

Running Head: ROLE, GENDER, AND EMPATHIC ACCURACY

The influence of role and gender in the empathic accuracy of coaches and athletes

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## Abstract

### Objective

The purpose of this study was to investigate differences in the empathic accuracy of coaches and athletes in relation to the gender of the dyad member occupying each role in the coach-athlete relationship.

### Method

The empathic accuracy of fifty-six coach-athlete dyads was assessed using actual recordings of their own training sessions (see Lorimer & Jowett, 2009a; 2009b). Participants viewed selected video footage of discrete interactions that had occurred during these training sessions. Participants reported what they remembered thinking and feeling while making inferences about what their partner's had thought and felt at those points. Comparison of partners self-reports and inferences allowed their empathic accuracy to be calculated.

### Results

It was found that female coaches were more accurate than male coaches. Additionally, for athletes, the highest accuracy scores were displayed by female athletes working with male coaches, and the least by female athletes working with female coaches.

### Conclusions

The results are discussed in terms of Social Role Theory and suggest that the interaction between the expectations of coach and athlete roles and gender play a key part in how accurately coaches and athletes perceive each other.

**Keywords:** Empathic accuracy, Social Role Theory, coach-athlete relationship

The influence of role and gender in the empathic accuracy of coaches and athletes

The rapport that forms between an athlete and their coach has been cited as one of the primary influences on an athlete (Jowett & Poczwardowski, 2007). This is partially because coaches can play a fundamental function in athletes' performance accomplishments and success. Particularly at higher levels and as competition intensifies coaches and athletes work closely to bring about physical, technical, and psychological changes through the application of their own knowledge, experience, and expertise (e.g., Lyle, 2002). Additionally, it has also been suggested that, working so closely together, coaches and athletes will form significant relationships and become involved in aspects of each others' lives within and out of the sport context (Jowett & Cockerill, 2003). Furthermore, a high degree of interdependence is intrinsic to any interaction between a coach and an athlete due to the athlete's need to acquire knowledge and skill, the coach's need to guide their athlete, and for them both to translate these interactions into positive outcomes such as performance success (Antonini Philippe & Seiler, 2006).

A major underlying factor of these issues is the ability of the coach and athlete to understand each other (Lorimer & Jowett 2009a). Coaches' and athletes' ability to understand each other is essential because it allows them to react and interact effectively with each other, while misunderstandings often lead to disagreement and conflict (Cassidy, Jones, & Potrac, 2004; Janssen & Dale, 2002; Jones, Armour, & Potrac, 2004; Lynch, 2001). Lorimer and Jowett (2009a, 2009b) have suggested that this understanding in the coach-athlete relationship is linked to the psychological notion of empathy.

Empathy is the ability to "perceive the internal frame of reference of another with accuracy and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto as if one were the person..." (Rogers, 1959, pp. 210-11). That is, the ability to infer the psychological condition of another, such as thoughts, feelings, and moods, and the motivations and

reasoning behind behaviours. This understanding of the other can be used by coaches and athletes to assist their thought (e.g., 'Why has my coach only asked me to do another lap around the track') and to manage their own responses (e.g., 'Do I do what the coach asks?'), and hence effectively and successfully interact with each other (cf. Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

To date very few papers have examined this concept in sport or sports coaching. In three recent papers Lorimer and Jowett (2009a; 2009b; 2010) have found that the empathic accuracy (i.e., how *accurately* one can perceive the other's thoughts and feelings) of coaches and athletes is influenced by situational characteristics of the sport context. Coaches in team sports display significantly less empathic accuracy than coaches in individual sports. This effect is mediated by the shared cognitive focus of coaches and athletes, with coaches and athletes in team sports more frequently displaying a divergence in thoughts and feelings than coaches and athletes in individual sports (Lorimer & Jowett, 2009a). Additionally they have found that empathic accuracy is significantly associated with coaches' and athletes' positive perceptions about their relationship with each other and their satisfaction with the outcomes of that interaction (Lorimer & Jowett, 2009b). Furthermore, the level of feedback from athletes, as well as individual factors such as coaching experience, has also been shown to influence coaches' empathic accuracy (Lorimer & Jowett, 2010).

