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**Title Page**

**Original research – Brief report**

**Title:** The gap between athletes’ and parents’ perceptions of parental practices: the role of gender

**Short running title:** Perceptions of parental practices

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**Author contribution:**

Noémie Lienhart: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original Draft  
Virginie Nicaise: conceptualization, writing - review & editing

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PERCEPTIONS OF PARENTAL PRACTICES

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32 The gap between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices: the role of gender

33 Research has provided evidence that the quality of a sports environment (e.g., parents,  
34 coaches, peers) plays an essential role in young athletes' experiences (Knight et al., 2017).  
35 Parents provide emotional, financial, organizational, and social support to their children. They  
36 are the most cited supporters by student-athletes, regardless of context (i.e., personal, sport,  
37 and university levels; Condello et al., 2019). By providing such support, parents influence  
38 athletes' psychological experiences and performance in sport (Knight et al., 2017). Through  
39 their involvement, some parents have a positive influence on the young athletes' experiences  
40 while others have a detrimental influence on the young athletes' experiences (Gould et al.,  
41 2006; Knight et al., 2017; Lienhart et al., 2020). For instance, adaptive psychological  
42 outcomes (e.g., enjoyment, positive affects, self-determined motivation, self-esteem) have  
43 been positively associated with athletes' and parents' perceptions of praise and understanding  
44 behaviours. In contrast, detrimental psychological outcomes (e.g., anxiety, controlled  
45 motivation, negative affects) have been positively associated with athletes' and parents'  
46 perceptions of directive behaviours and pressure (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Bois et al., 2009;  
47 Dorsch et al., 2016; Lienhart et al., 2019). Researchers have paid considerable attention to  
48 understanding how parental practices and involvement in the sport context may positively and  
49 negatively influence the quality of young athletes' experiences in sport. Parental practices  
50 include "specific, goal-directed behaviours through which parents perform their parental  
51 duties" concerning their child's sport (i.e., at home, during training, or competitions; Darling  
52 & Steinberg, 1993, p. 488). Parental involvement entails "the time, energy, and money  
53 parents invest in their child's sport participation and includes things such as transportation,  
54 attending practices and games, providing instructional assistance, and purchasing sport  
55 equipment" (Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999, p. 592).

56           The majority of studies have used athletes' perceptions of parental practices and  
57 involvement to explore the influence of parenting in sport (e.g., Bois et al., 2009; Lienhart et  
58 al., 2019). This approach was the most appropriate since previous studies sought to identify  
59 the consequences of parental practices and involvement on athletes. However, recent studies  
60 have highlighted that parents want to have relevant educational resources and provided  
61 strategies to enhance parental involvement through the implementation of evidence-based  
62 parental education (Dorsch et al., 2017; Gjaka et al., 2021; Knight et al., 2017; Thrower et al.,  
63 2017, 2018). One of the goals of these educational programmes was to increase parents'  
64 awareness of their practices and their impact on their children (Harwood & Knight, 2015).  
65 Thus, parents should be aware of whether or not the practices they believe they have  
66 implemented are aligned with their child's perceptions. If there is a lack of agreement,  
67 knowledge of these differences will optimize parents' support to their children.

68           Studies have explored the concordance between how children and parents report  
69 parental practices (for a review, Hou et al., 2020). In the sport context, like in the clinical and  
70 developmental context, preliminary evidence has outlined that parents and athletes do not  
71 systematically agree about parental practices. Parents and children have reported moderate-to-  
72 low agreement on parental practices (e.g., Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Boiché et al., 2011; Dorsch  
73 et al., 2016; Hou et al., 2020; Kanters et al., 2008). For example, in the sport context, young  
74 hockey players have reported significantly higher scores regarding parental pressure than their  
75 parents, whereas they reported lower scores of parental support than their parents did (Kanters  
76 et al., 2008). Many factors influence perceptions of parental practices and involvement  
77 (Knight et al., 2017). Among these factors, specific characteristics of parents and children,  
78 such as gender, have a significant role (Hou et al., 2020). Consequently, this study explored  
79 the agreement on parental practices by considering children's and parents' gender.

