COACHING STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH ATHLETES WHO HAVE HIGH PERCEPTIONS OF ENTITLEMENT

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Mikaila Sue Etheredge, candidate for the degree of Master of Science in Kinesiology and Health Studies, has presented a thesis titled, *Coaching Strategies for Working with Athletes Who Have High Perceptions of Entitlement*, in an oral examination held on July 12, 2017. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

The mainstream media has been increasingly describing athletes as entitled over the past several years and deems this concept of entitled athletes as a plague – something to be remedied. However, in the academic sport community, entitlement is a neglected topic. Using entitlement as it is looked at in education, psychology, and sociology as a base, this research aims to understand entitlement in sport as well as examine strategies coaches use in order to create and maintain success when working with athletes who have high perceptions of entitlement.

A qualitative approach consistent with phenomenological principles was used to conduct the research. Eight participants from the United States and Canada who currently hold or have held a head coaching position at a junior college, college, or university level were interviewed for approximately sixty minutes and asked to discuss their experiences coaching athletes who have high perceptions of entitlement as well as the strategies they use to coach these athletes.

Data were analyzed using an interpretive qualitative analysis approach and findings included categories centered around characteristics of athletes with high perceptions of entitlement as well as the impact these players have on the team. Additionally, categories (or strategies) were identified which showcase how coaches suggest managing these athletes.
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Dedication

Mike Smith – the coach who changed the course of my life.

Keith Harris – the coach who laid the foundation.

I am forever grateful.
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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

The research that is described in this study is something to which I am very close. Therefore, I believe it is important to first note my personal relationship and experiences with the topic. I have spent most of my life around the game of softball. I started playing in my backyard and going to my sister’s games when I was three. Once I turned five, I started playing tee ball. As I grew older, every major decision I made was directly impacted by softball. When I graduated high school I moved 90 miles to Columbia, Tennessee to go to school and play softball. After two years, I moved 250 miles to Columbia, Kentucky to continue my playing career and education. I moved my life around the country in pursuit of the opportunity to play softball. This was just the beginning. After I graduated from college in 2013, I got my first “real job” as a Physical Education and Health Teacher at a K-12 school in South Alabama, which took me another 500 miles away. However, I did not apply for the job through the Alabama Board of Education. I got my job through the Alabama High School Athletic Association. I was hired to coach softball. I loved coaching and I loved the girls on my team fiercely but the love I had for playing the game still held on strong. At the end of my first year, I resigned from my position and moved 2,000 miles to Canada to reopen my playing career at the University of Regina. After posting a good resume my first season with the Cougars, I was picked up to play professionally in Europe, which added another 7,000 miles to my travels. A year and a half later, after completing my final year of eligibility on the field with the University of Regina, I added another 8,000 miles to my travel log as I set out to play in New Zealand. I intended to continue traveling in pursuit of softball for the next several years.

The opportunities that softball has provided are greater than I ever anticipated. It has literally taken me on a journey around the world. However, I know that I cannot play forever.
Soon, I will have to hang up my cleats for good. But when I do, my passion and excitement for the game will continue to lead me in my profession. I have a tremendous passion for this game. The one year I spent coaching changed my outlook. I thought I would love coaching because I love softball. But I quickly found it was my passion for the players around me that made me want to be a better coach and that made the experience so meaningful. The relationships I formed with my players in just one year are still strong and impactful for many of them. However, through my experiences as both a player and a coach, I have realized some players are easier to coach than others. This realization has been a driving factor through the process of forming and writing my thesis.

In the past several years I have seen the word entitlement thrown around a lot in the sport community, primarily in the mainstream media. A quick Google search produced articles from USA Today, CBS Sports, Columbia Sports Journalism, National Collegiate Scouting Association, Purdue University, and even Forbes. Players are consistently being labeled as “entitled”. In fact, there are vast amounts of people, both mainstream and academic, who label the entire millennial generation as being entitled (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). The notion is that these entitled players expect things to be handed to them. Everyone who doesn’t wear this scarlet letter “E” views this sense of entitlement as a “curse” and something that should be cured (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004; Miller, 2013; Thompson & Gregory, 2012).

It is no secret that the United States places a huge emphasis on athletics. Professional athletes are paid to play a game for as much as $300 million compared to firemen who will make roughly $44,000 (Forbes, 2015; Payscale, 2015). With so many major news outlets reporting on entitlement in sport over the last several years combined with the love of athletics in the country,
it is surprising to find little research being done on this topic in the academic literature for sport. This claimed sense of pervasive entitlement could impact a lot of future research from personality to team cohesion. For example, when I look back at my career as a player I can immediately pick out players who the media would call entitled. I think about how I felt about them, the impact these entitled players had on team dynamics, and how coaches treated them in comparison to others. When I look at the year I spent coaching I can do the same thing. If this is a true “epidemic” how will it affect players on my teams in the future? What is the true definition of entitlement? Where does this sense of entitlement come from? What can I do about it?

For as long as I can remember, I have been a highly competitive person. My sense of competitiveness is something I carry into all aspects of my life. I want to be the best at what I do. But being the best requires preparation. I have already begun to prepare to compete in my future career. My goal is to coach college softball. I not only want to coach, I want to be a good coach and build a strong and reputable program. If this sense of entitlement is going to continue to be present for each generation and could potentially put a strain on my future program, I want to do what I can to manage it. This is why I have examined entitlement in sport and how other coaches work with their entitled athletes.

As does any professional, I want to walk into my future career as prepared as I can be. I am thoroughly trained in the game of softball and I have a very distinct philosophy. I know that each year I will grow and change as a coach. I will learn more things, develop new viewpoints, and implement new methods. Gallimore, Gilber, and Nater (2013) suggest that, “A commitment to ongoing learning has long been recognized as a hallmark of effective sport coaches” (p. 268). I believe that gaining insight from veteran coaches can be extremely beneficial for young
coaches in particular and taking advantage of this opportunity now will only help my career in the future.

Perceptions of entitlement are something I have seen first-hand. I have witnessed the detrimental effects that can happen regarding a team’s success and ultimately, in the college system, creating a successful program is vital to job retention. I believe that if I have seen it, so have others. This research was used as a way to prepare for my future career by speaking to established coaches about their experiences with entitlement. This research was used as an effort to understand entitlement in sport as well as examine coaches’ strategies for coaching athletes with high perceptions of entitlement.

The following literature review will provide an insight into the various definitions of entitlement as well as the definition that will be used for this research. It will also provide insight into where entitlement stems from, as well as how entitlement differs from seemingly similar concepts. Additionally, it will examine how entitlement appears in closely related constructs and how it may carry over in similar fashion into the realm of sport. Subsequent to this information, I will take you through the process I used to examine entitlement in softball and will then discuss my findings.
CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

As previously stated, entitlement is something that has yet to be looked at in the realm of sport. However, it has been looked at in other fields such as sociology, psychology, and education. The goal of this research was to understand entitlement in sport as well as examine strategies coaches use in order to create and maintain success when working with athletes who have high perceptions of entitlement. However, it was crucial to first gain an understanding of how entitlement is frequently defined in related fields. As the reader will see throughout this introductory section, entitlement has a clear, yet distinct relationship with concepts such as deservingness, narcissism, hubris, and privilege. Although there is yet to be a call for coaching athletes with high perceptions of entitlement in the academic sport psychology and coaching literature, the mainstream media brings attention to it regularly which leads to the belief that there is, in fact, a need for this research.

2.1 Defining Entitlement

Entitlement is not an emergent concept. However, in the academic sport community, it has yet to be examined. This is why it is important to understand the definition of the concept. In order to understand entitlement in sport, we must first define it. It is central to note that the research for this thesis operated under the principle of looking at entitlement through closely related lenses. There are many disciplines where the concept of entitlement is present, such as economics, philosophy, legal work, social justice, political science, and even marketing. Conceptually, the definitions provided in these areas do not carry over into the field of sport adequately due to the fact that the definitions from these areas focus on government entitlements rather than a general sense of entitlement. However, the disciplines of sociology, psychology,
and education have provided definitions that are useful for examining this construct in a sport context.