It can be argued coaches and athletes who manifest high levels of empathy are more effective and successful in their interactions (see Lorimer & Jowett, 2009a). In contrast, coaches and athletes who do not report high levels of empathy will most often have less effective and less successful interactions. These arguments can also be supported albeit indirectly by a series of qualitative research that focused on understanding the nature of coach-athlete relationships (see e.g., Jowett, 2003, 2008; Jowett & Cockerill, 2003; Jowett & Frost, 2007).

While high levels of empathic accuracy would seem to be a desirable factor in any coach-athlete relationship there are barriers that can make it difficult to achieve. One of these barriers is the expectations placed upon the coach and the athlete. The influence of these expectations can be explained by the underpinnings of Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, & Koenig, 2006). This theory states that individuals will interact and react differently in social situations, such as their relationships, depending on the expectations that society places upon them. The theory suggests that most behavioural differences that are observed between individuals, and particularly between males and females, are the result of stereotypes about gender in relation to a perceived gender power-hierarchy and gender allotted roles.

One popularly held gender-stereotype is that women possess a greater insight and sensitivity into the thoughts and feelings of others than men (see Ickes, Gesn, & Graham, 2000). This suggests that people as a whole believe that there is a differential ability between genders; and so women as a group possess some inherent ability that makes them better perceivers than men. However, Social Role Theory argues that the traditional subordinate status of women to men in society and females' association with child rearing and home keeping has created a stereotype where females are perceived as more submissive and understanding than males, and where males are perceived as being more assertive and in taking on more leadership roles (Eagly, & Koenig, 2006). If this is the case then any situation that reinforces traditional gender-roles will result in individuals making an effort to fulfil these expectations (Eagly & Koenig, 2006) and as a consequence females will exhibit greater levels of understanding and empathic accuracy while males will become more assertive and controlling (Eagly & Koenig, 2006; Ickes, Gesn, & Graham, 2000).

Furthermore, it can be argued that the traditional gender-roles of males and females may interact with the traditional roles of the coach and athlete. In the coach-athlete relationship, the coach and athlete play very different parts. The relationship is often

perceived as one in which the coach's control is indisputable and absolute; the role of the athlete being to submit without question to the control and instruction of the coach (Burke, 2001). The pressures placed on individuals to act in a certain way may lead to them to interact and react differently to each other depending on the specific expectations of their gender and role within the coach-athlete relationship. The stereotype held about males and females, and about coaches and athletes may therefore lead to different levels of motivation in coaches and athletes to understand their partners.

Male coaches have both the expectations of their role as a coach (e.g., controlling and directing; Burke, 2001) and their gender (e.g., assertive and leading; Rudman & Glick, 2008) acting on them, as do female athletes (e.g., submissive and understanding; Burke, 2001; Rudman & Glick, 2008). Additionally, coaches and athletes in a dyad made up of a female athlete with a male coach may find their role expectations even more strongly reinforced. Conversely female coaches and male athletes may have conflicting expectations placed upon them due to a divergence of role-expectations (cf Yoder & Schleicher, 1996) which also in turn may be further exasperated by the gender of their partner. For example a male athlete with a female coach: As an athlete their role expectation is to be demure and submissive to the coach, but as a male their role expectation is to play a part in leadership, something that may conflict with their submissive position as an athlete to a female coach.

Subsequently, the interpersonal dynamics of the coach-athlete relationship may be intrinsically about the power wielded by the coach over the athlete (Tomlinson & Yorganci, 1997). It has been argued that in any relationship where there is a perceived imbalance of power between roles, that the superior partner will display decreased levels of empathy while the subordinate member will exhibit increased levels (Snodgrass, 1985).

Individuals in a position of power, such as a coach, have at least some control over their partner and are therefore less dependent on them (Snodgrass, 1992). It may be that

coaches do not need to rely on an accurate understanding of their athletes to accomplish their goals and are therefore less likely to be motivated to do so. Additionally, those in power often have increased demands on their attention. This gives them less resources on which to base their inferences and impacts on the time they have to develop a more comprehensive understanding (Fiske, 1993). In contrast, individuals in a subordinate position have little or no power over their partner. This one-sided control is likely to affect one's own wellbeing (Fiske, 1993). Thus, people in less powerful positions often need to find a way to redress the balance of power within their relationships with other people. Individuals who become more sensitive to how their relationship partner thinks and feels can correctly modify their own behaviour and react appropriately to their partner, leading to more effective relationships and interactions (LaFrance & Henley, 1993).