80 Sports literature has shown that fathers are more likely than mothers to claim expertise  
81 in sports (Brand et al., 2011). In the case of youth sports, this means that fathers have  
82 expected to support and guide children as they learn to play sports (Coakley, 2006). More  
83 specifically, studies in youth sport have highlighted that fathers report engaging in more  
84 pressure and directive behaviours, whereas mothers report offering more praise and  
85 understanding (Dorsch et al., 2016; Wuerth et al., 2004). In addition, there is evidence that  
86 athletes' perceptions of parental practices differ according to whether the athletes are female  
87 or male (e.g., Lienhart et al., 2019). Fathers have reported using more directive behaviours  
88 and more praise and understanding behaviours with sons than with their daughters (Boiché et  
89 al., 2011). Male athletes have reported higher levels of parental pressure compared to female  
90 athletes (Amado et al., 2015). These findings are in line with Fredricks and Eccles' study,  
91 which revealed that both mothers and fathers tended to perceive their sons as more competent  
92 in sport and to provide more encouragement and equipment for them than for their daughters  
93 (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005).

94 Finally, children imitate the parent of the same gender given their shared gender  
95 identity (Washburn, 1994). In addition, parents' and adolescents' perceptions of their  
96 relationships evolve during adolescence (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2019). The gender  
97 intensification hypothesis posits that during adolescence, same-gender parent-adolescent  
98 dyads shift towards greater agreement over perceptions of their relationships compared to  
99 opposite-gender dyads (Hill & Lynch, 1983). Gender may therefore play an essential role in  
100 the concordance between how adolescents and parents report parental practices in sport.

101 In the interest of educating parents, the purpose of the current study was to explore the  
102 differences between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices by considering  
103 athletes' and parents' gender. Based on previous research on parenting practices and

104 involvement with adolescents in various contexts, this study investigated **three** main  
105 hypotheses:

- 106 • Hypothesis 1: The concordance between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental  
107 practices **is expected** to be low to moderate regardless of the gender of parents and  
108 athletes (Boiché et al., 2011; Dorsch et al., 2016; Hou et al., 2020).
- 109 • Hypothesis 2: The perceptions of parental practices would be different depending on  
110 the respondent. **Athletes would report more frequent use for directive and pressure**  
111 **behaviours and less frequent use for active involvement and praise and understanding**  
112 **behaviours than their parents (Kanters et al., 2008).**
- 113 • Hypothesis 3: **The differences in perceptions of parental practices would be predicted**  
114 **by athletes' gender, parents' gender, and/or their interaction (e.g., Brand et al., 2011;**  
115 **Lienhart et al., 2019).** In particular, it is expected that same-gender parent-adolescent  
116 dyads would be more concordant than opposite-gender parent-adolescent dyads (Hill  
117 & Lynch, 1983; Mastrotheodoros et al., 2019; Washburn, 1994).

## 118 **Method**

### 119 **Participants**

120 A sample of 256 competitive adolescent elite athletes (Swann et al., 2015), aged 14.72  
121 years  $\pm$  1.53; and 352 parents, aged 46.52 years  $\pm$  7.36, participated in this study. They  
122 represented four sub-groups of 88 dyads: father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter, and  
123 mother-son. A total of 96 athletes were represented in two dyads (i.e., mother-son and father-  
124 son or mother-daughter and father-daughter), while 160 athletes were represented in only one  
125 dyad. Athletes trained in intensive training centres and involving in national sport  
126 competitions were eligible to take part. They are accommodated on weekdays at centres run  
127 by France's national sports federations and returned to their family homes on weekends.

### 128 **Measures**

129 An adapted French version (Lienhart et al., 2019) of the Parental Involvement in Sport  
130 Questionnaire (PISQ; Lee & MacLean, 1997) was used to assess the mothers' and the fathers'  
131 behaviours separately. The questionnaires contained four dimensions for parental practices:  
132 *Directive behaviours* (5 items; e.g., "before a contest your father/mother tells you what  
133 particular things you need to work on to do well"); *pressure* (4 items; e.g., "your  
134 father/mother puts pressure on you to win"); *active involvement* (3 items; e.g., "does your  
135 father/mother take an active role in running your club?"); and *praise and understanding* (4  
136 items; e.g., "after a contest your father/mother praises you for trying hard"). Each item was  
137 rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  ranged  
138 from .71 to .87 for athletes and from .69 to .76 for parents in the present study.

