotypical position taking of men by becoming involved in coaching their son's team. Here we focus on the stories of two of such mothers who were interviewed. These mothers coached their son's team, a position they shared with a father. Clearly, such a small sample cannot be taken as representative of women coaches, but they do represent some women in this study and combined with our observations their stories shed valuable light on the experiences of a 'space invader'. They form an important source of evidence to our understanding of mothers as 'insider as outsider' by illustrating how the process of invasion might

take place (see Puwar, 2004). The experiences of these mothers are described in two contexts: with their son and with their colleagues.

One mother described her experience in relation to her son:

My son did not like me being his coach. That had to do with an argument we once had. I was his coach and stood along the sidelines. I shouted that he had to change position from striker to playing in the mid-field. Everyone had to change places now and then, but he didn't want to. He said: 'I want to be striker' and I said 'You don't get to decide'. I felt horrible to have this struggle with my son, openly... a mother being in charge. Well, I finally had to take him off the soccer field, because he did not want to listen and that was devastating for him. (Mother 2, Club 2)

This mother observed other signs that her son did not like her being the coach. For example, when she shouted instructions to him or his team he reacted by putting his fingers in his ears, and when she asked him why he acted like that, he responded by saying 'after all, this is not funny' and she noticed he then looked very angry. Sometimes he even said 'I wish dad was there.' The woman went on to explain that she had considered withdrawing from coaching his team for a few years, so her son could develop more freely. In accordance with her 'serving' role, in other words, the mother tried to understand her son's position, and from that perspective she intended to withdraw from the space.

This argument between the mother and son reflects a form of dominant masculinity that constructs a hierarchy between men and women. One father alluded to this construction when he stated that he felt quite uncomfortable with the idea of a woman being in charge of him:

Listen, if I were a soccer player and I had to listen to a woman coach, I must admit that I would have problems with that.

Interviewer: Why?

By nature, I don't know why. If I had a women boss...after all, I'd have trouble with that too. It's just a feeling. It does not mean they [women] don't have enough sense to do it... I just cannot bear a woman telling me how to play, it won't work. (Father 5, Club 2)

Another mother shared coaching her son's team with a father in the F-division. The mother mentioned that they disagreed on substituting young players when the team was losing. In her opinion, all boys at this level should play the same amount of time regardless of the score. The father, however, preferred not to substitute a boy who was playing well when the team was behind:

He was crazy about it, he insisted on doing it his way and I thought it was ridiculous. So we always disagreed on this point.

Interviewer: Where do you think these differences come from?

Mother: Performance... he always wanted to win, and so do the children... but he's extremely eager to win. I remember another time...after a match

we always took penalties, and one time he had bought silver cups for all the players. He likes those kind of heroic awards, while I prefer to spend money on eating ice cream together at the end of the competition... It escalated at a certain moment, he could be very tough on the boys... There was a boy who had just got on the soccer field, he was a bit of a softy and, because he missed a ball, a goal was scored by the opposing team. The father started shouting at the boy and substituted him again which was ridiculous, because he had only just got on. I said: 'Look, the boy is eight years old and you yell at him. We had agreed that I would substitute the players and not you.' And then, when the boy was in tears, the father said to me: 'Why don't you go to him, because I'm not so good at cheering up and talking.' So I replied: 'I don't think so, this is your job, I'm not going to fix it for you.' So now I prefer not to be involved in coaching for a while. That experience really turned me off. (Mother 5, Club 1)

The argument between the mother and her colleague was not primarily about equal playing time; the main issue was that the mother valued this above winning. She insisted on another value system with these young athletes. She prioritized equal opportunity above performance. However, the argument had such an effect on her that, although she had taken a position in a man's space, she decided to (temporarily) withdraw. While this was her decision, it is questionable how 'voluntary' her withdrawal was. Although women may be blamed for leaving the space, the situation may also be interpreted as a (conscious or unconscious) strategy to eliminate space invaders who want to change the meaningful order of the positions and habitus.