In this paper, it is proposed that a fundamental dimension of coaching is coaches' and athletes' ability to accurately perceive each others' thoughts and feelings. It is further proposed that this ability, in accordance with Social Role Theory, will be influenced by the role and gender expectations of coaches and athletes which will influence their motivation to be empathically accurate. Individuals in positions of perceived authority and power, such as coaches, have less need to be empathically accurate due to higher levels of control and a decreased dependency on their partners while those in subordinate positions must be more responsive and understanding of their partner (Fiske, 1993; Jowett & Clark-Carter, 2006). Furthermore, it is postulated that traditional gender-roles may be reinforced by traditional coach-athlete roles by placing female athletes under the direction of male coaches. This reinforcing of expectations that the female athletes will be submissive and male coaches directing and assertive means that female athletes should display higher levels of empathic accuracy while male coaches should display lower levels. Thus the following hypotheses were formed:

*Hypothesis 1.* Coaches will have significantly lower empathic accuracy than their athletes.

*Hypothesis 2.* There will be a significant interaction between the gender of coaches and athletes. Female athletes with male coaches will exhibit higher levels of empathic accuracy while male coaches with female athletes will exhibit lower empathic accuracy.

*Hypothesis 3.* Male coaches will have significantly lower empathic accuracy than female coaches.

## Method

### *Participants*

Fifty-six coaches ( $M_{age} = 29.00$   $SD = \pm 10.56$ ) and fifty-six athletes ( $M_{age} = 21.45$   $SD = \pm 3.92$ ), forming 56 coach-athlete independent dyads were recruited from a range of team ( $n = 32$ ), and individual sports ( $n = 24$ ). Coach-athlete dyads had been together for an average of 20.2 months ( $SD = \pm 29.03$ ). Twenty-six point eight percent (26.8%) of dyads had both a male coach and athlete, 25% a male coach with a female athlete, 26.8% a female coach with a male athlete, and 21.4% a female coach and female athlete. Lorimer and Jowett (2009a) have shown that coaches involved in team and individual sports display significantly different levels of empathic accuracy and therefore each category of dyad (e.g., male/male, female/male etc) contained approximately 50% team and 50% individual sports. Coaches had been involved in coaching for an average of 7.75 years ( $SD = \pm 7.00$ ). Athletes had an average competitive experience of 7.15 years ( $SD = \pm 4.91$ ). The performance level of the participants was categorised as follows: regional (46.4%), national (30.4%), and international (23.2%). These participants represent an expansion on the original sample used by Lorimer and Jowett (2009a) as part of a larger ongoing study. As such care should be taken if including both of these studies in a meta-analysis.

*Procedure*

Coach and athletes were contacted using a variety of means including personal contact, email, and letter. Participants were invited to take part in a study exploring how coaches and athletes interact during training. Brief descriptions of the study's aims and practical implications were supplied with information related to confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the voluntary nature of the study. There were three criteria for participation: (a) both the coach and their paired athlete must participate, (b) participants were at least 18 years of age, and (c) participants were actively engaged in training and participated regularly in competitions. The athlete that a coach worked with was selected based on (a) who was willing to participate (b) who was available to work with the coach during both filming and follow up session, and finally (c) who the coach preferred to work with. Prospective participants who expressed an interest completed informed consent forms before any further involvement. Ethical approval was granted by the University's Ethical Advisory Committee before the data collection phase of the study.

*Measuring empathic accuracy*

Empathy was assessed using an experimental laboratory-based protocol developed by Lorimer and Jowett (2009a). This was originally based on the unstructured dyadic interaction paradigm (see Ickes, Stinson, Bissonnette, & Garcia, 1990) developed to assess moment-to-moment empathic accuracy in diverse types of two-person relationships. A mutually convenient date and time were identified for the video recording of a typical training session between each coach and athlete. Coaches wore a small wireless lapel microphone so that conversations between the athlete and themselves could be recorded directly onto the video camera. After the initial briefing, the researcher had no further interaction with participants until the conclusion of the training session. Coaches and athletes were asked to conduct the session as they normally would, and were recorded, from an unobtrusive position.