Emmons (1984) defined *entitlement* as “the expectation of special favors without reciprocating” (p. 292). As we continue to examine definitions of entitlement provided by other authors, we see that Emmons’ definition explains entitlement but does not put it into context, whereas later definitions do.

Campbell et al. (2004), who are one of the few in the psychological community to provide a definition, defined entitlement as, “...a stable and pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others” (pp. 30-31). Seemingly, using Campbell’s definition would be the best option, since the work is done in the psychology field. However, Campbell and colleagues’ definition does not paint a good picture for those new to the concept of entitlement. This definition of entitlement describes the circumstance entitlement exists in, but does not put a concise definition to the word entitlement which is important for this research.

Gresse, Linde, and Schalk (2013) summarized entitlement nicely by referring to it as: “...an occurrence in which individuals consistently believe that they deserve preferential rewards and treatment, often with little consideration of actual qualities or performance levels” (p. 271). Essentially, those who perceive they are entitled believe they should be given something “just because”. They have no justification for why they should have something. They just believe they should. This definition explains the concept of entitlement as well as any. However, this definition, opposite of Campbell’s, defines the concept of entitlement but does not put it into context.

Miller (2013), whose most noted research on entitlement stems from the area of education, described entitlement as:
…a trait on the equity sensitivity spectrum, with benevolence at the opposite pole and equity sensitivity in the middle range (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1985, 1987), whereby persons compare what they get from a situation (outcome) to what they bring to the situation (input) to determine if they are rewarded fairly (Adams, 1963, 1965). (p. 654)

Although Miller described his definition as entitlement, he is actually describing deservingness, which has a fundamental difference from entitlement that will be discussed later in section 2.1.

Despite the most recent attempts to define entitlement, it appears that Raskin and Terry (1988) had explained entitlement more clearly than those used subsequently – both explaining the concept of entitlement and putting it into a social context. Raskin and Terry (1988) described entitlement as “the expectation of special privileges over others and special exemptions from normal social demands” (p. 890). This definition is the foundation on which this research was conducted because it most accurately and clearly describes entitlement in a way that could be used across many disciplines. Additionally, it simplifies the concept of entitlement so that it easy to understand.

Previous research most often classified entitlement as a negative characteristic, even calling it a “curse” (Campbell et al., 2004, p. 30). The fact that entitlement is seen as a negative perception is not surprising as it is most typically paired with narcissism, as it is a subcategory on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Campbell et al., 2004; Pryor, Miller, & Gaughan, 2008). Entitlement has also been paired with trait characteristics such as distrustfulness, lack of self-control, anger, greed, aggression, interpersonal violence, hostility, and deceitfulness in various research studies (Lessard, Greenberger, Chen, & Farrugia, 2011). The combination of these typically negative perceptions make it easy to see why entitlement is not always seen in a
Although most researchers have interpreted entitlement as a negative characteristic, there are others who would argue that entitlement can be beneficial under the right circumstances; for example, in settings where confidence and self-esteem would be beneficial such as negotiating for wages (Campbell et al., 2004; Lessard et al., 2011; Lippmann, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009). Consequently, if entitlement can be beneficial in situations where confidence and self-esteem are needed, it seems as though a sense of entitlement could potentially play a role in the success of individuals in sport.

Understanding what entitlement is and how it operates was crucial for this research. It was important to distinguish that those who perceive to be entitled feel that they should have something or more of something in comparison to others. They also feel as though social rules do not necessarily apply to them and although entitlement can often be seen as a negative trait to possess, research findings have indicated that a sense of entitlement may not always be a bad thing.

2.2 Distinguishing Entitlement from Other Concepts

Findings from psychologically based research show that those who believe they are entitled experience this sense of entitlement throughout all areas of their lives rather than just in one specific instance. Campbell et al. (2004) state:

…psychological entitlement is intrapsychically pervasive or global: it does not necessarily refer to entitlement that results from a specific situation (e.g., “I am entitled to social security because I paid into the system,” or “I deserve an ‘A’ because I performed well in class”). Rather, psychological entitlement is a sense of entitlement that is experienced across situations. (p.31)
Understanding this platform is crucial to being able to distinguish entitlement from other concepts. Entitlement is often associated, used interchangeably, and even mistaken for other concepts such as deservingness, narcissism, hubris, and even privilege. However, these concepts cannot be used interchangeably as they each have key differences.

2.2.1. Deservingness. Deservingness differs from entitlement in that it is characterized by the expectation of a reward as a result of a person’s actions (Feather, 2002). Basically, those who have a sense of deservingness feel like they should receive something because they worked for it whereas those who have a sense of entitlement feel they should receive something just because. Feather (2002) declared:

I reserve the term deservingness for judgements that relate to outcomes that are earned or achieved as products of a person’s actions, where these actions are either directly observed or indirectly inferred from information about a person’s qualities. Thus, a student who works hard is said to deserve the high grade that he or she obtains; a business entrepreneur who is perceived to be dishonest is said not to deserve the financial benefits that might result from his or her actions. (p. 368)

A key feature to distinguishing deservingness from entitlement is the contingency between an outcome and action that the involved party is responsible for. Deservingness is not used to describe outcomes that are not related to a person’s actions. Also, it is important to note that deservingness works in both positive and negative situations. Good outcomes follow good actions and bad outcomes follow bad actions. Both are deserved outcomes (Feather, 2002). Feather goes on to say, “In contrast to deservingness, I use the term entitlement to refer to judgements that relate more to an agreed-upon body of law, social norms, and formal and
informal rules…” (2002, p. 368). Essentially, Feather uses the term entitlement when referring to situations where there already seems to be clear cut rules in place.

A final important difference in distinguishing deservingness from entitlement is that the outcomes associated with high perceptions of entitlement are typically positive. For example, one might say they are entitled to higher wages, more playing time, or fair treatment. It is not typical to associate entitlement with negative outcomes. One would not typically say “That criminal is entitled to a life-sentence.” Instead, the word deserve would be used because the criminal’s sentence would be correlated to his poor actions. He is not entitled to a punishment rather he deserves punishment (Feather, 2002).

Feather (2002) created two studies to investigate the suggested difference between entitlement and deservingness. In the first study, reactions were gauged to scenarios where a student competing for election in a national organization was suggested to give either a high or low amount of effort and was either eligible or ineligible due to their age. Subsequently, the student was either elected or not elected. In the second study, reactions were gauged to a scenario where an individual had to decide how much money to leave in a will to their son, nephew, or friend, all of whom had provided different levels of assistance. Feather (2002) summarized the results by saying, “Results of both studies supported the distinction between deservingness and entitlement. Whether an outcome was deserved depended on amount of effort in Study 1 and on amount of help in Study 2” (p. 367). These findings show that a sense of deservingness occurs when an individual feels they have given a fair amount to a cause or situation and that they should be rewarded fairly. Entitlement, however, does not operate under these conditions.
As previously stated, entitlement and deservingness are often confused with one another, even in academic settings. Examples can be found throughout the literature.

E-mail from a student who “deserved” an A: After getting my grade for your class a couple of days ago, I keep going over and over what exactly you expected out of your SOC 152 students. I’m questioning who/what sets the standard for your class….To me, if a student does/hands in all assignments, misses class no more than two times, participates during lecture, takes notes, attentively watches videos, and obviously observes/notes sociology in his/her life, it would make sense for that student to receive a respectable grade—an A. It seems like the work and time that I (and I’m assuming other students) put into this class didn’t create the results that I (or you) wanted. Personally, I can’t comprehend how my performance in your class equated to an 87 percent. (Lippmann et al., 2009, p. 197)

Although Lippmann et al. describe this scenario as student entitlement, this researcher would argue that it is actually deservingness. The student makes a case and provides reasons as to why they believe they deserve an A. If this was truly a case of entitlement, the student would not provide reasons as to why they deserved an A. This mix-up is common both in and out of academic settings, but it was important to distinguish between the two and not use entitlement and deservingness interchangeably for the purpose of this research.