Discussion and Conclusion

Bourdieu's constructs of field, positions, habitus and position taking have been used to gain a better understanding of the ways in which parents do gender in the space of their son's soccer. Thorpe (2009), who applied Bourdieu's habitus-field complex to an examination of women in snowboarding, found that this perspective offers a "detailed account of the conditions of emergence for critical thought, which in some cases leads to gender reflexivity" (p. 510). Our findings support the value of Bourdieu's theoretical framework for a critical analysis of the way in which symbolic gendered borders are constructed and challenged by fathers and mothers in the space of their son's soccer.

Our study showed that a border divided the 'main' field from the 'serving-the-main' field. The 'main' field was controlled by several formal positions that are generally taken by men. In the 'serving-the-main' field, mothers dominated when their sons were young, but this space changed as the boys grew older. We characterized this space as a place where masculine bodies and positions replaced female bodies and positions. As a result, the boys who play soccer are forced from a relatively safe and caring space into a more insecure space due to 'natural' processes of getting older and becoming a man, which includes learning masculinities. Consequently, boys may experience pressure to perform well in the game and play like "a man".

Although fathers replaced mothers in the 'serving-the-main' field, they took a different position. They supervised the 'main' field by expressing their knowledge and technical insights. In other words, the 'serving-the-main' field changed from a

supportive to a supervising space, which assumed a different status position toward the 'main' field. This suggests a dominant rather than subordinate status position toward the 'main' field. While other scholars have found that fathers contribute to the way in which their sons learn masculinities in the space of soccer (see e.g., Kay, 2009; Shaw & Dawson, 2001), our study has emphasized how this process of learning masculinities is maintained and sustained within specific (sub) spaces and positions.

As noted in the introduction, changes in parenthood are taking place, with fathers becoming more involved with care and support in bringing up their children and mothers becoming more involved with public spaces (Kay, 2009). Our data, however, do not fully support Kay's conclusion that fathers' involvement and emotional support in sport can be seen as a potential space for transforming gender hierarchies. We interpreted fathers' involvement and emotional support as a way of controlling the space of soccer and reproducing dominant masculinities in this space. These different interpretations may be a methodological artifact, since we interviewed both fathers and mothers about their involvement with their son and focused on gender differences between them and their partner, while Kay's study focused only on fathers' involvement with their son's soccer.

Our study adds to previous research on mothers' involvement with public spaces. The process whereby boys learn masculinities interacts with the separation between the 'main' and the 'serving-the-main' field. Learning masculinities involved sons disconnecting from the supportive 'serving-the-main' field as represented by mothers. In accordance with their role in 'serving-the-main' field, mothers withdrew from this public space for the sake of their son's development. In doing so, they reaffirmed the *status quo* of soccer clubs as a space for boys to develop a more traditional masculine habitus.

This finding is supported in other research (Kay, 2009; Messner, 2007; Coakley & White, 1992) showing how young male athletes associate their sport participation with becoming a "man". The alternative scenario—when mothers tried to challenge this habitus by taking a position as a coach—can be interpreted using the notion of a space invader. The few women who had become coaches had only done so at the youngest age groups of their son's soccer. They could be seen as space invaders since they challenged the dominant constructions of the 'main' field. As one such mother expressed it, these contrasting meanings can be symbolically represented as 'silver cups' versus 'ice creams'. The few mothers who acted as soccer coaches failed to transform the field, due to the power of the symbolic violence they experienced within the space of their son's soccer. They were viewed as 'invaders' which made them feel uncomfortable and therefore they preferred to withdraw from the field.

In Hills' (2006) study on how girls negotiated gendered physicality in physical education, the author introduced the notion of 'regulated liberties' as spaces these girls use to express more subtle forms of resistance. The notion of regulated liberties is useful in our study to better understand the mothers as soccer coaches, since "the concept of regulated liberties demonstrates the position of the habitus as neither completely determining nor liberating." (Hills, 2006, p. 552). It shows the tenuous character of the situation of these mothers in a masculine space. She is an insider, but constantly on the verge of leaving, which may be typical for the position of an 'insider as outsider' (Puwar, 2004). Yet the position of the 'insiders