The video-recording of each training session was downloaded onto a computer for review. Every period of interaction between the coach and athlete was identified. Interactions were then rejected if the sound quality of the dialogue was poor or the view of the coach or athlete was obscured. As training sessions varied considerably in length (from 20 minutes up to 3.5 hours), a representative sample of 12 discrete coach-athlete interactions were randomly selected for each dyad using the guideline of approximately 20% of interactions taken from the first third of the footage (warm up, beginning of session), 50% from the middle (main training session), and 30% from the final third (typically the cool down and conclusion). This provided a range of interactions from across the training session, without making the selection so prohibitively long that coach-athlete dyads would be unwilling to watch them. These interactions were then used to create a continuous video, with each separate interaction sequence divided by 80-seconds of blank footage.

The day following the training session, participants were asked to independently review the compiled video of their own interactions. Participants were each given a standardised coding sheet. This coding sheet was broken down into twelve numbered sections, one for each interaction. These were completed during the period of blank footage following the viewing of an interaction. Participants were asked to record what they could clearly remember thinking and feeling during the actual interaction with each other. Two responses were required for each section: (i) the general feelings they remembered experiencing, (ii) the specific thoughts they remembered having. Participants were then asked to immediately watch the video again. The procedure this time was identical except that participants were instructed to record what they believed their partner had been feeling and thinking during the actual interaction with each other. All participants were informed that their partner would not be allowed to see any of their responses. At the conclusion, the coach and athlete provided demographic information, including their gender, age,

performance level, experience, and relationship duration, before being fully debriefed about the nature of the study.

Empathic accuracy scores for coaches and athletes were then calculated by comparing each partner's self-reported thoughts and feelings to their partner's inferences with his/her for each of the selected interactions (Ickes et al., 1990; Lorimer & Jowett, 2009a). Three raters considered the similarity of each pairing (i.e., inferences and self-reports) using a 3-point scale: 0 – essentially different, 1 – similar, but not the same, and 2 – essentially the same. The mean score for each individual participant is then calculated. This is the average score of all three raters for all inferences made by an individual. This average score can then be multiplied by 50 to produce an easy to interpret percentile score describing the level of accuracy: 0% describing total inaccuracy and 100% describing perfect accuracy. This raw score must then be corrected for the ease with which participants could have made accurate inferences based purely upon chance (Ickes et al., 1990; Lorimer & Jowett, 2009a): participant's self-reports are randomly paired with their partner's inferences. The similarity of the content of these random pairings is then assessed using the same method above. The resulting score for each dyad (called baseline accuracy; Ickes et al., 1990) is then subtracted from their own original raw empathic accuracy score to produce a corrected value which is used in the analysis. Raw, baseline, and corrected values are all reported in Table 1. The inter-rater reliability for these score ranged from .81 to .88.

## Results

*Hypothesis 1.* To determine if the empathic accuracy of coaches and athletes differed significantly their mean scores were compared using a paired t-test. No significant difference was found,  $t(55) = .62, p < .05$ .

*Hypothesis 2 and 3.* To test whether coaches' and athletes' empathic accuracy varied as a function of the gender, two 2 X 2 (Coach Gender by Athlete Gender) ANOVAs were

conducted. The two between-subjects factors for both ANOVAs were coach gender and athlete gender, and the dependent variables for the two ANOVAs were coach empathic accuracy and athlete empathic accuracy.

The results of the first ANOVA using coach empathic accuracy as the dependent variable revealed a non-significant main effect for Athlete Gender ( $p < .05$ ) as well as a non-significant Coach Gender by Athlete Gender interaction effect ( $p < .05$ ). However, a significant main effect was found for Coach Gender,  $F(1, 52) = 10.69, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .17$ , with female coaches displaying greater empathic accuracy than male coaches (see Figure 1).