2.2.2. Narcissism. Morf and Rhodewalt (as cited in Malkin, Zeigler-Hill, Barry, & Southard, 2013) referred to narcissism as “…a form of self-love that involves arrogance and self-absorption. It has been suggested that narcissistic individuals seek self-affirming feedback from their social environments because they possess self-concepts that are simultaneously grandiose
and vulnerable to threat” (p. 1). Kopp (2011) described narcissistic individuals as being characterized by an over-inflated self-concept, a sense of superiority, and having feelings of entitlement that leads them to feel as though they deserve special privileges. It is easy to see that entitlement and narcissism differ greatly in terms of their definitions; however, they are related. Unlike deservingness, entitlement and narcissism are not confused as often for one another or used interchangeably. However, entitlement is a sub-scale on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Hall, 1979), which is the most widely used tool to measure narcissism in individuals (Campbell et al., 2004). Because entitlement is a subcategory of the NPI, it makes sense that the two would often be used in relation to one another. A number of researchers (e.g. Ackerman & Donnellan, 2013; Campbell et al., 2004; Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004; Mansi, 2009; Pryor et al, 2008; Raskin & Novacek, 1989; Raskin & Terry, 1988) studied the relationship between narcissism and entitlement.

Campbell et al. (2004) stated, “Entitlement is clearly a component of narcissism, either as a single factor or as part of a larger factor” (p. 30). However, Campbell et al. went on to say that although entitlement is a component of narcissism you cannot use tests designed to gauge narcissism to also gauge entitlement as they are separate concepts (p. 30). Additionally, there is little to no research that directly compares and contrasts entitlement and narcissism. It is a generally accepted fact in the academic community that although related, they are not the same concept.

Furthermore, the use of narcissism and entitlement together provides reason to why entitlement is most often viewed in a negative manner since narcissism is most often viewed in a negative light. However, it is important to note that just because someone is high in narcissistic
beliefs it does not always mean that they have perceptions of being entitled and vice versa. However, one is usually a good indicator of the other (Campbell et al., 2004).

2.2.3. Hubris. Originating in ancient Greece, the term *hubris* was used originally to describe those who used violence to humiliate or degrade others (Bergmann, 2016). The term then shifted to describe the “dangerous combination of arrogance and error, overconfidence and disrespect” (Gibson, 2015, p. 64). It is used to describe those who viewed the limits set by the gods as merely a suggestion since they themselves are superior to the gods (Gibson, 2015).

As time went on, the connotation changed again. Van Damme, Hoorens and Sedikides (2016) stated, “The label, hubris, refers to conveying one’s self-superiority beliefs blatantly and unabashedly, that is, by making explicit self-superiority claims” (p. 174). This is how hubris is now viewed. It is thought to be a sense of extreme self-worth and is often used in conjunction with terms such as arrogance, superiority, pride, egotism, and conceit. Similar to narcissism, hubris is most often viewed as a negative characteristic. Those who exhibit a sense of hubris are disliked among social groups and that a display of this sense of superiority can lead to lower wages in the work place (Hoorens, Pandelaere, Oldersma, & Sedikides, 2012; Van Damme et al., 2016).

Hubris and entitlement differ in the sense that entitlement is not about superiority for power, position, or pride, whereas hubris is. Individuals with high perceptions of entitlement feel like they should have more than the next person—just because. They do not necessarily want something because they feel superior. They want something just because they want it and they do not see any reason as to why they should not have it.

2.2.4. Privilege. It is important to make note of *privilege* as well, but not in the same sense as deservingness and narcissism which are directly related to entitlement. Privilege is not
directly related to entitlement and it is important to make this distinction at this time. Johnson (as cited by Egan, 2002) stated that privilege is, “…the social relation where members of one group gain benefits at the expense of another. …Privilege is defined in terms of domination over positions of power as well as legitimation of that domination” (p. 266). Entitlement, however, is not characterized by gaining at the expense of others or by domination. Additionally, the opposite of privilege is oppression, which, again, does not correlate with entitlement. Although it could be expected that beliefs of entitlement could be stronger in individuals who come from a place of privilege, that hypothesis was outside the scope of this study.

In summary, it was important to make the distinction between entitlement, deservingness, narcissism, hubris, and privilege. A sense of entitlement is characterized by an individual feeling they should have something just because where an individual feeling they should have something because they earned it characterizes deservingness. Narcissism differs from entitlement in the sense that narcissism is characterized by an over-inflated ego and extreme self-love. Hubris and entitlement stand apart due to the fact that those who exhibit a sense of hubris feel prideful and superior where entitlement is not characterized by either. Lastly, privilege is depicted as a dominating and somewhat ruthless trait whereas entitlement is not.

Being able to make these distinctions among definitions was crucial to the development and process of this study. Entitlement is a concept that can easily be misunderstood or mistaken for another due to the similar appearances. However, entitlement is unique in the sense that those who perceive they are entitled feel as though they should have certain things just because. They do not necessarily have a reason to justify why they should have something nor do they feel as though they should have it because they are superior to others. They simply do not see any reason as to why they should not have what they are seeking.
2.3 The Development of Entitlement

In the last forty years, it appears that a sense of entitlement has been increasing with each generation. For example, in the United States, the 1970s were referred to as the “Me Decade”, the 1980s as the “Greed Decade”, and the 1990s as the “New Gilded Age” (Campbell et al., 2004). Additionally, there is now extensive research being done on how to handle “The Millennials” (also known as Generation Y), which are categorized as the up and coming workforce that appears to have an unwarranted and extreme sense of entitlement (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). These same Millennials are the students causing havoc in the academic community with their unwarranted sense of entitlement in the classroom (Lippmann et al., 2009).

This pervasive sense of entitlement, which seems to have begun in the 1970s, stemmed from an attempt to boost adolescent self-esteem in the United States. The self-esteem movement began during this time and was an effort to increase and protect adolescents’ self-esteem and self-worth (Lessard et al., 2011; Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008). This movement was a result of Nathaniel Branden’s (1969) book “The Psychology of Self-Esteem” which argued that high self-esteem was crucial to success. Up until that point in time, it was common for both teachers and parents to be blunt and often times harsh with children. The self-esteem movement changed the approach teachers and parents started taking. Rather than criticizing the bad things children did, they began praising the good (Baumeister, Campbell, Joachim, & Vohs, 2003; Branden, 1969; Lessard et al.; Twenge et al.). Soon after, games were modified to no longer have winners and losers and participation trophies became the norm. Crocker and Knight (2005) explain that there was an unforeseen side effect of the self-esteem movement; an unnecessary growth of self-worth despite the reality of possessed skills and accomplishments. These increased feelings of self-worth and self-esteem have been said to increase entitlement levels in
these same individuals (Lessard et al., 2011; Twenge et al., 2008). The ideals from the self-esteem movement have been used in each subsequent generation resulting in the inflated feelings of self-worth that now characterize the current Millennials.

2.4 Entitlement in Other Areas

As previously discussed, entitlement has been researched in disciplines such as education, psychology, and sociology. Although each discipline may put a different title on entitlement (e.g., psychological entitlement, academic entitlement, student entitlement, workplace entitlement), it is important to note the underlying definition of each term remains the same. Entitlement may be preceded with a word that puts it in the context of a specific discipline, but the underlying definition remains unchanged. Entitlement, whether it is being looked at in education, psychology, or the workplace, is the sense that one should receive special privileges or treatment. Because no studies have been found that examine entitlement in a sport context, it is important to discuss the findings from other disciplines.

2.4.1. Academics. University and college professors are currently dealing with high perceptions of entitlement in students in their classrooms. Howe and Strauss (as cited in Fullerton, 2013) state “…many experts contend that students believe they are entitled to, or deserving of, professors providing them with certain treatments, services, and benefits” (p. 31).