as outsiders' form a continuous possibility for the deterritorialization of these powerful masculine spaces and are a potential source for disrupting their exclusionary character (see also Hills & Kennedy, 2006). Fathers and mothers do not operate in a gender neutral space that influences the development of boys' habitus (see also Swanson, 2009). Mennesson's (2012) study of women's ability to challenge the masculine spaces of soccer and boxing suggested that this process depended on both the gendered characteristics of a specific field and on the women's habitus. Her study included the practices of women in both sports. Our research highlighted the practices of women/mothers and in exceptional cases men/fathers when challenging the characteristics in the space as forms of regulated liberties. However these practices of regulated liberties interacted with the practices of symbolic violence of men/fathers who preserved the gendered characteristics in the space. Subsequently, the practices of symbolic violence these women were subjected to encouraged them in the end to define the space as a place where they did not belong. We argue that the naturalization of these gendered practices of symbolic violence in the sport context obstructs possible transformations of dominant gender power structures in the space. The naturalization of these practices creates stability in structuring gender spaces and habituses, and the "task of recognizing such social acts for what they are is difficult because it requires us to examine our own inculcated perceptions (Brown, 2006, p. 167).

Although our findings may apply to many sports, soccer seems to be the ideal space for fathers and sons to express the masculine part of family ideologies. In soccer, father-son bonding dovetails with learning dominant masculinities (Harrington, 2006; Kay, 2009). Soccer may therefore be seen as an appropriate space for the transfer of masculine values as symbolic capital from father to son within the cultural context of this research, namely, that of white, middle class, heterosexual families in the Netherlands. These meanings may differ in other cultural contexts. Swanson (2009), for example, described how soccer has a different meaning in the USA. There, mothers were involved with their son's soccer and considered it to be an appropriate space for the development of their son's habitus as a male member of upper-middle-class families. These mothers defined this habitus as "a boy who stays out of trouble, shows commitments, works hard individually and with a team, exudes sportsmanship, displays—even if modestly—his hetero masculine prowess, and is not too physically aggressive" (p. 422).

In the Netherlands, by contrast, soccer is the national sport and, as in many other countries, is a bastion of hegemonic masculinity. It may therefore be of great importance to fathers that their son gains this symbolic capital (hegemonic masculinity) by playing soccer rather than any other sport. Soccer is perceived as a "real" masculine sport in contrast to less masculine sports which, at times, are defined as "sissy". Some fathers use soccer as a frame to differentiate between dominant and subordinate masculinities, but also as a frame for their son to differentiate between a father to bond with and a mother to become independent of. This bonding and distancing interacts with gendered meanings that are attached to (technical) knowledge and insight versus care, support and ignorance. These meanings represent important (main and masculine) versus marginalized (serving and feminine) positions in the field, respectively.

The influence of the family on the development of children's habitus via embodied physicalities should not be underestimated (Dagkas & Quarmby, 2012).

Currently, the image of a preferred, dominant and masculine space that contrasts with a marginalized, subordinate and feminine space is the only possible frame for boys to adapt to, unless they choose to withdraw from the space of soccer. But it is unlikely that they will do so, since masculine values like heroism and status, as reflected in soccer, seem to attract many boys.

Some scholars (Pringle & Hickey, 2010; Pringle & Markula, 2005) have argued that dominant masculinities limit practices that express femininities or dissatisfaction with these masculinities. They suggested that dominant masculine values in sport may lead to moral problems for male athletes. Our research has identified the manner in which parents contributed to processes that created these dominant masculine values. At the same time, it highlighted the fact that dominant hyper masculine practices in soccer can also lead to moral problems among some fathers and mothers involved in their child's sport participation. Further research on mothers' involvement in sport may disclose how the process of gender construction in other (sub) spaces in sports may result in different gender meaning constructions. We also recommend further investigation into how (hyper) masculinities relate to the current increase in excesses in sport, since a strong 'masculine' sport space contributes to forms of hyper masculinities such as aggression and violence (see Cushion & Jones, 2006; Pringle & Hickey, 2010).

Notes

1. In this paper the words 'space' and 'field' have the same meaning.
2. Embodied positions in the space refer to Bourdieu's positions taken in the field.
3. The authors acknowledge Merel Janssen for her contribution to the data.

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