The results of the second ANOVA using athlete empathic accuracy as the dependent variable revealed a non-significant main effect for Athlete Gender ( $p < .05$ ) as well as a non-significant main effect for Coach Gender ( $p < .05$ ). However, a significant Coach Gender by Athlete Gender interaction effect was found,  $F(1, 58) = 7.59, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .13$ . Post hoc *t*-tests revealed that the empathic accuracy of male athletes displayed no significant difference between male and female coaches, that the empathic accuracy of female athletes was significantly higher with male coaches than female coaches. Further analysis also showed that the empathic accuracy of female athletes was significantly higher than that of male athletes when working with male coaches but significantly lower than male athletes when working with female coaches (see Figure 2).

### Discussion

The purpose of this paper was to examine the degree to which the role an individual occupies in a coach-athlete dyad and the dyadic gender composition influences empathic accuracy in the context of the coach-athlete relationship. Contrary to the first hypothesis there was no significant difference between the roles participants occupied in the coach-athlete dyad and their levels of reported empathic accuracy. This contradicts the findings of

two papers that have found differences between coaches and athletes (Jowett & Clark-Carter, 2006), and between teacher and students (Snodgrass, 1985).

This finding would also appear to contradict Social Role Theory. However, the effect of role and power on empathic accuracy is not a simple one, and under certain situations a superior member may actually be expected to display higher levels of empathic accuracy depending on the exact role they play within the relationship. Snodgrass (1992) explored empathic accuracy in the context of managers and employees. They found that subordinate partners were more accurate at inferring their partner's thoughts and feelings about them (e.g. "My partner likes me") than their superiors were at inferring theirs. However, they also found that the managers, the superior partners, were more accurate at inferring their partners' thoughts and feelings about themselves (e.g. "I was a good student") than the subordinate partners were at inferring theirs. They interpreted these findings in regards to the roles superiors and subordinates are expected to play in a relationship. The role of the superior partner such as a manager, teacher, or coach is often seen to be to evaluate the subordinate, expressing their opinion about what the subordinate needs to improve or adjust. In these situations it may be particularly valuable for the superior to know how their subordinate views themselves and their own abilities, and so the partner who occupies a position of authority, control, and power will be more motivated to fulfil this role expectation by using available information to make accurate inferences in regards to this. Future research will need to examine just what thoughts and feelings, and under what conditions (e.g., successful versus less successful coaches, talented versus less talented athletes), coaches and athletes are most motivated to infer accurately. Furthermore, however great a coach's motivation might be, a coach's task may be complicated by the fact that they often have to deal with a large number of athletes in their teams and squads (Lorimer & Jowett, 2009a). Such knowledge could have significant practical implications for effective and successful sports coaching, as it

is likely to help us determine where, when, and how high levels of empathic accuracy are most beneficial to the coach and the athlete.

In partial support of the second hypothesis there was a significant interaction effect for athlete empathic accuracy. As expected female athletes exhibited greater empathic accuracy with male coaches than did male athletes (see Figure 2). Tomlinson and Yorganci (1997) have argued that the perceived imbalance of power in the coach-athlete relationship is particularly pronounced where a male coach is working with a female athlete, reinforcing traditional gender-roles. This is in line with both Social Role Theory (Eagly & Koenig, 2006) and the previous findings of Ickes, Gesn, and Graham (2000) who found that females exhibit higher empathic accuracy when traditional gender-roles were made salient such as in situations where they are placed subordinate to a male partner.

Additionally, it was found that female athletes display a lower empathic accuracy than male athletes when working with female coaches (see Figure 2). One explanation for this may be the idea of gender incongruence in relation to the expected roles of males and females. In line with Social Role Theory (Eagly & Koenig, 2006), many types of employment carry with them a gender-typing of occupation, or have some form of occupational gender segregation. Some types of job are seen as being the role of females (e.g., caring or helping roles such as nursing) or of males (e.g., physical labour or leadership roles; Eagly & Koenig, 2006; Rudman & Glick, 2008). Males undertaking a job perceived as a female position, or females doing a job seen as a male position, may be seen as being in a role incongruent to their traditional gender-role (Rudman & Glick, 2008). Leadership roles are traditionally seen as man's job or a male role (Eagly & Koenig, 2006) and coaching may often be perceived as one of these male occupations (Butler & Geis, 1990).

