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### Paper:

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Parental Involvement in Elite Junior Slalom Canoeing

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18

Abstract

19 The aim of this study was to examine elite youth athletes' views on parental  
20 involvement in training, competition, and at home. Eight canoeists were interviewed  
21 up to four times and completed written diaries over a 6-week period. Results indicated  
22 that parents were generally deemed to have a positive influence through domain  
23 specific and cross-domain behaviors. Positive behaviors included parents focusing on  
24 their children's holistic development at home, motivational and constructive  
25 evaluation at training, and limiting demands on athletes through the provision of  
26 practical support, reading and understanding the situation and their child, and  
27 supporting the development of growth mindset across all domains.

28

29 *Keywords:* positive parenting, youth sport, competition, parental involvement, canoe  
30 slalom

31

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32 Parental involvement is a critical ingredient in the achievement of an elite  
33 status in youth sport (Holt & Knight, 2014). From tangible support in the form of  
34 transportation or supplying equipment to emotional support at competitions and  
35 advice regarding schooling, the roles parents fulfil to enable children to participate  
36 and excel in sport are extensive (Côté, 1999; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). Some parents  
37 successfully meet the demand of these roles and positively influence children's  
38 sporting development (e.g., in tennis; see Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). However, some  
39 parents have detrimental influences (e.g., Gould, Lauer, Rolo, Jannes, & Pennisi,  
40 2006, 2008; Lauer, Gould, Roman, & Pierce, 2010a; 2010b; McMahon & Penney,  
41 2015). As such, researchers have sought to identify the types of parental involvement  
42 that result in positive outcomes and increase the potential for children to enjoy sport  
43 while succeeding at the highest levels (e.g., Knight & Holt, 2014).

44 Much of our initial understanding of parental involvement and influence in  
45 sport has been obtained from studies exploring the development of elite athletes (e.g.,  
46 Bloom, 1985; Côté, 1999). Combining insights from coaches, parents, and elite adult  
47 (18 years or older) athletes, these retrospective studies detailed the varied and critical  
48 role parents played throughout the sporting lives of athletes. For example, parents  
49 were shown to be important providers of tangible support, which was demonstrated  
50 through behaviours such as funding children's involvement and transporting children  
51 to training and competition. Further, parents were also critical sources of emotional  
52 support, providing athletes with comfort after losses and giving guidance as required.  
53 Overall, the findings illustrate the extensive influence parents' have upon athletes'  
54 development within sport and home contexts.

55 More recent studies have explicitly sought to uncover the positive and  
56 negative influence of parents on athletes' development (Gould et al., 2006, 2008;

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57 Lauer et al., 2010b; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005), and have further highlighted the varied  
58 roles and influence of parents in sport. For example, Gould and colleagues (Gould et  
59 al., 2006, 2008; Lauer et al., 2010b) conducted a three-part research project to explore  
60 the role of parents in tennis players' lives. Through a survey of 250 junior tennis  
61 coaches, focus groups with 24 high-level junior coaches, and interviews with nine  
62 elite adult players, eight parents, and eight coaches it was identified that, although the  
63 majority of parents had a positive influence on their children's development,  
64 numerous negative parental behaviors also existed. Negative behaviors included  
65 focusing too much on match outcomes rather than player development, interfering  
66 with training, demanding too much of coaches' time, and being too involved in their  
67 child's tennis. As with the earlier talent development studies, the findings from Gould  
68 et al.'s work provide a clear indication of the varying domains (e.g., driving home  
69 from competition, at training sessions) in which parents can exert an influence on  
70 children's sporting development.

71         The aforementioned studies provide pertinent insights into parental  
72 involvement and influence in sport. However, apart from certain exceptions (e.g.,  
73 Wolfenden & Holt, 2005), these initial studies were seeking to examine parental  
74 influence across the entirety of athletes' development and thus relied on retrospective  
75 accounts from adult athletes, parents, and coaches rather than including children. The  
76 inclusion of children as participants within sport parenting research is important  
77 because children are actively involved in parent-child interactions, and it is children's  
78 interpretations of parental involvement that dictate how issues affect them (Mayall,  
79 2002). Although retrospective accounts are useful for examining developmental  
80 experiences, they are influenced by hindsight and reflection. Such accounts might not  
81 fully encapsulate the thoughts and feelings the athletes' experienced as a child.

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82           Recognising the importance of including children within research, more recent  
83 parenting research (e.g., Knight, Boden, & Holt, 2010; Knight, Neely, & Holt, 2011;  
84 Omli & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2011) has explicitly sought to gain children's insights into  
85 parental involvement in sport. In one such study, Knight et al. (2010) conducted 11  
86 focus groups with adolescent tennis players exploring their preferences for parental  
87 involvement at competitions. Knight et al. (2010) reported that athletes preferred  
88 parents to comment on effort and attitude rather than performance, and provide  
89 practical advice but to refrain from offering technical and tactical advice. In a follow-  
90 up study, Knight et al. (2011) conducted interviews with 36 adolescent female team  
91 sport athletes and identified several preferred parental behaviors in different temporal  
92 phases (i.e., before, during, and after competition). These findings demonstrate that  
93 children do have specific views regarding appropriate and inappropriate parental  
94 involvement at competitions.

95           However, such studies of children's preferences for parental involvement have  
96 generally relied upon one-off interviews or focus groups, which might have limited  
97 the amount and/or quality of the data obtained from the children (Knight et al., 2010).  
98 For example, given the potentially sensitive nature of the topic, children might not  
99 have felt comfortable disclosing all the details regarding their parents' involvement in  
100 a one-off meeting with an unfamiliar researcher. The timing of data collection with  
101 respect to the proximity of a competition (e.g., a very recent competition experience  
102 might dominate responses or might be easier to recall than a more distant experience)  
103 might also have influenced responses. Prolonged engagement with participants and  
104 the integration of multiple data collection points would be beneficial to overcome  
105 such limitations.

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106 Further, studies explicitly examining children's preferences for parental  
107 involvement in sport have also focused exclusively upon the competition context  
108 (e.g., Knight et al., 2010, 2011; Omli & LaVoi, 2011). Due to their public and highly  
109 emotional environment, competitions provide excellent opportunities to examine  
110 parental involvement. But, as adult athletes, parents, and coaches have identified,  
111 parents also influence their children away from competitive situations (e.g., in and  
112 around training) and beyond the immediate sport context (e.g., at home) (Harwood &  
113 Knight, 2015). To further our understanding of the ways in which parents' influence  
114 children's sporting performance consideration must also be given to understanding  
115 children's thoughts regarding parental involvement across these various domains  
116 (Holt & Knight, 2014).

117 Some preliminary insights from children regarding the cross-domain influence  
118 of parents can be teased out of recent studies that have combined parents and  
119 children's views on parental involvement in sport (e.g., Holt, Tamminen, Black,  
120 Mandigo & Fox, 2009; Knight & Holt, 2014). For example, Holt and colleagues  
121 (2009) examined parenting styles and practices in youth soccer through a season-long  
122 period, which comprised 56 interviews parents and an additional 34 interviews with  
123 the parents' female children. Holt and colleagues found that parents who adopted an  
124 autonomy-supportive parenting style were able to read their child's mood and engage  
125 in bidirectional communication, which influenced the timing and type of feedback  
126 they provided to their child. Children perceived these parenting practices, which  
127 penetrated all domains of the children's sporting life, positively and indicated that  
128 these behaviors enhanced their sport experiences. However, Holt et al.'s (2009) study  
129 focused primarily upon the parent interviews, with the child interviews being used to  
130 create family profiles and help to identify similarities and differences between

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131 families. Consequently, children’s views are unlikely to be fully explored in the  
132 findings.

133 The purpose of this study was to examine elite youth athletes’ views on  
134 parental involvement in training contexts, competitive contexts, and at home, and to  
135 identify the influence different types of parental involvement across domains have on  
136 athletes’ performance. Canoe slalom was chosen as an appropriate sport in which to  
137 conduct this study because it is a sport which demands high-levels of financial  
138 investment from parents, along with a substantial time commitment to transport  
139 children to training and competitions due to the limited numbers of facilities.