Lippmann et al. (2009) described student entitlement as “…a self-centered disposition characterized by a general disregard for traditional faculty relationship boundaries and authority” (p. 198). Kopp (2011) described academic entitlement (AE) as “…the expectation that one should receive certain positive academic outcomes (e.g., high grades) in academic settings, often independent of performance” (2011, p. 106). These various definitions of entitlement in the academic context are consistent with the definition used in the psychology discipline, as they all
embody the idea that an individual should receive something without having to work for it. With this sense of entitlement being seen in college students, it is likely that some of these students are also student-athletes. Since Campbell et al. (2004) classifies entitlement as “a stable and pervasive” (p. 31) concept, it could be presumed that the sense of entitlement seen in the classroom would carry over into other aspects of their lives, in this case, sport.

When conducting research on entitlement in an academic setting, Baer and Cheryomuichin (2011) found that professors identify with having an increased number of students who place a large emphasis on grades, which has created more demands on professors. Students exhibit behaviours such as requesting higher grades, expecting special treatment, and threatening faculty for grades lower than an A. Another study, conducted by Gresse et al. (2013) found that an individual’s entitlement levels affected the level of expectation of future employment. Those who had higher perceptions of entitlement had higher demands and expectations compared to those who are low in entitlement. Since entitlement is a “stable and pervasive sense” (Campbell et al., 2004, p. 31) it could be assumed that those students who reported higher expectations for future jobs, are also the same students requesting higher grades, special accommodations, and making threats if their grade is not as high as they believe it should be.

Lippmann et al. (2009) provided suggestions when working with students who have entitled beliefs. Making expectations clear and in writing for all assignments could be beneficial, as it does not leave room for interpretation. Providing examples of work from previous students will allow the students to see how a quality assignment needs to appear. Students often try to negotiate for higher grades because they feel as though they have nothing to lose. Give students something to lose by making it clear that a reevaluation of work could result in a higher grade or
a lower grade. Additionally, if they want to make a case for any type of change, have them present their case in writing. It is also suggested that students and faculty be re-socialized to an older mindset where the teacher is a professional rather than employee. It is now common for the student to feel as though they are a consumer since they are paying for school, which leads to the feeling that the students can make demands like a customer would of a business. Lastly, it is recommended that institutions provide rigorous and in depth seminars for all new students that clearly convey expectations of both student and teacher.

2.4.2. Work place. Entitlement is a concept that affects everyone. According to Campbell et al. (2004), every person falls somewhere on the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES), either ranking high, low, or moderate on the scale. When a group of people high in entitlement beliefs has to work together, they often clash, as all the individuals feel as though they should be receiving special privileges in comparison to the others (Tomlinson, 2013). “From the theoretical perspective, it is plausible that individuals high in entitlement not only feel that they deserve a disproportional amount of resources…but also success and favorable treatment from others…” (Campbell et al., p. 31). In an exploration of the work place, Thompson and Gregory (2012) wrote:

The popular press has been full of stories decrying the perceived neediness, disloyalty, sense of entitlement, and overall casualness in Millennials’ approach to work. Organizations have begun to pay attention as well, recognizing that managers (who at this point are typically from other generations) are having trouble managing their “young people.” (p. 238).

With the Millennials now accounting for nearly half of the work force, it would then make sense that entitlement in the work place is becoming a more commonly researched topic as
employers seek to diminish this sense of entitlement in their employees in order to create a more cohesive setting for the business to operate (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). It could be presumed that research done in this field would carry over into the field of sport, as a work place operates much like a team in the sense that members must work together to be successful.

Managers (who are typically from an older generation) are having issues managing these Millennials who seem to require much more attention, recognition, and satisfaction at work (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). It has been suggested that, in order for organizations to be successful, managers must accommodate the Millennials by adopting management styles that work with the needs of these individuals, as they will soon account for the majority of their work force (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). If employers want to attract and retain the most talented Millennials, they will have to adapt their practices and cater to the Millennial needs (Thompson & Gregory, 2012). Additionally, the findings from the research support the idea that each subsequent generation since the 1970s has believed they are more entitled than the last (Lessard et al., 2011). If this trend continues, the current Millennials will soon be in management positions trying to direct even more entitled individuals than themselves and may call on the research that is currently being written about them.

If this concept does carry over similarly into sport, it is likely that suggestions that coaches have for working with entitled athletes are similar to the ways it is suggested for handling Millennials in the work place as well as the classroom. According to Thompson and Gregory (2012),

Drawing on existing management research, we contend that managers who can adopt a leadership style rooted in the individual consideration domain of transformational leadership—one that promotes relationships and meeting individual needs—are the
managers who will most successfully attract, motivate, and retain their Millennial employees. This approach to managing entails coaching, mentoring, developing, and providing frequent feedback to employees (Avolio & Bass, 1995). Managers who adopt an individual consideration approach to working with their employees will offer the personalized, development-orientation attention (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003) that seems to be so desired by Millennials. (p. 243)

Although Millennials are characterized by traits other than entitlement, it could still be presumed that the best way to handle Millennials may also be similar to managing athletes with high perceptions of entitlement. Consequently, if it is found that coaches are using similar methods for working with athletes as those in the workplace and classroom, the available research for those working with entitled athletes would expand substantially as they would then be able to rely on research already conducted in these areas outside of sport to shape their method of coaching.

2.5 Purpose of the Study

Understanding entitlement, as it already exists in the literature, was crucial to moving forward with this research. Based on what is known about the existence of entitlement in other domains, the first purpose of this research was to discover if entitlement (as defined by Raskin & Terry, 1988) exists in sport. As previously stated, there is research documenting entitled students in academic settings (Baer & Cheryomuichin, 2011; Gresse, Linde, & Shalk, 2013; Kopp, 2011; Lippmann et al, 2009). Since Campbell et al. (2004) defined entitlement as a stable and pervasive concept, it was hypothesized that there would be coaches who identify working with entitled student-athletes. Additionally, given the literature and the call to 'manage' and 'cure' individuals with high perceptions of entitlement, this research aimed to seek out coaching
strategies for working with entitled athletes. It is also important to note that this research did not operate under the assumption that entitlement existed in sport, but aimed to provide evidence that it does.
CHAPTER 3: Method

Research has been previously conducted on the concept of entitlement, but not in the sport realm. Instead, the majority of prior research stems from the education and psychology disciplines with the emphasis being on entitlement in the work place and in academics (Fullerton, 2013; Gresse et al., 2013; Kopp, 2011; Lessard et al., 2011; Lippmann et al., 2009; Miller, 2013; Thompson & Gregory, 2012). It was hypothesized that this concept would translate nicely into the realm of team sport since the work place essentially has to operate and function as a cohesive group, or team, in order to be successful. It was surprising that no studies could be found that explore this concept in athletics since so much prior research has been done on team dynamics and group cohesion. It was the belief of the researcher that looking at the concept of entitlement in sport had the potential to make a great contribution to the sport community and bring attention to something that had not been previously examined.

This project operated under the guiding principles of phenomenological research. Consistent with phenomenology, the research was exploratory in nature with no predetermined outcomes or results in mind (Smith, 2013). This section will begin by explaining why a qualitative approach was used as well as why the phenomenological methodology was chosen to answer the research questions. It also includes participant qualifications and procedures as well as ethical considerations. Data collection and analysis will also be discussed.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1. Qualitative approach. When conducting research, it is vital that the research question be the guiding factor in choosing a particular methodology (Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2012). It is the belief of the researcher that the qualitative approach, which aims to generate an understanding of an aspect of social life, would be best to determine how coaches manage
athletes with high perceptions of entitlement (Brikci & Green, 2007). Since not much research has been done on entitlement in the realm of sport, the researcher was essentially looking at a new topic where very little previous research had been conducted. Brikci and Green (2007) stated, "In situations where little is known, it is often better to start with qualitative methods (interviews, focus groups, etc). It can help you with generating hypotheses that can then be tested by quantitative methods" (p. 5). By this logic, the research question dictated the use of a qualitative approach.