It may be that athletes working with female coaches see their coaches' role as being incongruent with their gender-role. This may be particularly pronounced in female athletes

as it may de-emphasise their own traditional gender-role (cf Eagly & Koenig, 2006). As it is the salience of their gender-role that increases female athletes' motivation to make accurate inferences (Ickes, Gesn, & Graham, 2000), de-emphasising this role may result in them exhibiting less empathic accuracy. It is however unclear why this possibly perceived gender incongruence of female coaches would have no influence on the empathic accuracy of male athletes.

It seems likely that the congruence or incongruence of traditional gender-roles and the coaching-role is a complicated one. It may be moderated by several factors such as the perceived competence of a coach and the quality of the relationship they have with their athletes. It is also probably influenced by the gender associations held about each sport (e.g., boxing may be perceived as masculine while synchronised swimming may be perceived as feminine). Whether this lower empathic accuracy in female athletes working with female coaches is attributable to gender incongruence or not, it is an interesting and potentially important finding and one that indicates the salience of Social Role Theory in the social psychology of sport and in the coach-athlete relationship.

For coach empathic accuracy there was no significant interaction effect, suggesting that the empathic accuracy of coaches was not influenced by the gender of their athlete. However, in support of hypothesis three, there was a significant main effect for coach gender which revealed that male coaches displayed lower accuracy than their female counterparts. While this is certainly in line with traditional stereotypes that cite females as being more empathic than males, this effect is thought to be one of expectations which in turn is a motivational influence rather than one of differential ability (Snodgrass, 1985). In line with Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987) Ickes, Gesn, and Graham (2000) have suggested that females are motivated to be make more accurate inferences when their traditional gender-role of being understanding and responsive is reinforced. While Rudman and Glick (2008) have

suggested that this is most likely to occur when females are placed in a subordinate role, this is not the only form of role that would reinforce this gender-expectation. It is a coach's role to instruct and develop athletes, passing on their own knowledge and expertise (Lyle, 2002). In many ways this has similarities to the traditional parental-role in caring and nurturing children (Maccoby, 1992), and it has even been suggested that in many ways coaches eventually supplant parents as pivotal figures in athletes' lives (Jowett & Timson-Katchis, 2005). If this is the case, the coaching-role may reflect a quasi-parental-role that in line with Social Role Theory could reinforce certain expectations of the traditional gender-role of females such being caring, understanding, and empathic (Eagly & Koenig, 2006; Rudman & Glick, 2008), with the increased motivation to fulfil those expectations resulting in higher levels of empathic accuracy (Ickes, Gesn, & Graham, 2000).

In terms of practical applications of these findings what is most apparent is the variability of empathic accuracy; with female coaches, and female athletes with male coaches, displaying greater levels of accuracy. Overall accuracy levels for this study were poor, although comparable with previous studies, averaging just over 40%, similar to previously reported levels by Lorimer and Jowett's (2009a) but lower than the circa 50% average previously reported in friendships and dating partners (Stinson & Ickes, 1992; Thomas & Fletcher, 2003). If empathic accuracy is a vital factor in successful and effective coach-athlete relationships (Lorimer & Jowett 2009a) then efforts need to be made to allow coaches and athletes to be as accurate as possible.

This study suggests that role and gender of an individual may influence their ability and motivation to make accurate inferences and to understand a partner. However, its purpose is not to suggest that this is an ideal situation, simply that this often occurs and that it can facilitate the effectiveness of a relationship. Instead a possible way forward is to use the significant effect of motivation on empathic accuracy to enhance coach-athlete relationships.

It may be that by emphasising the importance of empathic accuracy and understanding between coaches and athletes, perhaps through continued professional development and psychological interventions, that empathic accuracy can be increased. It is possible that any factor that increases coaches or athletes desire for their relationship to succeed (e.g. desire to perform well or monetary compensation) may motivate them to try and work more effectively with each other, which in turn may increase empathic accuracy (cf Lorimer & Jowett, 2009b). However, more research is needed to confirm the influence of motivational factors, other than role and gender, on empathic accuracy in the coach-athlete relationship.