140 Consequently, canoe slalom requires parents to be committed and involved.

141 Additionally, the majority of parenting research to date has been conducted in  
142 “mainstream” sports, particularly tennis and football. One of the purported reasons for  
143 many of the negative parental behaviors in sport is parents’ desire for their children to  
144 become professional athletes, and consequently earn large amounts of money and  
145 gain recognition (Holt & Knight, 2014). However, canoe slalom is a relatively young  
146 sport, which is not associated with large financial rewards or recognition for success.  
147 Thus, we were interested to see if differences would emerge in comparison to tennis  
148 and football, which are traditionally associated with fame and money. To address the  
149 purpose in this population, the following research questions were posed: 1) What  
150 behaviors do parents engage in at home, training, and competition relating to  
151 canoeing? And, 2) How do parents’ behaviors across different domains influence  
152 canoeists’ thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to their performance?

### 153 **Method**

#### 154 **Methodological Decisions and Philosophical Assumptions**



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155           To address the aims of this study, and ensure sufficient information would be  
156 gathered regarding the home, training, and competitive contexts, the decision was  
157 made to engage in data collection over a six-week period as the canoeists underwent a  
158 series of selection races for the Great Britain (GB) Junior Squad. During this six-week  
159 period, the squad of canoeists, from which the participants were selected, completed  
160 numerous training sessions together and travelled to various venues around the United  
161 Kingdom (UK) to engage in competition with and against each other. Thus, this  
162 period of time provided a unique opportunity for the research team to engage with all  
163 the participants on numerous occasions when they were training and competing.  
164 Specifically, the second author spent a total of 100 hours with the canoeists (at two  
165 competitions, two training weekends, and a week-long training camp), during which  
166 time he had ample opportunities to watch the participants' interactions with their  
167 parents (and other canoeists' and canoeists' parents) and also engage in informal chats  
168 with the participants. Through such engagement, the second author (who completed  
169 all the formal data collection) gained a greater understanding of the canoeing context,  
170 which facilitated the development of rapport with the participants and also aided his  
171 understanding of the experiences they were describing. A number of researchers have  
172 used such immersion in the field to gain deeper insights into different sports and  
173 cultures (Atkinson, 2012).

174           By developing such rapport with the participants and an understanding of the  
175 environment, in addition to observing canoeist-parent interactions, it was hoped that  
176 the participants would feel more comfortable or able to discuss both their positive and  
177 negative thoughts about their parents' involvement. Additionally, such engagement  
178 with the participants was sought to help the research team gain an in-depth  
179 understanding of each of the canoeists and their individual realities at the time of data

180 collection. This study was approached from the interpretivist paradigm, adopting a  
181 relativist ontology and subjective or transactional epistemology (Sparkes & Smith,  
182 2014). That is, the research team believes that there are no fixed realities, rather  
183 individuals experience different realities based upon their interpretations, which are  
184 influenced by their past experiences, personality, perceptions, interactions, and the  
185 social environment (Sparkes & Smith, 2014). Thus, rather than seeking one “truth”  
186 we were interested in understanding the participants’ experiences as they made sense  
187 to them at the time of data collect. Additionally, we recognise that our own values  
188 will influence and have influenced what is understood and thus we have played a role  
189 in co-creating the findings that are presented.

### 190 **Participants**

191 British elite junior slalom canoeists ( $N = 8$ ; 7 male, 1 female;  $M = 15.30$  years  
192 old;  $SD = 0.98$ ) were purposefully sampled based on their levels and experiences in  
193 the sport and their presence at national selection camps. These eight athletes were  
194 selected from the small squad of canoeists located across the UK who were competing  
195 to represent Great Britain. All participants had competed at national levels for at least  
196 two years, and five of the canoeists had competed internationally for over a year.

### 197 **Procedure**

198 Following receipt of institutional ethical approval, a member of the research  
199 team (who was working as a sport psychologist in canoe slalom) contacted a coach  
200 working for GB canoeing to facilitate the organization of the research project. The  
201 coach consented to members of the squad participating in the study. The coach  
202 supplied parents and athletes with letters detailing the study. Interested parents and  
203 athletes provided contact details to the research team and suitable times for initial  
204 interviews were arranged. In total, athletes participated in up to four interviews over a

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205 six-week period and completed a diary three days a week for the six-week period.

206 This period included one week before, three weeks during, and two weeks after

207 selection races for the GB Junior Squad.

208       **Initial interviews.** Prior to the first interview, all participants returned  
209 completed informed consent forms from their parents and provided informed assent to  
210 participate. The interview guide was also piloted before the first interviews. The pilot  
211 interviews were conducted with one international (male aged 16 years) and three  
212 national level youth sport participants (one male aged 16 years; two females, aged 14  
213 years and 16 years) to assess whether questions elicited sufficient depth while also  
214 allowing the interviewer to practice his use of clarification and elaboration probes.  
215 Following the pilot interviews, several changes were made to the interview guide  
216 including the addition of questions to encourage greater reflection on parents'  
217 influences in participants' sport experience.

218       The final interview guide followed the format used in previous parenting  
219 research (e.g., Knight et al., 2010). It started with introductory questions then moved  
220 on to transition questions, followed by main questions, and finished with summary  
221 questions and recommendations. Introductory questions sought to identify pertinent  
222 demographic information, such as length of involvement in the sport and what led to  
223 their involvement. Transition questions focused on the involvement of each  
224 participant's parents in his or her sport. Participants were then asked about their  
225 parents' involvement in relation to training, competition, and at home. Participants  
226 were requested to identify the different behaviors their parents engaged in within  
227 these specific environments and to highlight the positive and negative consequences  
228 attributed to those behaviors. Finally, participants were asked to give  
229 recommendations regarding parental behaviors in each setting and summarize their

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230 general thoughts about their parents' involvement (see Appendix A for a copy of the  
231 interview guide). Following introductions and discussion regarding the purpose of the  
232 study, all initial interviews lasted between 25 and 66 minutes ( $M = 42$  minutes). All  
233 interviews were conducted in private and away from participants' parents.

234       **Diaries and follow-up interviews.** At the end of the initial interview,  
235 participants were provided with either paper diaries or a website address to access an  
236 online diary (depending on their preference) to complete over the six-week data-  
237 collection period (see Appendix B for an example of the diary questions). To ensure  
238 confidentiality, and to encourage participants to honestly disclose parental behaviors,  
239 if participants requested paper diaries they were given a separate diary (as an A5  
240 booklet) for each day with an accompanying envelope. Participants were asked to  
241 complete their diary entries in private and then seal them in the accompanying  
242 envelope immediately after completion. The participants then handed the sealed  
243 envelopes to the interviewer at scheduled meeting times.

244       Participants were asked to use the diaries to record specific types of parental  
245 behaviors they experienced along with the effect these behaviors had on their  
246 thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Diaries were used to help guide the content of  
247 follow-up interviews, provide participants with opportunities to verbalize ongoing  
248 experiences, and to allow the research team to clarify any points that were unclear.  
249 After reviewing the diaries from each participant, follow-up interviews were  
250 conducted. These interviews sought to further explore the content of the diaries  
251 (which was often brief and limited in detail) and provide further opportunities for the  
252 participants to share their experience. A semi-structured interview guide was used to  
253 elicit the specific types of parental involvement in different contexts. These follow-up

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254 interviews varied in length from 12 to 45 minutes (depending on the extent to which  
255 participants wanted to elaborate on their diary entries).

### 256 **Data Analysis**

257 Initial data analysis occurred throughout the process of data collection to  
258 ensure the interviewer remained immersed in the data and was able to ensure  
259 sufficient data was collected from the participants. Immediately following each  
260 interview, the audio files were transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy. These  
261 transcripts were then reviewed by the interviewer, who highlighted meaningful  
262 segments of data, identified areas for further exploration, and created memos  
263 identifying themes that appeared to be present. Following data collection, the data  
264 (from diaries and interviews) from each participant were analysed by the first author  
265 following the steps proposed by Miles and Huberman (1992).