3.1.2. Phenomenology. This study aimed to understand the strategies coaches use to manage athletes with high perceptions of entitlement. Focus was on exploring the concept of entitlement as it pertains to sport and determining whether or not it exists in the sport realm. Additionally, the researcher also looked at what strategies coaches employ to work with these entitled athletes in order to create success for individuals as well as the team.

This study used a phenomenological approach to research. "Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view" (Smith, 2013, para. 1). Essentially, phenomenology is the study of a particular phenomenon where findings are documented through a person's personal experiences with that particular phenomenon. A phenomenological approach best suited this study because entitlement is something that some would argue is extremely prevalent in society. However, since it had not been looked at closely in sport, the researcher believed it was vital to first understand how coaches view entitlement and then get first person accounts of what working with these individuals with high perceptions of entitlement in a team atmosphere is like as well as how to coach them. In short, the phenomenon that is being examined in this study is how coaches perceive working with athletes who have high perceptions of entitlement.
Additionally, this research was exploratory in nature due to the fact that this was a previously neglected topic. The data drove the findings instead of a predetermined hypothesis. With phenomenology being well known as an exploratory research method, and this topic having little research to build off of, it was the belief of the researcher that phenomenology was the best methodology for this particular research (Schram, 2006).

3.2 Participants

The sample for this study included eight coaches from the United States or Canada who currently hold or have held a head softball coaching position at junior college, college, or university level. There were three female coaches and five male coaches who had a minimum of six years coaching experience and a maximum of 46 years coaching experience. In order for participants to have been selected for the study, they first had to identify as having worked with athletes whom they deemed to have feelings of entitlement.

3.3 Procedures

Participants were recruited through the researcher's professional contacts (made possible by her role in the softball community). However, there was difficulty in finding enough participants to participate who met the pre-determined requirements. Although the coaches recruited had been coaching for a number of years, not all of them had retained head collegiate coaching positions for at least three years. It was the decision of the researcher to then accept coaches who had previous coaching experience but with only a one year minimum at the collegiate level.

After contact was made with potential participants, the researcher explained that she was looking at the concept of entitlement in sport. Specifically, she hoped to gain a better understanding of how coaches manage athletes who have high perceptions of entitlement.
Participants were informed that the interview process would take sixty to ninety minutes. Participants were also informed that they would have the option to review the transcript of their interview and change or add anything. They would also have the opportunity to review the interpretations and summary notes the researcher prepared from their interview. Participants were informed that the combined review time could also take sixty to ninety minutes.

Once participants agreed to participate in the study, the researcher had participants sign and return a copy of the consent form via e-mail. Once the researcher had the consent of participants, an interview time was set up to take place either over the phone or via Skype.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

An application was made to the University of Regina’s Research Ethics Board and subsequently approved (Appendix A). An amendment (Appendix B) to the original ethics application was submitted and approved at a later date, which changed the minimum number of years a coach needed to have held a head coaching position at the collegiate level from three years to one year. Upon approval from the researcher’s committee members as well as the Research Ethics board, a consent form (Appendix C) was sent via e-mail to potential participants. It was noted that there are always confidentiality risks when sending information via e-mail such as unsecure servers and data retention within the system. All possible precautions were taken to maintain confidentiality. Once consent forms were received they were printed and electronic copies were deleted. All transcribed information was anonymized by removing any identifying information such as coach’s names, team names, places, and regions. E-mails were printed with identifying information blocked out and the originals were deleted. Additionally, original voice recordings were deleted once the data had been transcribed.
3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

3.5.1. Data collection tool. For this study, the researcher conducted one on one interviews with participants either over the phone or via Skype. Questions were developed by the main researcher in order to obtain data that were specific to the research questions (see Appendix D).

Coach demographics and philosophy. The first section of the interview included obtaining coaches’ demographic information (e.g., job title, where they coach/coached, how long they have been in their current position, how long they have been coaching, what made them decide to go into coaching) and progressed to discussing their coaching philosophy. These questions were asked as both a way to get the participant comfortable having a conversation and as a way to establish each coach’s experiences and background within the sport. Carter and Bloom (2009) discuss the importance of understanding a coach’s experiences but also noting their background, as their background ultimately shapes their interpretations and views.

Defining entitlement. The second part of the interview focused on defining entitlement. Participants were asked to define both entitlement and deservingness before being given the academic definition to both. It was important that participants understood the definition being used for the purpose of the research as well as understanding the difference between entitlement and deservingness. Once participants agreed upon the academic definitions they were asked, again, to confirm that they do believe this sense of entitlement exists in sport and they have personally worked with athletes who they feel fit the definition of entitled.

Characterizing entitlement. One of the primary focuses of this thesis was to determine strategies that coaches use when managing entitled athletes. However, it was important to understand the characteristics and habits of entitled athletes before being able to distinguish how
to manage them. Coaches were first asked to describe how an entitled athlete acts or behaves. This opened the door for a variety of responses and personal experiences coaches have had when working with entitled athletes. Coaches were then asked several more questions that ultimately helped paint a picture for what entitlement looks like (e.g., Do you view entitlement as a negative, positive, or both? Why? Have your entitled athletes been successful? Where do you think entitlement stems from? Do you think entitled players have more confidence? Is that confidence generally warranted or unwarranted?)

**How entitlement impacts the team.** The fourth section of the interview served to gain insight into how having entitled players impacts the team. It is the belief of the researcher that it is vital to understand how an entitled athlete’s presence impacts others on the team as well as overall team chemistry. Coaches were asked to describe the impact entitled players have on a team, what good and bad things they bring to a team setting, how others feel/act towards these entitled players, and whether or not they, as coaches, feel entitled athletes are disruptive to a team concept.

**Managing entitlement.** The final section of the interview served to answer the research question pertaining to strategies that coaches use to manage entitled athletes. It was here that coaches were asked to share strategies they use, explain their role in managing these entitled athletes, and justify their response for whether they find entitled athletes easy or difficult to work with. Although some coaches had already shared strategies they use in earlier sections, each coach was able to discuss several strategies they employ and the benefits behind it.

**3.5.2. The data.** When dealing with qualitative research, it is important to ensure that data are not misinterpreted and that they are trustworthy (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). As a way to enhance trustworthiness of the data, member checks were used. Member checks were used
throughout the data collection process as well as the data analysis. Participants were given the opportunity to review and alter interview transcripts once the data were transcribed. Additionally, participants were asked to review the interpretations and data summary of the researcher and sign off on a final copy of both.

### 3.5.3. Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis is usually a time-consuming process due to the large amounts of data to analyze (Lacey & Luff, 2009). An interpretive qualitative analysis was used when analyzing the data. “Interpretive qualitative analysis is used to understand relationships among various segments of the data investigated, applying qualitative procedures to qualitative data” (Rabinovich & Kacen, 2010, p. 698). An open coding system was used to sort and analyze the data which consisted of interviews, researcher notes, and summary notes. Specifically, line-by-line coding was used, which analyzed each word and line of the data individually and was important for recognizing and building concepts (Seidel, 1998). Tutt, Rothery, and Ginnell (1996; as cited in Rabinovich & Kacen, 2010) state, “The central phases of qualitative interpretive analysis engage open coding of meaning units, categorization of codes, examining the relationships among them, and imparting meaning” (p. 698). Since the research was exploratory examining the data line-by-line allowed for the categories to be derived directly from the data, rather than from the researcher. However, ultimately, discovered categories were based on the interpretations of the researcher.