### 139 **Procedure**

140 The present study was conducted according to international ethical guidelines. The  
141 coaches of the training centres comprised in the study were contacted before data collection.  
142 They presented the study to all athletes and parents before the start of the season, emphasizing  
143 that their participation was voluntary and that their answers remain confidential. Written  
144 informed consent were obtained from parents before the beginning of the study. Athletes and  
145 parents completed the questionnaires in a separate place in groups of 10 to 20 participants  
146 managed by one of the research team members during welcome meetings at the training  
147 centres.

### 148 **Data analysis**

149 First of all, zero-order correlations were computed with SPSS software (Version 20;  
150 IBM SPSS Predictive Analytics, Chicago IL) for the entire sample and each sub-group (i.e.,  
151 father-daughter, father-son, mother-daughter, and mother-son) to assess the strength of the  
152 linear relationships between athletes' and parents' perceptions of the four parental practices



153 (hypothesis 1). Cohen's classification (1988) was used to define the strength of the  
154 relationships (i.e., low: .30, moderate: .50, and strong: .80).

155 Then, multilevel models were used to test hypotheses 2 and 3 because sampling data  
156 are nested (i.e., some athletes appear in two dyads). The multilevel models were specifically  
157 designed to model dependent observations (Field et al., 2012). These statistical analyses  
158 were carried out with R software (RStudio Team, 2015). One series of models was computed  
159 to answer each of the two hypotheses. First, a one level multilevel model was computed to  
160 explore the influence of the respondent (level 1 units of analyses) on the perceptions of  
161 parental practices (hypothesis 2). A null model (i.e., no predictor) was estimated for each  
162 parental practice (i.e., directive behaviours, pressure, active involvement, and praise and  
163 understanding). Intra-Class Correlations (ICC) were calculated from these models to estimate  
164 the amount of variance at the between and within individual levels. The ICC determined  
165 whether conducting multilevel models was relevant or not. Then, the respondent (i.e., athlete  
166 vs. parent) was added as a predictor of the perceptions of parental practice to the final model.  
167 Second, a two-level multilevel model estimated the impact of the athletes' gender, parents'  
168 gender, and their interaction on the differences in perceptions of parental practice (hypothesis  
169 3). The respondent (level 1 units of analyses) was nested within the dyad (level 2 units of  
170 analysis). A new dependent variable was created for each parental practice: the difference  
171 between the athletes' and the parents' perceptions (i.e., the difference in perceptions). A null  
172 model was estimated for each difference in perceptions for the four parental practices. Then, a  
173 two waves interaction (i.e., athletes' gender\*parents' gender) was added as a predictor of the  
174 difference in perceptions to the final model. An estimate of the effect size was reported for  
175 each model using the conditional pseudo  $R^2$  (using the MuMin package of the R software).

176

## Results

177 Table 1 presents demographic information for the entire sample, and Table 2 the mean  
178 and standard deviation of each subscale for the entire sample and each sub-group. Overall,  
179 both mothers and fathers reported higher scores for active involvement and praise and  
180 understanding behaviours than the athletes did. Conversely, they reported lower scores for  
181 directive behaviours and pressure than the scores reported by athletes, with a single exception  
182 (the mother-daughter dyad regarding pressure).

183 Firstly, correlations were calculated for each subscale of the PISQ between the  
184 mothers' and fathers' self-reported scores and the athletes' scores (Table 3; hypothesis 1).  
185 Overall, the correlations were significant and positive at  $p < .001$ , for the directive behaviours,  
186 pressure, and active involvement subscales. They were low to moderate in magnitude, ranging  
187 from  $r = .30$  (pressure) to  $r = .57$  (directive behaviours). Conversely, the correlations failed to  
188 reach significance at  $p = .05$  for the praise and understanding behaviours. Similar results were  
189 found for three of the four sub-groups. The correlations for directive behaviours, pressure, and  
190 active involvement were significant, and low ( $r = .22$ ) to moderate ( $r = .57$ ) in magnitude for  
191 father-daughter, father-son, and mother-son dyads. For the mother-daughter dyad, only  
192 moderate correlations for directive behaviours ( $r = .57$ ) and active involvement ( $r = .64$ ) were  
193 significant and positive at  $p < .001$ .