266 First the data set from each participant was coded, which occurred in three  
267 stages. Firstly, descriptive coding was conducted on each interview transcript and  
268 diary entry for one participant. During descriptive coding, raw data units that  
269 represented types of parental involvement the canoeist encountered and the influences  
270 of different behaviors were identified. For example, codes such as shouting  
271 encouragement, talking during run, giving congratulations after run, forgetting  
272 equipment, carrying boat were identified, along with consequences such as irritating,  
273 frustrating, happy, distracting, encouraging. The next step of coding, interpretive  
274 coding, involved the grouping of similar codes to allow for more abstract categories  
275 to be produced. For example, descriptive codes such as congratulations after a run,  
276 talking during run, and encouragement during a run were grouped together under the  
277 category of type and timing of feedback. Finally, pattern codes were identified to  
278 highlight the relationships between interpretive codes, with codes such as type and

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279 timing of feedback being grouped with reacting to child's emotions to create the code  
280 read and react to situations. Further, during pattern coding, the types of involvement  
281 and the consequences of involvement were linked to ensure that these were  
282 understood together.

283         Following coding, a data matrix for each participant was created based on the  
284 coded interview transcripts and diary entries. The initial matrix simply identified the  
285 pattern codes and associated descriptive and interpretive codes as described by the  
286 canoeists. This matrix was then expanded to provide an opportunity to examine the  
287 codes across contexts. In this instance the matrix comprised a number of columns  
288 labelled with different domains (e.g., home, competition, and training). The pattern  
289 codes were then allocated within these different domains to provide a visual display  
290 of which behaviors were domain-specific and which behaviors occurred across  
291 domains.

292         The coding process and development of initial matrices was then repeated for  
293 each canoeist. Once individual matrices had been created for all the participants, these  
294 were compared and an overall matrix containing details of all the types of  
295 involvement and the consequences of involvement was created and the domains in  
296 which they occurred. These data were then transferred onto a time-ordered matrix to  
297 identify any temporal considerations in the data (e.g., was there a change in type of  
298 involvement over the six weeks?). Finally, the matrices were shared with the rest of  
299 the research team, who reviewed them and compared them to the interview transcripts  
300 and diary responses.

### 301 **Methodological Rigor**

302         Steps taken to ensure the methodological rigor of this study were guided by  
303 Tracey's (2010) review of criteria underpinning "excellent qualitative work" (p.837).

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304 Specific criteria guiding this work included: rich rigor, achieved through the selection  
305 of an appropriate sample and multiple data collection techniques to gain meaningful  
306 data; credibility, demonstrated through continued engagement with the participants to  
307 gain their reflections on the developing finding and the integration of rich participant  
308 quotes and description; sincerity through the presentation of detailed information  
309 pertaining to each stage of method and the interviewer's continual engagement in  
310 self-reflection through journaling; and meaningful coherence through the use of  
311 appropriate data collection methods to address the purpose of the study and  
312 integration with previous literature. For example, the interviewer spent considerable  
313 time in the canoeing environment to build rapport with the participants and to develop  
314 understanding of the canoeing culture. This immersion in the research environment,  
315 along with multiple contacts with participants in and around interviews, helped the  
316 interviewer in understanding the meaning of participants' words and phrases and to  
317 situate them in the context of parent-child interactions that occurred during the  
318 international squad selection phase. This prolonged engagement ensured that the data  
319 collected appropriately addressed the research aims, as well as provided detailed and  
320 abundant data.

### 321 **Results**

322 Through the analyses of the data, it became apparent that participants desired  
323 or required certain types of parental involvement in each of the three different  
324 contexts. However, the canoeists also discussed types of involvement that they  
325 perceived to be positive across all the domains, and cross-domain involvement  
326 seemed to have the greatest influence on athletes' performances. In the following  
327 sections, types of parental involvement that influenced performance are presented  
328 under context headings; starting with the types of involvement that are desired across

329 all contexts, the results then progress to types of involvement desired in two specific  
330 contexts, before ending with behaviours desired in only one context. A visual  
331 representation of the findings is presented in Figure 1.

332         When discussing their parents' involvement, participants were frequently  
333 asked to highlight behaviors that resulted in positive and negative performance  
334 consequences. However, through the analysis process, it became apparent that there  
335 were certain types of involvement that were desired from the canoeists and were  
336 perceived to have a positive consequence on their performances. When these types of  
337 involvement were not adhered to or present, this was then deemed by the canoeists to  
338 have a negative consequence on their performance. Thus, rather than there being a  
339 clear distinction between positive behaviors and negative behaviors that parents  
340 displayed, it was the fulfilment or not desired involvement that appeared important.  
341 Thus, in the following sections, the types of involvement that were desired by the  
342 canoeists and perceived to have a positive influence on performance are presented.  
343 Examples of negative consequences arising when parents do not fulfil this type of  
344 involvement are provided within each of the categories.

#### 345 **Home-Training-Competition Involvement**

346         When discussing parental involvement, there were five types of involvement  
347 that were desired by canoeists across all three domains. These types of involvement  
348 appeared to transcend context, instead relating to the overall involvement and support  
349 parents provided to their children, which was perceived to influence their  
350 performances.

351         **Allow athletes to focus on canoeing by providing practical support.** When  
352 discussing the involvement of their parents across all three domains, participants  
353 continually returned to the importance of parents providing practical and logistical



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354 support to help the canoeists. Such support ranged from general parenting behaviour  
355 (e.g., cooking meals, washing clothes) to more sport-specific behaviors. Participant 3  
356 said, “I see my mum and dad generally there for support rather than performance  
357 enhancing . . . driving me to places.” Writing in his diary, Participant 1 explained:

358         At a competition, mum printed out a start list so I knew when my run was. It  
359         was reassuring because when I forget my run time I have to run round trying  
360         to find out when it is and potentially miss it. However, with the start list I  
361         always knew when my run was.

362         When considering the influence of such practical support on their  
363 performance, canoeists indicated that it was beneficial because it enabled them to  
364 focus their attention on training and competitive performances rather than other more  
365 menial tasks. For example, Participant 5 said about his mum providing him food for  
366 race day, “It’s really helpful and stuff, ‘cause then I don’t have to . . . focus on err, like  
367 bothering about my food”.

368         **Read and understand the situation and the athletes’ response.** Participants  
369 spent considerable time describing the different reactions they wanted and received  
370 from their parents in various situations (e.g., whether they had won, raced well, or  
371 raced poorly). For example, reflecting on a good run Participant 4 wrote in his diary,  
372 “My dad congratulated us on our first run, he said it was good and showed [us] how  
373 close we were to first place. This made me feel happy, it made me feel quite positive  
374 about my run.” In contrast, after a poor performance participants might desire  
375 different responses. As participant 8 explained:

376         If it’s [the performance] been good, like [they should] try to talk about it quite  
377         a bit like [say], “You’ve done really well” and like, be proud. But, if it’s been  
378         quite bad, then still try and talk a bit positive, but like erm...like just (pause)

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379           err understand how the athlete's feeling. Like, if they're not very happy, then .  
380           . . . agree; like [say], "Oh, that weren't that good." But then, be positive and  
381           say, "Ah, there's always next time."

382           On examining these different explanations, it seemed that parents were deemed  
383           to have a positive influence on performance when they understood different situations  
384           and outcomes that arise in canoeing and tailor their comments and support to the  
385           athlete. For example, Participant 2 thought that his father was perceptive to his needs  
386           for space on race day, which he found helpful. He commented, "Sometimes I'm  
387           focused on the day, and sometimes I'm not. If I am, then he'll [dad] pick [up] on that  
388           and give me space . . . so I can focus." By appropriately gauging athletes' emotions,  
389           parents helped to increase participants' perceptions of competence and motivation for  
390           canoeing. Participant 3 said:

391           Just seeing them recognise when you feel good about something that you've  
392           done, seeing that they think its good as well, just kinda gives you a bit of  
393           reassurance. . . . I suppose it almost feels . . . good that you are impressing  
394           people in a way.