The researcher first sought to become familiar with the data by listening to the recorded interviews and reviewing transcripts, observational notes, and summary notes multiple times prior to analysis. Being familiar with the data is important in the analysis process and makes for a more accurate inquiry (Rabiee, 2004). Data were organized and analyzed by each section before being analyzed as a whole. Once the data were thoroughly reviewed, charts were made to
document each participant’s general answer to each question asked. This was done so the researcher had a quick way to determine the group’s overall feel and response to a single question. The data were then reviewed line-by-line to search for common meanings. As ideas appeared they were color coded and placed in a chart with a description of the potential category. The researcher tracked how often ideas appeared and once it was determined that the concept had appeared multiple times it was classified as a category. It was the decision of the researcher to only classify an idea as a category if it was documented in the data of four or more coaches. Although some concepts appeared a number of times throughout the data, the concepts that were appearing were only displayed in one or two coaches’ interview. The researcher felt it was important that ideas and concepts be experienced through multiple participants in order to classify it as a category. The researcher then defined each category and produced a report of the data.

As stated earlier, it is important that data and findings are trustworthy and peer debriefing can be a beneficial tool to help with the process of data analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As a way to increase trustworthiness the first author and supervisor met and discussed the analysis process as each section was analyzed and categories emerged. The supervisor also reviewed the categories independently to ensure both members agreed on the findings.
CHAPTER 4: Results

Data analysis revolved around four of the five sections of the interview with the first section not directly relating to entitlement. The second section aimed to understand how coaches view entitlement as well as provide a definition to the concept and determine whether coaches identify as working with athletes who meet the provided definition. The third section revolved around characterizing entitlement and how athletes with high perceptions of entitlement act and behave. The fourth section involved determining what impact these athletes have on a team and the fifth section determined strategies the coaches use to manage this sense of perceived entitlement in athletes. It is the belief of the researcher that the best way to report the data and answer both research questions is to first discuss the existence of entitlement in softball followed by outlining the characteristics of entitled athletes and their impact on the team before discussing strategies that coaches use to work with athletes who have high perceptions of entitlement.

4.1 The Presence of Entitlement in Softball

In order to answer the second research question, which aims to identify strategies coaches use when working with athletes who have high perceptions of entitlement, we had to first confirm that entitlement does in fact exist in softball. The second section of the interview aimed to provide confirmation. Subsequent to participants providing their own definition of entitlement, they were then provided the academic definition of entitlement which stated that entitlement is defined as “the expectation of special privileges over others and special exemptions from normal social demands” (Raskin & Terry, p. 890). All eight participants identified with that definition and then agreed that they have coached athletes who fit that description. Not only did participants agree to its existence in sport but they also responded with passion and certainty. When asked if entitlement exists in sport, Coach A responded,
“Definitely! Now a days, yes! More than it did 20 years ago. Definitely!” Coach C stated, “I firmly believe it does. Yes.” Coach F responded, “Oh, yeah! 100%!” Coaches responding with confidence were prevalent through all eight interviews. These emphatic responses provide a quick and evident answer to our first research question that entitlement does exist in softball.

4.2 Characterizing Entitlement

Again, the researcher felt it was important to report categories discovered in sections other than just identifying strategies because she felt it was important to understand how the athlete behaves and how their presence impacts the team before deciding what strategies could be used to manage these athletes.

When looking at characterizing entitlement two main categories were identified. The first was characteristics of entitled athletes which is defined as the traits or characteristics that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement often display. The second category discovered in this section was the development of entitlement, which is defined as the link to where entitlement characteristics stem from.

Five main subcategories were discovered when exploring the characteristics of athletes with high perceptions of entitlement. Coaches were in general agreement that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement (a) lack a sense of work ethic, (b) have expectations for rewards, (c) have a sense of superiority, (d) are uncompromising, and (e) are difficult to coach.

Additionally, two subcategories were identified in reference to the development of entitlement, which, most coaches agreed stems from upbringing and societal attitudes/beliefs. Table 1 displays the definitions of the subcategories related to characterizing entitlement as well as the subcategories related to where/how entitlement is developed. Each subcategory found is explained below.
Table 1

Definitions of Characteristics and Development Subcategories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of work ethic</td>
<td>Not working hard or putting forth much effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation of rewards</td>
<td>Expecting to reap rewards and benefits without putting forth effort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superiority</td>
<td>General belief that one is above or better than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncompromising</td>
<td>Unreceptive to working under an authoritative figure such as a coach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult to coach</td>
<td>Individual doesn’t follow instruction, questions authority, and generally disrupts the team setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upbringing</td>
<td>The values and ideas instilled in a person from a young age in their home life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal attitudes/views</td>
<td>Views and attitudes generally accepted by most people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1 Characteristics of entitled athletes. The following five subcategories (lack of work ethic, expectation of rewards, superiority, uncompromising, difficult to coach) were found when looking at what characteristics athletes with high perceptions of entitlement display. Each subcategory is elaborated on and defined below.

Lack of work ethic. Lack of work ethic was the second most present subcategory throughout the entire data set appearing over fifty times with all eight coaches in agreement that it is a major characteristic of athletes with high perceptions of entitlement. Coach B referenced the lack of work ethic in athletes with high perceptions of entitlement early in the interview after being asked to provide a definition for entitlement: “I would say entitlement is anybody who comes in or on to a team who thinks that they deserve something given to them other than having to earn it out right.” Coach A stated early in the interview that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement do not seem to work as hard as other athletes. Coach F felt like these athletes believe
they do not have to work hard for something while Coach H simply referred to them as “lazy”. A clear pattern emerged throughout the data with coaches referencing the lack of work ethic in these athletes. As the interviews progressed coaches began to provide a ‘reason’ for why they believe these athletes have this sense of entitlement. Coach B commented that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement are usually players who have been given a lot in their life without having to work for it. Coach D reasoned, “I don’t know how hard a lot of these kids have really had to work. …I think that they’re just kind of used to getting everything.” Coach F explained, I do think that a player who prepares the right way is going to be prepared in the long run and the one with a little bit of self-entitlement, that player, for the most part, doesn’t work very hard because they just believe that they should get what they get. They don't need to work in order to be where they're at.

Coaches seemed to be in agreement that the reason these athletes feel as though they do not have to work hard is because, in the past, they have been given the things they wanted without having to work for them.

Based on the comments from the coaches, the lack of work ethic subcategory is defined as not working hard or putting forth much effort.

**Expectation of rewards.** Tied in closely with a lack of work ethic are the expectations that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement have. Seemingly, these entitled athletes expect to be given the things they desire whether they have worked for it or not. Coach G commented, “…Entitlement means…that somebody is wanting something that they haven't earned or deserved.” Coach A and Coach C noted that it is difficult to work with these athletes because they immediately come into the program feeling that something is owed to them. Coach B stated, “Ya know, I want that kid that fights for it – that goes right out there and does exactly
what she needs to get to where we’re going. Instead of thinking that she just deserves to be out there.” All eight coaches commented on the expectation of rewards from athletes with high perceptions of entitlement and all agreed that it is a common trait for these athletes to possess.

Based on the coaches’ statements the expectation of rewards subcategory is defined as expecting to reap rewards and benefits without putting forth effort.

Superiority. Six of the eight coaches made reference to athletes with high perceptions of entitlement seemingly acting or believing that they are better or above others in some way. Coach E commented,

They have a self-importance that is not justified. …They think they're better than everyone else. …When I look back on several of the kids that I've coached…it seems to be in every one of them. They think they're the next greatest thing. Ya know?

Coach A, Coach B, Coach F, and Coach G all said that these athletes carry themselves like they are better than everyone else using statements such as “They act like they are better than everyone else on the team and campus.” Coach F described one situation in particular where these athletes’ sense of entitlement seems to stand out.

A couple of players on my team show up and just watch everybody else set everything up. And they take batting practice and then they either leave early or they still let everyone clean up after them. They feel as though touching field equipment or anything to set up balls or bats or whatever is beneath them. That's something that I struggle with. But that's something that I see in some of the entitled athletes here.
Coach A, Coach C, Coach F, and Coach H discussed instances where these athletes felt that certain things being asked of them were “beneath them”. Whether it be to work hard, do field clean up, or attend team functions, those athletes with high perceptions of entitlements expressed, either verbally or nonverbally, that they were “too good” to be held to the same expectations as the rest of the team. Coach A elaborated,

Because they do think that they’re a step above everybody else. Sometimes they don’t think they have to work as hard or do the little things that other people do. And it could be something like…getting the field ready for a game or practice or clean up afterwards. And they think that that’s beyond them to have to do that and when they get here they learn that it’s not. Everybody does it.