194 Secondly, two series of multilevel models were conducted to (1) measure the influence  
195 of the respondent (i.e., athlete vs. parent) on the scores of the four subscales of the PISQ  
196 (Table 4) and (2) explore the impact of the athletes' and parents' gender on the difference in  
197 perceptions of the four parental practices (Table 5). The ICC (i.e.,  $\tau_{00}/(\tau_{00} + \sigma^2)$ ) reported that  
198 the within-individual variance represented 57–95 percent of the total variance for the four  
199 parental practices and the differences in their perceptions, and the between-individual  
200 variance corresponded to 5–43 percent of the total variance. Therefore, the results of the null  
201 models indicated that total variances were not fully explained by only within-individual or

202 only between-individual variance. Thus, the results of the null models highlighted the  
203 usefulness of multilevel models in the case of the present study.

204 Results showed first of all that the scores of directive behaviours ( $\beta = -.29, p < .001$ ),  
205 active involvement ( $\beta = .18, p < .05$ ), and praise and understanding ( $\beta = .27, p < .001$ ) were  
206 predicted by the respondent (hypothesis 2). Compared to athletes, parents reported  
207 significantly lower scores (i.e., less frequent use) for directive behaviours and higher scores  
208 (i.e., more frequent use) for active involvement and praise and understanding. Furthermore,  
209 the differences in perceptions of the directive behaviours ( $\beta = -.22, p < .01$ ) and active  
210 involvement ( $\beta = .22, p < .05$ ) were predicted by the parents' gender (hypothesis 3). The  
211 differences in perceptions of these two parental practices were higher when the father was  
212 involved in the dyad (i.e., father-daughter and father-son) compared to the mother (i.e.,  
213 mother-daughter and mother-son). In contrast, results highlighted that the differences in  
214 perceptions of the four subscales were not significantly predicted by the athletes' gender and  
215 the gender match of dyads (i.e., athletes' gender\*parents' gender).

## 216 Discussion

217 The purpose of the current study was to explore the differences between athletes' and  
218 parents' perceptions of parental practices in sport by considering athletes' and parents'  
219 gender. Our findings highlighted relatively modest concordance between perceptions of  
220 parents and adolescents. This result supports previous work showing that parents and children  
221 have different perceptions of parental practices in the sports context (Boiché et al., 2011;  
222 Dorsch et al., 2016; Kanters et al., 2008). This study extends this observation to adolescents  
223 involved in the elite context of team sports. Gender plays a significant role in parenting in  
224 sport but its influence still needs to be clarified (Fredricks & Eccles, 2005; Knight et al.,  
225 2017). This study intends to advance knowledge about the role of parents' and athletes'  
226 gender in the differences in perceptions of parenting practices. Results showed that the

227 differences in perceptions of parental practices between athletes and parents differed  
228 according to parent's gender. In particular, the differences in perceptions of two (directive  
229 behaviours, active involvement) of the four parental practices explored were higher when the  
230 father was involved in the dyad (i.e., father-daughter and father-son) compared to the mother  
231 (i.e., mother-daughter and mother-son).

232 In line with our first hypothesis, the correlations highlighted mainly relationships low  
233 to moderate between athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices. *This study*  
234 *intends to advance knowledge* in the correlations for the mother-daughter dyad, whereas the  
235 results showed three significant relationships for the other dyads, which confirms the interest  
236 in considering athletes' and parents' gender. The results of multilevel models provided  
237 evidence for the second hypothesis: parents and athletes had different perceptions for three of  
238 the four parental practices measured. Adolescents perceived more frequently directive  
239 behaviours and less frequently active involvement and praise and understanding than what  
240 parents reported. This supports previous work in hockey showing that children perceived a  
241 higher degree of parental behaviours generally associated with negative psychosocial  
242 outcomes (i.e., pressure and directive behaviours) and a lower degree of parental behaviours  
243 generally associated with positive psychological outcomes (i.e. support and active  
244 involvement) in comparison with what parents reported (Kanters et al., 2008). In contrast,  
245 although in the present study, adolescents reported pressure behaviours more frequently than  
246 parents, no significant difference was detected between adolescents' and parents' perceptions.  
247 This second result provides evidence that parents and adolescents are more in line with each  
248 other over the course of adolescence compared to childhood (Mastrotheodoros et al., 2019).