395           **Developing a growth mindset through a task-involving climate.** In addition  
396           to their desires for parents to react to their emotions, participants noted how parents  
397           helped them focus on opportunities to develop their skills. Participant 6 explained:

398           Well, usually my dad will come down and talk to me, and like tell me it was  
399           a good run, and I may have done this wrong, but I may have done this really  
400           well. And, I can easily do what I did wrong a lot better. So, the time [race  
401           outcome] might not mean so much.

402           By emphasising skill development, it seemed that parents helped the canoeists master  
403           their own performances while de-emphasizing comparisons with other competitors.

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404 For example Participant 6 said, “One thing he’s [dad] always said to me is, ‘Don’t  
405 worry about the outcome . . . what other people are doing.’ Which just helps . . . which  
406 helps quite a lot.” He reiterated this point in his diary, writing, “[Dad] woke me up for  
407 training and again talked to me about making sure I was thinking just about my  
408 paddling [not comparing to others]. It is good to know he cares about my training  
409 even when he is ill.”

410 Canoeists discussed the positive influences such suggestions had on their  
411 motivation, pre-race anxiety, perceptions of pressure, and confidence. For example,  
412 Participant 7 outlined the pressure-reducing effects of her father’s comments:

413 I’ll be getting changed and he’ll [father] start saying, “You don’t need to be  
414 thinking about all the other people because it doesn’t matter what they’re  
415 doing because as long as you paddle your best . . . I don’t really care, and  
416 you’ll beat them anyway” and all this so . . . it changes every time, but that’s  
417 the kind of basis of it. And, it takes away the pressure.

418 By consistently receiving the same message from her father that emphasized a task-  
419 involving environment, Participant 7 felt under less pressure to perform.

420 **Value canoeing and understand the importance to canoeist.** Whether  
421 discussing the home, training, or competitive environment, participants placed great  
422 value on their parents’ presence and interest in their canoeing. Participant 3 wrote:

423 At the course, Paddle training. My mum asked how we got on in the session,  
424 positive. It happened when I got back to the cottage we were staying in. My  
425 mum, my dad, my brother and myself [were present] . . . err how it made me  
426 feel. It’s good, it’s nice that she takes an interest in how I do and how I feel  
427 that I do.

428 Participant 8 similarly liked the interest his father took in his canoeing, he said:

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429           If there's a race on, and there is something else that they're [the family are]  
430           doing, he'll [father] come to watch me. Like, he always comes to watch me if  
431           I'm doing something like canoeing . . . he's given me priority. It's quite cool  
432           that like he puts me before other things.

433           Whether through their attendance or comments, demonstrating an interest in  
434           their canoeing and understanding how important it was to canoeists appeared central  
435           to increasing athletes' motivation and feelings of support. Participant 4 explained in  
436           his diary, "Positive. My dad said that if I don't warm up properly [at training] I will  
437           hurt myself. He has my best interest in mind. This happened after training. I felt  
438           supported; it showed he cares." However, one caveat to parents' interest was ensuring  
439           conversation was not overly focused on canoeing at home (see later section).

440           **Willingness to adapt involvement.** The final type of involvement  
441           participants' discussed across all three domains was that parents were flexible and  
442           able to adapt their involvement based on communication with athletes, coaches, or  
443           sport psychologists. Although athletes generally perceived their parents' current  
444           involvement to be positive, several canoeists shared insights into how they or other  
445           members of their support team had worked to shape their parents' involvement. For  
446           example, when discussing his mother's post-race comments, Participant 5  
447           commented, "All she would say is, 'You need to get on. Just like put it behind [you,  
448           and]. . . get on with your next run.'" When asked if these comments were ok, he  
449           continued to explain:

450           Yeah . . . it's good. I don't like her bothering about it because she's not my  
451           coach at the end of the day. Like, it's really annoying when your parents start  
452           trying to coach. . . . It happened last year a bit with my dad, but we sat him  
453           down, and we had a chat, and said like, "Right, you're not gonna coach me,

454           like, at all. And, stay out of the way of coaching me. Don't be near me; don't  
455           give me any input." And he has done (pause) [The] same with my mum.

456   Other changes that canoeists requested related to specific types of involvement at  
457   competitions, such as their practical support or cheering during runs. For example,  
458   Participant 1 asked his mother for larger lunches on race days because he was always  
459   hungry. He said:

460           I have talked to my mum a bit about [having a bigger lunch]. . . . We've  
461           organised what we're going to do differently about it. . . . I think it's good, like,  
462           that I can take an issue like that to my parents, and they'll listen, and try and do  
463           something about it.

464   Although participants' reasons for requesting changes differed, it seemed that by  
465   parents simply being open to and changing their involvement resulted in positive  
466   changes in canoeists' motivation, perceived competence, concentration, and anxiety  
467   levels. For example, Participant 5 explained that when competing he could hear his  
468   Dad's voice throughout the race and found it difficult to concentrate on technically  
469   challenging sections. He told his Dad "to pipe down a bit and just [shout] like on the  
470   open bits," so he was not distracted. On hearing his Dad shout at preferred times, He  
471   said, "it just made me go for it a bit more."

#### 472   **Training-Competition Involvement**

473           In addition to the five types of involvement participants liked across all three  
474   domains, canoeists highlighted a further three types of involvement that they  
475   perceived to have a positive influence in the training and competition environment.

476           **Match encouragement to canoeists' needs.** Participants emphasized the  
477   encouragement their parents provided before, during, and after training and  
478   competition. For example, Participant 1 wrote in his diary, "Positive. Mum told me I

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479 was looking sharper as the week went on. In fact when I was packing my kit. It gave  
480 me confidence because selection is approaching and it is nice knowing I am  
481 improving going in to the race.” Canoeists perceived such support to positively  
482 influence their motivation, confidence, and perceived competence.

483         However, these benefits were only realised when the encouragement provided  
484 matched the participants’ needs. For example, before runs in training or competition,  
485 some athletes highlighted the importance of parents providing simple consistent  
486 motivational comments. Participant 1 said, “Sometimes before a race or something,  
487 dad’ll say these little phrases that he has, and they sort of get me into gear.” Such  
488 encouragement was deemed to help motivate and enhance his focus. However, other  
489 canoeists described a preference for silence and space before runs, as Participant 3  
490 said, “[parents should] just give someone else space when they need it.” Similarly,  
491 during a run some canoeists perceived that any encouragement was satisfactory  
492 because they could block out the noise. For others, however, the timing of  
493 encouragement in relation to the difficulty of race sections largely dictated whether  
494 encouragement had beneficial or detrimental effect on performance. Participant 5  
495 explained:

496         Well . . . its just like, “Oh, mum’s shouting at me!” And then I end up losing it  
497 . . . just lose a bit of focus. And, I end up clipping a gate or something like  
498 that, and getting a . . . two-second penalty or something like that. Just things  
499 like that. On the sprint, err it just kinda urges you on if you know . . . other  
500 people want you to win as well. And, it just really gives you that push.

501         **Trust athletes to prepare.** Although participants placed great value on the  
502 practical support they received from their parents across different domains, canoeists  
503 also wanted parents to trust them to be prepared for both training and competition. For

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504 example, when explaining why his father's involvement was positive, Participant 6  
505 commented:

506 My dad doesn't make me do anything. I just say, "I'm gonna do this, this, and  
507 this." And he'll say, "Oh. Ok, that's fine." . . . As long as I've worked it out  
508 with my coach, he doesn't take much notice. He'll just make sure I know what  
509 I'm doing and that's it.

510 By having parents place their trust in their athletes, canoeists felt that they were able  
511 to focus more successfully upon their performances.