Based on the comments of the coaches the superiority subcategory is defined as a general belief that one is above or better than others.

Uncompromising. Another characteristic commonly displayed by athletes with high perceptions of entitlement, according to coaches, is a sense of being uncompromising. These athletes often feel like things should be done their way and are unreceptive to taking direction from others. Coach B commented, “And so I think…they like to have things done their way. They like to be in charge and it should be their way…”. Coach C mentioned that these athletes will often be respectful as long as things are being done the way they want. However, if they do not agree with decisions that are being made they can openly disagree with both verbal and nonverbal communication. Coach C goes on to say that these athletes can often stir drama within the team if they do not agree with coaching staff decisions (e.g., they disagree with another player starting over them). Coach A tied together several characteristics including a lack
of work ethic, the expectation of rewards, and a sense of being uncompromising with the following explanation,

Kids come in with the entitlement attitude and they come in and think that you're just going to hand things to them and then when they find out that they have to work for it real hard...they do a couple different things. One thing is that some of them will quit. Because they know that I expect them to work hard. And then others will fight the system, fight the system. And then they never get the result they want out of it because I'm not the type of person...that caves. It's my way. Plain and simple. It's my way. And some kids, if they are entitled, they have a tough time with that.

Coach B also mentioned that, often, the career choices of athletes who she would deem as entitled are often careers that allow the athlete to be in charge and in an authoritative role.

Based on the coaches’ comments the uncompromising subcategory is defined as an athlete being unreceptive to working under an authoritative figure such as a coach.

**Difficult to coach.** Coaches also discussed the fact that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement are often difficult to coach. These athletes can struggle with following directions and team rules in addition to causing general problems within the team setting. Coach F stated, “My entitled athletes are the last ones to show up and the hardest to coach.” Coach H talked about players who choose not to make changes that coaches suggest by stating “...You try to make a change and it’s, ‘No, I don't have to do that because I hit the target. So, I don't need to change my throw.’ [They] just don't want to listen and be coachable...” Coach E discussed how these players will often whine, complain, and talk negatively about the coaching staff to other players if they are not getting their way. Coach C also mentioned how these players will often
be less respectful and less open to authoritative figures while Coach G described them as uncooperative.

Based on the comments of the coaches the difficult to coach subcategory is defined as when an individual doesn’t follow instruction, questions authority, and generally disrupts the team setting.

4.2.2 Development. The second category that emerged when characterizing entitlement was from where the coaches believed the traits and characteristics of athletes with high perceptions of entitlement stem from. The following two subcategories (upbringing, societal views/attitudes) were found when looking at where entitlement stems from. Each subcategory is elaborated on and defined below.

Upbringing. How the athlete was raised was a reoccurring trend throughout the interviews being referenced over thirty times and by all eight coaches. Coaches felt that the central reason athletes developed this sense of entitlement was due to parental influence. Coach E rationalized, “I really believe it's formulating in a child's younger years. I think because mom and dad are such a major teacher in a child's development until the age of five or six when they start going to school. I think that that's where it's initiated…” Coach A commented,

I think, ya know, this is just my opinion, but the family unit anymore…the mom has to work. The dad has to work. The kids have a lot of time on their own and things like that and the parents try and compensate for not spending as much time with them like they did when I was a kid. It’s…give little Johnny everything. Ya know, ‘you deserve everything’. And, I think it’s a guilt thing on the parents’ part a little bit. Because they know that they weren’t probably there as much as they’d like to have been. Then, they just defend their kid to the max and want to give
them everything they can and nothing’s ever their fault. It’s always somebody else’s fault. I think that just adding to it more and more all the time.

Several other coaches provided similar thoughts explaining that the parents seem to support their kid whether they are right or wrong. Coach A went on to state, “And I think 99% of it is because no matter what their child does, the parent backs them 100%, without even knowing if they’re right, wrong, or indifferent. And I think that just keeps building to the entitlement.” Coach B discussed how it is common now for parents to create easy ways out for their kids rather than them having to push through tough situations. “It’s been such a wave of it being handed to you. And if it’s not handed to you then Dad just goes and makes another team. But when they get to college…Dad can’t go make a new college. Ya know?” Coach B went on to say that parents encourage this sense of entitlement, which ultimately makes things more difficult for their athlete once they reach the collegiate playing field. Coach D mentioned that just being taught to say ‘thank you’ can make a huge impact on what kids expectations are in terms of things being given to them. Additionally, Coach A described how parents can over-inflate their child’s ego which causes them to expect ‘more’, “…It comes from the parents telling them that they’re the greatest thing that ever walked on the face of the earth.”

Based on the coaches’ comments the upbringing subcategory is defined as the values and ideas instilled in a person from a young age in their home life.

Societal views-beliefs. Coaches believe that another key factor in the development of entitlement issues are the generally accepted views and beliefs of society. Coach A blamed the participation trophy attitude saying,

…When my kids were playing t-ball and… you get the kid out and they go, “Oh, no. Just stay on base. Run the base.” And I see things like that and I’m like “No!
No. No. They’re out! They need to learn the game. …This is how the game works.” …And the “Oh, everybody ties. Everybody goes out for ice cream.” I don’t agree with that. I never did. I don’t think they should just get a trophy for participating. And, it really, in my opinion, creates an entitled society. It really does.

Coach A continued on by saying,

And then when you start talking athletics…the kids play a soccer game and nobody wins. There’s no winner. …Teach them that it’s okay to lose. You can lose. You’ll be fine. But I think it’s such a let-down for kids anymore when they lose or they aren’t given everything in the world because they don’t learn how to lose anymore. Ya know? You have to learn to lose, to learn to win, in my opinion. Not that I ever, ever in a million years would say it’s a good thing to lose. But…it’s part of sports. You’re not going to win everything you do.

Coach D commented on the role that the media and social media play in creating entitled athletes by discussing football’s national signing day and how the athlete’s egos are over-inflated due to the hype surrounding them. Coach E described how it is a common trend for players to be told how great they are by coaches/parents/fans from a young age, even when it is not true, causing an unrealistic view of talent levels which, in turns, leads players to believe they are entitled to certain things (e.g., playing time). Coach B discussed society’s seemingly ‘give me more’ belief, “I think this society is a society of ‘We need twenty-five pairs of shoes and six bats to get through a season.’ And it’s not helping. It’s not helping the situation.”

Based on the coaches’ comments the societal views/beliefs subcategory is defined as the views and attitudes generally accepted by most people.
4.2.3 Additional thoughts. Although the above were the most prevalent subcategories found, it would be difficult to ignore some additional thoughts shared by coaches. For example, several coaches also felt that these athletes often felt entitled to future rewards based on past accomplishments/experiences. Coach A commented, “Some of them come in and think ‘I should automatically get a starting position because I’m this person and I did this in high school.’ …And they don’t really want to work as hard for what they get…” Coach G stated that some players feel entitled to certain things due to successes they had in previous seasons while Coach H discussed how athletes will expect to be treated differently just because of who they are and where they came from.

Another trend was that the coaches felt athletes with high perceptions of entitlement often lack a sense of mental toughness. Coach D stated, “But, I think someone who acts entitled also, a lot of times, can be mentally weak.” Coach D, Coach B, and Coach F all gave examples of athletes with high perceptions of entitlement who struggled with the mental part of the game (e.g., going into slumps, breaking down when things get difficult). Coach F discussed how athletes with high perceptions of entitlement are often unprepared due to their lack of work ethic which ultimately impacts their mental game.