While presenting significant and potentially important findings, the results of the present study must be considered against the backdrop of its limitations. Primarily, the process of measuring empathic accuracy using video-recording, recall, and inference, may raise issues as to the validity of the findings as participants may not clearly recall what they were thinking and feeling during the recorded interactions. However, this methodology has been frequently used successfully in numerous social contexts (see Ickes, 2003) and more recently in sport (see Lorimer & Jowett, 2009a; 2009b). Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that the gender-stereotypes of different sports were not controlled for, and the categorizing of sport types as feminine and masculine may have offered different results.

A large amount of work remains to be explored in empathic accuracy in coaching and in the coach-athlete relationship. While research has shown that empathic accuracy can be influenced by both the context of coaching (Lorimer & Jowett, 2009a), positive perceptions of the coach-athlete relationships (Lorimer & Jowett, 2009b), and individual factors and levels of feedback (Lorimer & Jowett, 2010), the exact influence of these varied factors is still not entirely clear. Future researchers need to continue to explore empathic accuracy with regard to the coach-athlete relationship, particularly as this pertains to the requirements and

expectations of coaches' and athletes' roles, improved relationship quality, and performance success.

In summary, the findings of the present study highlight how the gender of coaches and athletes and the roles they occupy in the coach-athlete relationship can play a key role in how well they perceive each others' thoughts and feelings. Finally, these findings also raise the issue that coaches and athletes are not always as accurate as they potentially could be and that in the correct motivational context they could make more accurate inferences about each other.

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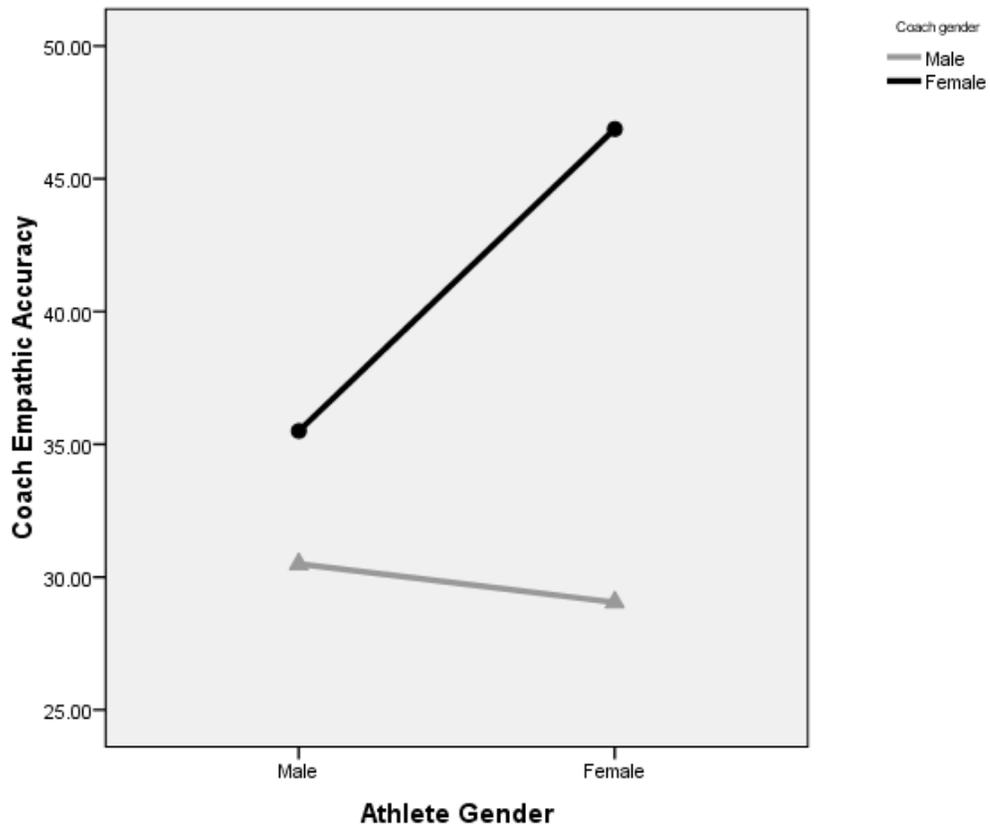
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Figure Captions