512 In contrast, if athletes were not trusted to prepare and parents were nagging  
513 them or directing their preparation, athletes often appeared frustrated. Participant 2  
514 said, "It happened earlier 'cause he [dad] was like, 'Bring your kit down with you.'  
515 But, I didn't wanna because I wanted it to dry. . . . So, he was just trying to force me  
516 to move my kit. . . . It was a bit annoying." He continued, "I just want to do my own  
517 thing rather than do what my dad wants me to do . . . I guess a little more sort of trust  
518 would be nice." Similarly, Participant 4 wrote in his diary:

519 Negative. My dad persisted in nagging me to get ready and go to training. He  
520 kept on repeating that I was going to be late, even though I had lots of time. [It  
521 made me feel] Annoyed, angry, fed up. Let me get on with my own thing.

522 **Understand canoeing is a social activity.** The final consideration for parental  
523 involvement across training and competitive environments was providing athletes  
524 with opportunities to socialize with other canoeists. This desire was apparent when  
525 Participant 4 shared the following example of positive involvement from his father:

526 My dad was good yesterday . . . normally when they come they try to push me  
527 to get home sooner rather than later. But after our run yesterday we were  
528 hanging around and soaking it up . . . with [name of another athlete]. So, we

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529           were just talking and having a good time. He [dad] wasn't pushing to try and  
530           get home or anything.

531   Throughout the interviews it became apparent that, although the participants were  
532   very focused in training and competitions, they also saw canoeing as a social activity  
533   and having opportunities to relax increased enjoyment and helped them relax. For  
534   example, throughout his interviews Participant 3 frequently returned to this issue,  
535   explaining that he became frustrated when, "my dad wants to drive home and watch  
536   the soccer and just . . . trying to like rush me when I'm getting changed," but that he  
537   appreciated when his dad let him, "talk to people afterwards . . . I don't really get the  
538   chance to talk to them before or during. So, it's like, I want to talk to a couple of  
539   people."

### 540   **Home-Competition Involvement**

541           Participants described two types of involvement that was desired in both the  
542   home and competition environments. These types of involvement, managing own  
543   anxiety and encouraging positive perspective taking, are discussed in the following  
544   sections.

545           **Managing own anxiety.** The canoeists explained that, at home, prior to  
546   competitions, and on arrival and throughout attendance at competitions, parents'  
547   managing their own anxiety and creating a relaxed environment was particularly  
548   important. For example, Participant 1 described the helpful interactions he and his  
549   parents had at home during the trials period:

550           It's been quite relaxed . . . quite chilled out I suppose. Just like as long as I'm  
551           in [back home] at the right times and stuff. . . . Basically chilled out really. So,  
552           I can relax, lay back, and not have to think too much about the race at the



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553 weekend. So, I'm not building up the nerves and everything. So, (pause) it's  
554 been good.

555 By remaining calm and minimizing their own anxiety throughout the period, it  
556 seemed that parents were able to help their children remain relaxed, which was  
557 thought to help performance.

558 In contrast, canoeists explained that if parents were unable to maintain their  
559 anxiety at home or around the competition, their anxiety could be transferred to them.  
560 Participant 4 explained:

561 We'll drive there, and he gets quite stressed out in the morning 'cause I'm not  
562 very good at getting up like most teenagers. So, he gets pretty stressed out . . .  
563 especially at competition[s]. . . . He's goin' [saying] "You're gonna be late!  
564 You're gonna be late!" He just sort of winds you [me] up a bit, but (pause)  
565 [Interviewer: So, what are you thinking or feeling?]. It's just like "We're not  
566 actually going to be late, so why are you messing like this? Just shut up!" I  
567 just try to blank it out because I need to do all this stuff before I go [leave the  
568 house], like prepare my kit, prepare myself.

569 **Encouraging positive perspective taking.** Participants shared several  
570 examples of the positive influences parents could have at home by helping them put  
571 poor performances in perspective. This was particularly important for Participant 4,  
572 who said the best involvement from his parents after competitions was that:

573 They'd be pretty sympathetic I guess erm . . . if you've had a bad run,  
574 normally they might just be sort of, "Ah well, it's only so and so . . . It's only  
575 one day." "It's only one race; it doesn't really matter." "Better luck next time"  
576 and then do something else.

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577 However, if such comments were not appropriately timed, parents did frustrate or  
578 disappoint athletes. For example, when talking about his parents giving  
579 encouragement straight after a race, Participant 4 said:

580 If I've got off the water and we've had a bad run, a really bad run and I'm  
581 steaming [angry], you get off the water and you dread just going to them  
582 [parents], because whatever I'll say, they'll be like 'Ahh, that was alright wasn't  
583 it? That was good.' And, I was like, 'It wasn't really, that was crap!' . . . So,  
584 like, the positive bit annoys me.

585 Participant 4 continued, "Really what you want is a fight at the end of your [bad] run,  
586 because you just feel annoyed. And then, they're [parents] more the opposite. So, I  
587 guess you're thinking 'just shut up and leave me alone.'"

588 When parents appropriately timed their comments, their assurances had  
589 numerous benefits, such as reaffirming athletes' perceptions of competence and  
590 protecting their confidence. As Participant 1 explained:

591 I think overall it's just been reassurance I think. They did also tell me that I  
592 did some of the moves quite well . . . just messing up on other bits. And, I  
593 think they also like saying, "You know, it doesn't matter about the percentage.  
594 There's plenty more races at [name of venue] to achieve that."

595 For Participant 8, such perspective helped him to move on from his losses and look  
596 towards his next run (race):

597 If it was a really good run . . . and like they'll come down to the finish and,  
598 like, congratulate me and that, and say, "That was a good run." If not [it did  
599 not go well], then they'll just stand about as I'm coming up, and I'll just shake  
600 my head or something, and they'll be like, "Oh well, its not exactly important"

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601 something like that. “You’ve got another run.” . . . So . . . I’d take that in from  
602 them and just take a bit of advice . . . it encourages me to forget about it really.

### 603 **Training**

604 In addition to cross-domain influences, participants highlighted one specific  
605 type of involvement in training and another in the home environment that influenced  
606 their performance. Within training, canoeists placed a specific influence upon the  
607 provision of motivation and constructive evaluation.

608 **Providing motivational and constructive feedback.** The participants’ shared  
609 many stories detailing their parents’ active involvement in training. For example, it  
610 was common for parents to attend training, provide verbal support, and offer some  
611 feedback or evaluation after athletes had completed runs or sessions. When describing  
612 the feedback they received, canoeists discussed the important role motivational but  
613 constructive feedback played in enhancing self-confidence and perceived competence.  
614 This input stood out for Participant 5 who noted the following as positive involvement  
615 from his mum:

616 She said, like, as the week was going on, every session I was looking just that  
617 bit more sharper out of every gate; just speeding up faster every time. So, it’s  
618 good. ‘Cause coming up to the important selection race you want to know that  
619 you’re not getting slower at some rate, and it even helps to know that possibly  
620 you’re getting just that bit faster.

621 Participant 1 shared similar experiences, explaining that she felt more confident  
622 when:

623 The other day I had a poor session and mum goes like, “Well, it wasn’t that  
624 good, but you’ve got to remember that you’ve done a load of other good  
625 sessions, and you’re bound to have a bad session in the week.” So, I think that

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626 also made me feel better about doing the bad session, and it didn't let it get to  
627 me before selection.

### 628 **Home**

629 Finally, there was one type of involvement, attending to their holistic  
630 development, that was only discussed in relation to the home context.

631 **Attending to holistic development.** Participants indicated that they preferred  
632 their parents' involvement when the focus at home was not solely on canoeing.  
633 Participant 7 shared, "I think, because I spend quite a lot of my time doing canoeing,  
634 it's almost good to have something else that you can think about. Say, for just an hour  
635 a day, not [to] think about canoeing." Participant 3 further explained, "We'd just talk  
636 about how someone's day went, like current events, anything really umm (pause),  
637 what's happened on telly. Just random things; anything and everything." When asked  
638 if this involvement was positive, he responded, "Yeah. Going from the racing  
639 atmosphere, and post-racing atmosphere, to sort of just like normal life, I guess is  
640 quite nice to have." Such an approach appeared to ensure that participants could relax  
641 at home and canoeing was not all consuming. Athletes particularly appreciated such  
642 an approach when canoeing was not going well, as Participant 1 commented, "I think  
643 it's helpful when your parents – say your having a bad time [canoeing] then your  
644 parents take your mind off it, and help you think about something else."