249 In an attempt to further understand the role of gender in the concordance of athletes'  
250 and parents' perceptions of parental practices, a second set of multilevel models were  
251 conducted to explore the impact of the athletes' and parents' gender on the difference in

252 perceptions of the four parental practices. Consistent with the third hypothesis, parents'  
253 gender predicted the difference in perceptions of parental practices. Indeed, results showed  
254 that differences in perceptions of directive behaviours and active involvement were higher  
255 when the father-was involved in the dyad compared to the mother. These findings suggest that  
256 sporting experiences fall on a continuum from more to less shared depending on parents'  
257 gender. The mother seems to have a privileged relationship with her children during  
258 adolescence since the concordance is higher than with the father. This is consistent with  
259 previous research in relationships that have indicated that adolescents and parents report more  
260 conflict with the father than the mother (Dorsch et al., 2016; Mastrotheodoros et al., 2019).  
261 Thus, the age of the athletes in this study (i.e., adolescents) could explain why the differences  
262 in perceptions were lower with mothers than fathers, even though fathers have expected to be  
263 more supportive and guiding than mothers in athletes' learning of sports (Coakley, 2006;  
264 Ehrlich et al., 2016).

265 Furthermore, multilevel models highlighted that athletes' gender and the interaction of  
266 athletes' and parents' gender did not significantly predict the difference in perceptions of  
267 parental practices. Thus, the data of this study did not provide evidence for a lower difference  
268 in perceptions in the same-gender parent-adolescent dyads compared to opposite-gender  
269 parent-adolescent dyads and partially supported the third hypothesis. An explanation of this  
270 finding could be based on the gender theory, which postulates that the mother has more  
271 interaction and communication with adolescents than the father regardless of the athletes'  
272 gender (Ferree, 1990; Palkovitz et al., 2014).

273 Various research studies have recommended the implementation of evidence-based  
274 parental education to enhance parental involvement (e.g., Knight et al., 2017). Recognizing  
275 that parental behaviour impacts the child through the child's perception of that behaviour  
276 (Stein et al., 1999), the findings of this study could enrich the content of evidence-based

277 programmes for parents. Indeed, one of the goals of these programmes was to increase  
278 parents' awareness of their practices (Harwood & Knight, 2015). Thus, it seems relevant to  
279 alert parents to the idea that the behaviours they believe they are using are not necessarily  
280 those perceived by the athletes, especially since athletes perceive a greater use of certain  
281 maladaptive behaviours and a lesser use of adaptative behaviours than those reported by  
282 parents. Parents may believe they are providing an adaptative involvement for their child's  
283 development when it is not perceived as such by the athlete. In addition, education  
284 programmes for parents should measure the perceptions of athletes and parents for each dyad  
285 regarding parental practices because the concordance differed according to gender. These  
286 measures could be an educational tool for parents and athletes to share their perceptions of  
287 parental practices. The exchanges induced by the sharing of these measures could also lead to  
288 awareness, among athletes, of the impact they can have (e.g., athletes' motivation, emotions,  
289 commitment) on parental practices (Knight et al., 2017). Finally, the findings suggest a  
290 particular focus on the father-daughter and father-son dyads.

291 Researchers can build upon the contribution of the present study by addressing its  
292 limitations. The primary limitation concerns the specificity of our sample (adolescent athletes  
293 in French intensive training settings in team sports). Therefore, caution is required before  
294 generalizing the findings of the present study to parenting in sport as a whole. Researchers  
295 could extend the present study by exploring differences between athletes' and parents'  
296 perceptions of parental practices across the different phases of participation in various sports  
297 and countries (Côté & Abernethy, 2007). The second limitation lies in the impact of the  
298 agreement and disagreement on athletes' experiences. Kanters et al. (2008) have shown that  
299 parent-child agreement may be a significant predictor of the affective outcomes typically  
300 associated with young people's participation in sports. Although the findings of this study  
301 alert parents as to the perception of their behaviours, the current study did not explore the

302 influence of the differences in perceptions on the sporting experiences of adolescents and  
303 parents.

304 Notwithstanding these limits, the current study meaningfully contributes to knowledge  
305 of parenting in sports by exploring the influence of gender in the difference between  
306 competitive elite athletes' and parents' perceptions of parental practices in sport. The  
307 perceptions of adolescents and parents concerning parental practices are not always  
308 convergent (Dorsch et al., 2016; Kanters et al., 2008), especially in the father-daughter and  
309 father-son dyads. The current study provides evidence that researchers and practitioners can  
310 use to inform evidence-based parental education programmes. With continued attention to the  
311 perception of athletes and parents, there is much potential for generating strategies to enhance  
312 both parents' and athletes' sporting experiences.

313

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317

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