*Figure 1.* Coach empathic accuracy scores

*Figure 2.* Athlete empathic accuracy scores



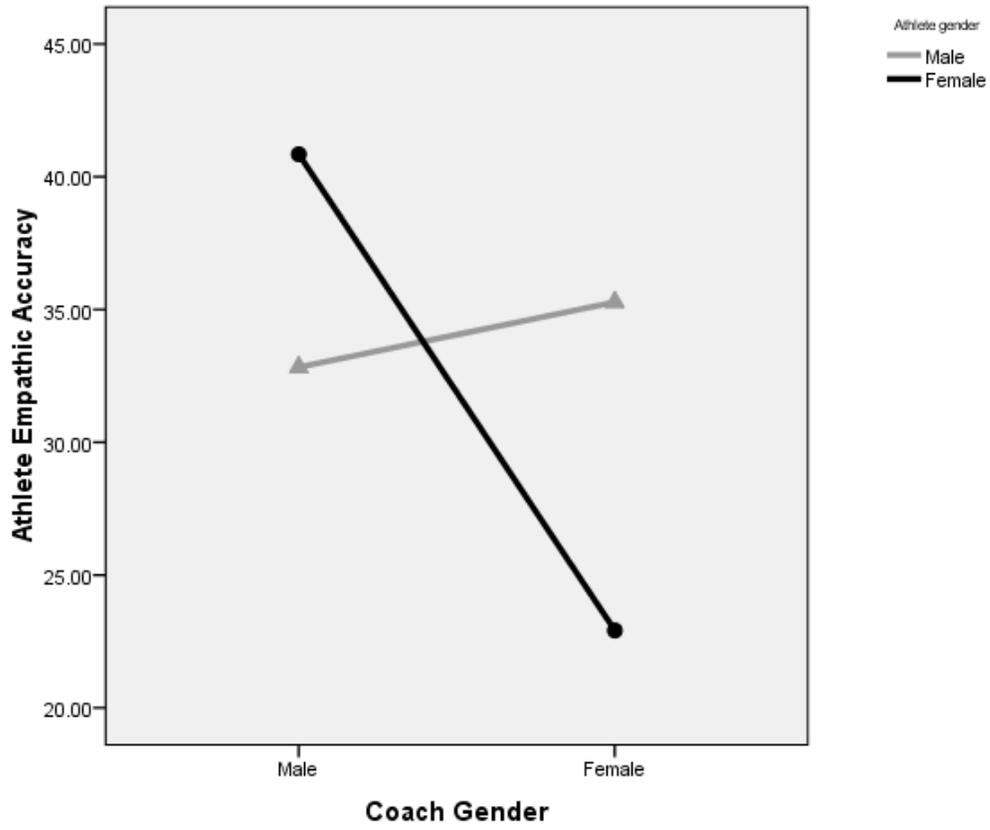


Table 1

*Means and standard deviations for raw, baseline, and final empathic accuracy scores*

	Male coach with male athlete <i>n</i> = 15		Male coach with female athlete <i>n</i> = 14		Female coach with male athlete <i>n</i> = 15		Female coach with female athlete <i>n</i> = 12		Average <i>n</i> = 56	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Coach</i>										
Empathic accuracy (raw*)	38.83	11.46	38.77	12.50	44.94	15.67	54.51	12.83	43.81	14.30
Empathic accuracy (baseline**)	8.33	5.75	9.72	7.45	9.44	8.83	7.64	6.92	8.83	7.19
Empathic accuracy***	30.50	14.29	29.05	15.52	35.50	11.78	46.88	8.91	34.99	14.33
<i>Athlete</i>										
Empathic accuracy (raw)	42.09	13.00	45.21	13.58	43.06	13.42	37.50	8.40	42.15	12.41
Empathic accuracy (baseline)	9.26	8.11	4.37	3.57	7.78	7.59	14.58	8.79	8.79	7.91
Empathic accuracy	32.83	10.92	40.85	12.81	35.28	15.86	22.92	15.23	33.37	14.79

\*raw refers to initially calculated empathic accuracy scores \*\*baseline refers to the corrective value calculated for the empathic accuracy of each dyad \*\*\*Empathic accuracy refers to the final adjusted score used in the analysis (raw score minus baseline score)