645 In addition to helping to take participants' minds off canoeing, by focusing on  
646 the participants' upcoming exams and revision (which immediately followed the  
647 selection period), parents were also inadvertently (or perhaps intentionally) reducing  
648 the pressure the canoeists associated with their sport. For example, when talking  
649 about parental pressure accompanying his upcoming selection race, Participant 5 said:

650 I don't think they've really said anything, because I've had quite a lot of  
651 exams over the last few weeks so. So, basically, I've been basically focusing  
652 on the exams, and they've just been telling me, "Ah, revise", "go do some  
653 revision," "stop playing on your Xbox™" (laugh). That's all that's said all  
654 week (laugh).

655 **Discussion**

656 The purposes of this study were to examine eight elite youth canoeists' views  
657 on parental involvement across home, training, and competitive contexts and to  
658 identify how different types of involvement influenced athletes' performances. The  
659 participants discussed a various types of parental involvement that were displayed  
660 across all three domains. Athletes indicated that these different types of involvement  
661 were beneficial because they helped to enhance their confidence, motivation, and  
662 perceptions of competence; reduce feelings of anxiety or pressure; and facilitate  
663 required focus. Overall, the findings of this study shed light on the extensive influence  
664 parents had on lives of the eight canoeists beyond the competitive context and  
665 provides evidence that parents, when involved appropriately, can positively influence  
666 youth athletes' sporting experiences.

667 Given the emphasis on positive parental involvement in this study of eight  
668 high-level canoeists, it is appropriate to compare these findings to Harwood and  
669 Knight's (2015) position paper on sport parenting expertise. Of particular interest is  
670 the extent to which the positive types of parental involvement identified in canoe  
671 slalom align with the six postulates Harwood and Knight presented based on studies  
672 conducted almost exclusively in soccer and tennis. In general, there are many  
673 similarities between the findings of this study and Harwood and Knight's postulates.  
674 For example, consistent with postulate one, which is supported by substantial research

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675 (e.g., Gould et al., 2006, 2008; Knight et al., 2010, 2011; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005),  
676 the parents in this study were appraised positively by their children because they  
677 provided appropriate types of social support. Specifically, for the athletes in this  
678 study, parents demonstrated suitable support by taking an interest in canoeing;  
679 providing practical support at home, training, and competition; and also by giving  
680 motivational and constructive evaluations during training. In line with Keegan, Spray,  
681 Harwood, and Lavalley's (2010) findings, by providing such support, parents  
682 positively influence their children's motivation, while also increasing perceptions of  
683 competence, confidence, and reducing anxiety.

684         Additionally, reinforcing the sentiments of tennis players (Knight et al., 2010;  
685 Knight & Holt, 2014) and other youth team athletes (Knight et al., 2011; Omli &  
686 Weise-Bjornstal, 2011), the participants discussed their positive view of cheering and  
687 encouragement during training and competition, when it was appropriately timed.  
688 Thus, rather than implementing wide sweeping bans on parent communication (which  
689 are increasingly commonplace in youth sport), it would appear that positive outcomes  
690 may arise if coaches, practitioners, and organizers work with parents to ensure they  
691 understand the importance of appropriate timing and phrasing of comments during  
692 competitions. After all, if these athletes succeed on the international stage, they will  
693 likely compete in noisy and distracting environments and having opportunities to  
694 develop strategies to cope with such conditions early in their careers might help  
695 developing-athletes enhance their future performances.

696         Though there may be some benefit for athletes from learning to compete in  
697 noisy environments, it is well known that "inappropriate" parental comments can  
698 have hugely detrimental influences on youth athletes, particularly leading to  
699 perceptions of pressure and pre-competitive anxiety (e.g., Bois, Lalanne, & Delforge,

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700 2009; Leff & Hoyle, 1997). Interestingly, in the current study, the main criticism of  
701 parents' comments was that they were distracting rather than pressuring. Thus, it  
702 appears that, at least for these athletes, the timing of comments rather than content  
703 was most important. Thus, addressing and reducing poorly timed or delivered  
704 comments should be a focus of interventions, but as is apparent in the current study,  
705 individual athletes' specific preferences and perceptions of parental encouragement  
706 differ. Specifically, it appeared that the athlete's own perception of his or her  
707 performance and the timing of the encouragement (in relation to a performance)  
708 influenced what encouragement they wanted from their parents. This finding provides  
709 further support for the importance of parents talking with their children to identify  
710 their specific wants and needs (Knight & Holt, 2014) and to communicate with them  
711 to assess perceptions of feedback and encouragement (Harwood & Knight, 2015).

712         Although canoeists spent time discussing the encouragement their parents'  
713 provided, they appeared to place greater emphasis on their parents' provision of  
714 practical and information support than emotional support. Researchers have  
715 previously identified the central and important role that parents have in providing  
716 youth athletes with emotional support, particularly in the form of comfort and  
717 commiseration if they have performed poorly (e.g., Knight et al., 2010, 2011; Lauer et  
718 al., 2010b; Wolfenden & Holt, 2005). However, in the current study, rather than  
719 emphasizing the need for parents to provide comfort after a poor performance,  
720 participants spoke highly of their parents' ability to help them to contextualize and  
721 interpret their performances in a developmental or incremental manner. Specifically,  
722 by creating a task-involving climate and de-emphasising ego-involvement, parents  
723 encouraged their child to adopt a growth mindset (Dweck, 2008). Researchers have  
724 documented the benefits of both developing a growth mindset and adopting task-goals

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725 (through the support of a task-involving climate) across a variety of achievement  
726 domains (e.g. Dweck, 2008; Keegan et al., 2010), including the sport context  
727 (Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavalley, 2009; O'Rourke, Smith, Smoll, & Cumming,  
728 2012, 2014).

729         In this study, canoeists reported numerous psychological benefits to parents'  
730 effort-based, self-referent, and improvement-oriented evaluations and comments  
731 across the training, competition, and home contexts. Parents, acting as interpreters of  
732 their children's sport performances (through their words and actions; Fredricks &  
733 Eccles, 2004), seemed to increase participants' confidence, reduce canoeists' pre-race  
734 anxieties and perceptions of pressure, and help facilitate and maintain athletes' task-  
735 focused motivation. These findings, in combination with previous studies of parental  
736 involvement indicate that parents can have pervasive, positive influences on  
737 children's sport performances and wellbeing, particularly when they shape athletes'  
738 thoughts, feelings, and behaviors through appropriate motivational climates and social  
739 support (Keegan et al., 2010; 2011; O'Rourke et al., 2012, 2014).

740         In the current study, the influence of parental involvement on children's sport  
741 experiences also appeared to be largely dictated by the extent to which it fulfilled  
742 canoeists' basic psychological needs (i.e., competence, autonomy, and relatedness) as  
743 conceptualized in self-determination theory (SDT; Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example,  
744 parents facilitated athletes' competence through encouragement and appropriately  
745 timed feedback, autonomy by giving children time and space at competitions and  
746 trusting them to prepare, and relatedness by allowing social time with peers after  
747 races and training sessions. Athletes seemed to value parents helping them meet these  
748 needs because they reported numerous positive outcomes in response. Thus,  
749 encouraging such involvement from parents appears important. However, the



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750 suggestion of encouraging parental involvement likely runs counter to the desires of  
751 some coaches and organizations (cf. Holt & Knight, 2014) who prefer parents to have  
752 minimal involvement in their children's sport careers. However, this research is  
753 evidence of the central and positive influence parents can have when they are actively  
754 and appropriately involved in their children's sport lives.

755         Parenting style was not explicitly examined within this study. Nevertheless,  
756 when considering the current findings, it appears that many of the behaviors the  
757 canoeists enjoy would align with an autonomy-supportive parenting style. This  
758 parenting style has received some support within the sport parenting literature (Holt et  
759 al., 2009; Sapieja, Dunn, & Holt, 2011) and was recommended by Harwood and  
760 Knight (2015) as a key component of sport parenting expertise. In this study,  
761 canoeists reported that parents who relinquished their control over their children in  
762 competitions and training by changing their involvement to align with their children's  
763 needs, trusting children to prepare, and, to a lesser extent, providing opportunity for  
764 athletes to socialize were thought to have a positive influence on performance. Such  
765 behaviors appear to fit with an autonomy-supportive parenting style, in which parents  
766 empower their children to make decisions, solve problems, and do not force them into  
767 actions (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Holt et al., 2009). By engaging in such behaviors,  
768 parents limited the extent to which they would frustrate or distract the athletes and  
769 helped to maintain athletes' motivation, enjoyment, and focus.

770         The most apparent manner in which parents could have a detrimental  
771 influence upon the canoeists' performances was when they were unable to manage  
772 their own anxiety. Such anxieties generally seemed to stem from parents feeling  
773 rushed or from worrying that their children would not arrive at the competition on  
774 time. Thus, while the parents appeared able to relinquish some control over their

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775 children, they also found themselves succumbing to some of the competition and  
776 organizational stressors (e.g., travel, planning, and logistics) that have previously been  
777 reported within the sport parenting literature (Harwood & Knight, 2009a; 2009b).  
778 Such findings may explain why parents asserted control over canoeists to organize  
779 them (e.g., nagging at home before training) and why parents seemed strict on time  
780 prior to and following competitions (e.g., to minimise or cope with parental stressors).  
781 This finding reinforces the need for parents to develop strategies to manage such  
782 stressors to be able to best support their children in sport (Postulate 5, Harwood &  
783 Knight, 2015).

### 784 **Applied Implications**

785       The findings of this study provide valuable information for sport  
786 psychologists, coaches, and canoe associations in terms of facilitating positive  
787 parental involvement within elite canoeing. At an organisational level, the results provide an  
788 impetus for offering educational material to parents who are transitioning with their child into more specialized  
789 stages of commitment to the sport (Côté, 1999). The direct insights and voices of children present parents with  
790 empowering and informative parameters within which to support their child-athlete in various contextual roles.  
791 Sport psychologists working at a more local level with athletes and parents could use illustrations of optimal  
792 support, communication, and home-based behavior to help parents appreciate their holistic roles in assisting their  
793 child-athlete's personal, performance, and social needs. In the absence of, or in conjunction with, sport  
794 psychologists, coaches can also apply our findings in order to facilitate their relationships with parents, and help  
795 parents to understand how they can effectively navigate and contribute to the elite canoeing environment as a  
796 valued stakeholder.

### 797 **Limitations and Future Directions**

798       The results from the current study support many previous findings in soccer  
799 and tennis. Thus, as the body of evidence regarding parenting in sport grows it is  
800 increasingly apparent that although there are many idiosyncrasies in different sports,  
801 there are also many similarities. Nevertheless, the results of this study must be  
802 considered within both British and canoeing cultures, and researchers intending to

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803 apply these findings to develop parental support programs in other sports and cultures  
804 should bear this in mind. Although this study has expanded the types of sport in  
805 which parental research has been conducted, the recommendation voiced by Gould et  
806 al. (2008) that there is a need to study parenting across more sports and cultures is still  
807 applicable.

808         The current research traced the experiences of elite junior slalom canoeists  
809 over six weeks using diaries and a multiple-interview protocol, which helped to  
810 ensure an in-depth understanding of parental involvement in this sport. However, the  
811 engagement of each of the participants varied across the six weeks, particularly with  
812 regards to the detail provided in diary entries. Thus, it is possible that participants did  
813 not disclose all pertinent information regarding to parental involvement. Further, it is  
814 possible that the canoeists did not feel that they could reveal details that might portray  
815 their parents in a negative light or they might have thought they had to provide  
816 specific answers, which may have resulted in the general positive tone of the  
817 responses. Extending the time spent with the participants to further facilitate the  
818 interviewer-participant relationship might be useful for future research to overcome  
819 this issue. Additionally, providing a completely anonymous means through which  
820 participants can share negative experiences (e.g., online with no identifying details)  
821 might also provide a more detailed understanding of negative experiences with  
822 parents.

823         Gaining an understanding of specific parental involvements across several  
824 contexts and during a highly pressurized time period could be valuable for coaches  
825 and sport psychologists who work within youth canoe slalom. Nevertheless, the  
826 specific focus on children's views in this study came at a cost of not understanding  
827 parents' beliefs and values, which shape their behaviors towards their children as well

## PARENTING IN SLALOM CANOE

828 as the intra-family dynamics that provide meaning to parental behaviors and parent-  
829 child interactions. Future research should seek to triangulate coaches' and athletes'  
830 views of positive and negative behaviors with parents' experiences of youth sport  
831 stressors to highlight areas in need of change at the individual (parenting behaviors,  
832 child's behaviors), group (training group practices), and organizational levels to  
833 improve youth sport participants' sport experiences.

### 834 **Conclusion**

835 Eight elite slalom canoeists offered their views on parental involvement in  
836 their sport participation and the influence such involvement had on their performance.  
837 Canoeists identified context-specific and cross-context behaviors and associated  
838 influences that occurred in and around training, competition, and at home. Parents  
839 were reported to influence participants' perception of competence, confidence,  
840 anxiety, focus, and motivation, as well as being perceived to directly help (or hinder)  
841 performance. The results can aid the development of sport-specific parent education  
842 programmes for canoe slalom and offer insight for parents, sport psychologists, and  
843 coaches into factors that positively aid athletes' performance. The results indicate the  
844 need for youth sport parent researchers to extend their research efforts to consider the  
845 broader influences parents have in sport, beyond competition settings.

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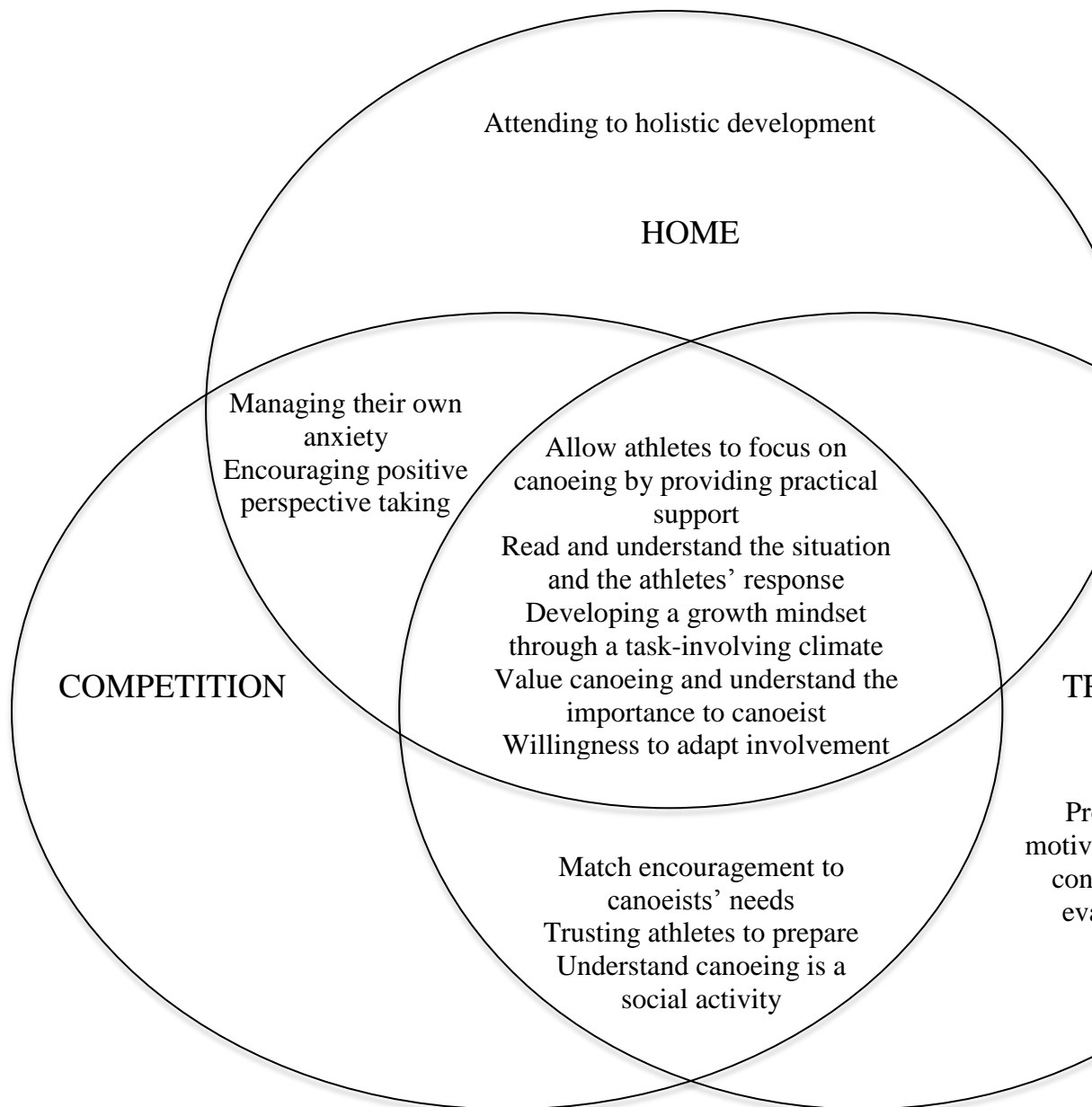


Figure 1. Positive parental involvement across domains

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## **Appendix A: Interview guide**

### **Section A: Introduction to the study (Modelled on Fletcher and Hanton, 2003)**

Hi, I'm [name of interviewer] from [name of university]. Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study on paddler's perceptions of their parent's involvement in their slalom canoeing. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of how you view your parents in relation to your slalom canoeing and in particular what they do or say that you find helpful and unhelpful. I want to understand this so that I can use this information to understand behaviours that might help sports people in the future, help educate parents about behaviours that might not be helpful and to help correct them and also letting them know what they are doing right.

Your information you give me in this study will be used in three ways. Firstly it forms the basis of my research project for my [name of degree at University]. Secondly the results of this study will aim to be published in a scientific journal to allow others in the sporting community to benefit from them (such as sport psychologists). Thirdly, the information gathered from my project will be used to the development of parental education workshops for sports organisations.

Given that the information you provide from this study will be used for these purposes, I want to remind you that the information you provide me here will be completely confidential. That is, I will not share it with your parents, your coach or discuss the information that you have given me with anyone else apart from my supervisors. Even then your identity will be protected and your responses will remain anonymous, that is your name will not appear in any of the results or quotes that I may use. I will discuss quotes and results with my supervisor, but even to them I will refer to with a pseudonym rather than your name, so they, and others won't know it is you that has said a specific quote.

However, confidentiality will be broken if you disclose something that I consider puts you at immediate risk or someone else at immediate risk, like say you threatened to kill someone or something like that then I would have to disclose that to [Coach 1; Head coach].

I just want to remind you of the rights that you have and that are indicated on the consent form. You are a volunteer in this study and that means that you are allowed to stop the interview at any point or refuse to answer questions that you do not want to. If you do not want to answer a question please say "no comment". Also, as I want to understand your views about your parents and learn from your experience and expertise, I am not looking for particular answers – there is no right or wrong answers, to the questions, so I hope you can answer them honestly and openly rather than saying what you think I want to hear. Feel free to ask me any questions if you have them as we go, and if you do not understand a question please say and hopefully I can phrase it in a better way.

I'm going to ask you some questions about your parents involvement in your canoeing and what you think are the positive/helpful, negative/unhelpful behaviours that occur in and around training, competition and at home. Firstly I am going to ask about how you got started in canoeing.

Do you have any questions at this point? If not we can get started.

## PARENTING IN SLALOM CANOE

### 985 **Section B: Introductory questions**

- 986 • When did you start getting involved in canoeing?
- 987 • How did you get involved in canoeing?
- 988     Probe: Who got you involved?
- 989 • Was there anything in your family background that might have influenced you becoming involved
- 990     in canoeing?

991

### 992 **Section C: Introduction to parental involvement**

- 993 • How are your parents involved in your canoeing (what sort of things do they do?)
- 994 • What would you say your parents' roles are in your canoeing?
- 995 • Do your parents have different roles in your canoeing involvement? (i.e. do your parents do
- 996     different things towards your canoeing)?

997     Probe: If they do, what things do they do differently?

- 998 • Do you have any other people that help you out in your canoeing? What do they do?

999

### 1000 **Section D: Training**

- 1001 • Is there anything that your parents do or say that you find positive/helpful or negative/unhelpful
- 1002     on the way to or before training?
- 1003 • Is there anything that your parents do or say that you find positive/helpful or negative/unhelpful
- 1004     during training?
- 1005 • Is there anything that your parents do or say that you find positive/helpful or negative/unhelpful
- 1006     on the way back from or after training?

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### 1008 **Section E: Competition**

- 1009 • What are your parents like on competition day?
- 1010 • Is there anything that your parents do or say that you find positive/helpful or negative/unhelpful
- 1011     on the way to or before competition?
- 1012 • Is there anything that your parents do or say that you find positive/helpful or negative/unhelpful
- 1013     at competition
- 1014 • Is there anything that your parents do or say that you find positive/helpful or negative/unhelpful
- 1015     on the way back from or after competition?

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### 1017 **Section F: Home**

- 1018 • Is there anything that your parents do or say that you find positive/helpful or negative/unhelpful
- 1019     at home?

### 1020 **Selected probes and follow up questions for sections D, E, and F:**

1021     Can you give me an example?

1022     Can you describe that a bit more for me?

1023     How does that make you feel?

1024     What do you think about that? What did you do after that?

1025     What happened after that?

1026

### 1027 **Section G: General Perceptions and recommendations**

- 1028 • Do you think your parents have a similar or different involvement in your canoeing compared
- 1029     to other canoeists' parents involvement in their child's canoeing?

1030     Probe: What do you think is different or similar about what they do or say?

- 1031 • What would you like your parents to do more of or less of with respect to your canoeing? What
- 1032     would you like your parents to do differently in the future if anything?

- 1033 • How would you say canoeists' parents can best support their child?

## PARENTING IN SLALOM CANOE

### Diary of parental involvement in slalom canoeing

Please note the format of the diary has been changed for publication. Below is a list of questions but the space to respond has been removed. The diaries participants received were double-sided booklets, which were placed in an envelope each day after completion.

1. What is today's date?

2. What is your email address?

3. What were you doing today? (Tick next to one or more)

Competing  Practicing  Not paddling

4. What have you done today? (You can select more than one) I have been...

At school  At home  At the gym  At the course (paddle training)  At a competition  Other

Describe anything that your parents have done or said to you today relating to your canoeing that you consider this I mean what you might find helpful or unhelpful towards your canoeing). If you have more than one thing to write, leave a gap between your entries for each of the questions. Please indicate whether you think the behaviour is positive or negative by writing P- or N- before you write under the 'what happened' question.

5. What happened? (who said/did what?)

6. Where did this happen?

7. Who was present?

8. How did it make you feel?/ What did you think?/What did you do?

9. Would you have preferred something else to happen? (Yes or NO - Please give a reason for your answer) preferred to happen?

Thank you for completing the diary today.

## PARENTING IN SLALOM CANOE