I think once things get really tough an athlete knows – the game knows. That’s the biggest thing. You can never hide – especially in our game. You can’t hide athletes. It’s not like what they say on television. Just stick someone in right field. Nothing’s going to get hit to them. Especially in the collegiate level there’s no way you can hide someone. So, I think that type of athlete [one with a high perception of entitlement]…once the rubber hits the road and things get really
tough that athlete tends to break down because that athlete knows they're not prepared.

Based on the coaches’ comments these athletes seemingly struggle to cope mentally when things do not go their way or when things start to get too difficult. Coaches also suggest that the sense of superiority that a lot of these athletes tend to have is a 'cover' for the fact that they lack a sense of mental toughness.

Coaches also commented that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement are often withdrawn or isolated by teammates. Coach E stated, “I notice a narrow presence around them” before going on to say, “The other players will figure it out really quick and they'll start to kind of isolate that player. They don't really like to be around them.” Coach F and Coach G described these athletes as “stand-offish” while Coach C described them as “withdrawn”.

4.3 How Entitlement Impacts the Team

When looking at how entitlement impacts the team two main categories were identified. The first was entitlement as a negative, which is defined as the perception that a sense of entitlement brings more negatives than positives to a team. The second category discovered in this section was the disruption of team chemistry, which is defined as the act of causing rifts or problems within a team.

4.3.1 Entitlement as a negative. Agreed upon by all eight coaches, entitlement was seen as a negative more than a positive. Coach A stated, “In my experience, most of the time it’s more negative than it ever is positive.” Coach B commented that the negative aspects that comes with this sense of entitlement cannot be out shown by talent level, “They may be talented as all get out but what they bring in negative-ness is not, and cannot be, described as positive. …What they bring in the negative cannot be overcome with what they do on the field.” Coach A, B, D,
and H believe that outsiders looking in also see this sense of entitlement in a negative light with
Coach A explaining that those who have a lot of respect for athletics will usually frown on
players with high perceptions of entitlement.

Additionally, five of the eight coaches used strong words to describe these athletes and
their presence on the team. Coaches G and E both described athletes with high perceptions of
entitlement as a ‘cancer’ with Coach E stating, “You cannot allow it [entitlement issues] to fester
and grow like a cancer because it can consume the team and it can rip it apart. It will destroy
your program.” Coach C used the word ‘poison’ to describe having athletes with high
perceptions of entitlement on the team while Coach F described their presence as potentially
‘explosive’. Furthermore, Coach E also referred to these athletes as being ‘dangerous’ while
Coach H commented, “I’ve seen it be toxic on our team”.

Based on the coaches’ comments, entitlement as a negative is defined as the belief that
entitlement brings more unwanted or negative problems to a team compared to the good that it
brings.

Confidence. Although coaches agree that this pervasive sense of entitlement is negative,
several coaches, when asked to describe if there is anything positive that comes with entitlement,
mention that these athletes can have a sense of confidence about them. Coach A commented,

I like the confidence that it actually brings to a person… …The player that you go
watch and you recruit them and…they just show all the confidence in the world
playing the game. And yeah, you want it. You want the kid that’s confident and
thinks that they’re real good…

Coaches C, D, G, and H also commented that a sense of confidence is one good thing athletes
with high perceptions of entitlement can contribute to a team.
4.3.2 Disruption of team chemistry. The most pervasive category throughout all eight interviews was that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement disrupt team chemistry. All eight coaches spoke on the topic with the category appearing in the data nearly 70 times. Coach E commented that it is dangerous having athletes with high perceptions of entitlement on a team because, “they can destroy the dynamics of the team”. Coach A and Coach H both explained how these athletes can negatively impact team chemistry and unity. Coach B described how members of the team will talk to parents/fans about the entitlement issues happening within the team which causes the parents/fans to often talk negatively and even shun the parents of the athletes with high perceptions of entitlement causing a divide not just within the team but within the program. When asked if these athletes with high perceptions of entitlement disrupt the concept of team, Coach F responded by saying that it disrupts the team from both a player and coach standpoint,

It makes things very grey. I think entitled athletes not only put the players in a compromising position...entitled athletes put coaches in a very compromising situation. Especially if one of your entitled athletes is a starter or somebody who brings a lot to the team. Because, as a coach, you sit there and think about what's best for the team. Is it best for the team for me not to play said athlete and potentially lose. Or is it better for the team for us to put said athlete in the lineup knowing that we got a really good chance to win. I think it's tough. I think that's where it gets the toughest. And that's where it puts a lot of strain on the team.

Coach A discussed the impact having athletes with high perceptions of entitlement has on a team by saying,
It can definitely break up the chemistry on the team. …I tell the girls all the time, you don’t have to be best friends off the field by any means. That’s not always going to happen and that’s not even an expectation that we should have, but you should be able to respect each other’s differences and work together for a common goal. And…it is tough with entitled kids sometimes because they do think that they’re a step above everybody else.

Additionally, Coach B described these athletes as being a negative light to the team when things do not go their way or they do not get what they want. Furthermore, Coach B and Coach E both discussed how athletes with high perceptions of entitlement disrupt the team setting by “rubbing off” on other players. The coaches also commented that they can often bring others down and ultimately lead others down a negative path.

Based on the coaches’ comments disruption of team chemistry is defined as causing rifts or general disturbances in a team setting.

4.4 Strategies

The purpose of this thesis, in large part, was to determine what strategies coaches use when managing entitled athletes. When asked how important the role of head coach is in managing these athletes Coach F commented, “Realistically, it’s the job.” All seven of the other coaches had similar responses, each agreeing that managing entitlement is vital to team success.

There were four main categories that appeared when looking at strategies that coaches’ use. The first is to conference with the athlete early, which is defined as having a one on one conversation with the athlete as soon as entitlement characteristics appear. The second strategy is to lay out expectations early, which is defined as explaining to the athlete what is expected of both them and the team. The third is to vocalize coaching decisions, which is defined as
rationalizing decisions made by the coaching staff to the athletes. The final category is *dismissal*, which is defined as the removal of the athlete from the team. Each category is elaborated on below.

### 4.4.1 Conference with the athlete early

Coaches rationalized that the first thing that must occur when seeing entitlement issues within a player is to pull them aside and have a conversation with them. Coach A explained, “The very, very first thing I ever do, is pull them in individually.” Coach G stated, “…For me, the very first thing that happens is a meeting – a conversation. …So, my strategy is usually to be straight upfront and talk.”

Coaches also expressed the importance of addressing the issues early. Coach E stated that a conversation would happen with the athlete early in the season, as soon as it is noticed: “You have to deal with it earlier than later. That's been my experience.” Coach A and Coach H both agreed that it is something they take care of immediately. Coach H went on to say that as a head coach, it is important to deal with entitlement issues before players are even in the program, “…It is kind of the groundwork with the kids you recruit. So, it really starts with recruitment. Who are you bringing in? Who are you allowing into your program?”

Based on the coaches’ comments conferencing with the athlete is defined as having a one on one conversation with the athlete as soon as entitlement characteristics appear.

### 4.4.2 Lay out expectations

Once the coaches have pulled athletes in for a conference, it is important to lay out their expectations that they have for both that athlete and the team. Coach A and Coach B both describe the importance of making sure that players know where they stand and they understand their role on the team. Coach A stated,

And like I said, immediately when I notice that I have a player like this…an entitled player…I bring them in and meet with them immediately and just tell
them, “This isn’t what’s going to fly with me. And this is what’s expected of you and it’s expected of player ‘#24’ right next to you. This is how we do things. This is how you’re going to do it. You’re not getting special treatment. It is what it is. Everybody’s treated the same.

Coach E explained how laying out expectations for the entire team can be beneficial in curving entitlement issues before they begin.

I deal with the girls right off the top. I talk about how important it is that you’re representing [our school] and you have a responsibility to the team that you are expected to fundraise. You are expected to work at the field. You are expected to be at practice. You are expected to be a team player who supports the team. And your job is to make the program better than what you found it.

Coach H felt it is important to define a culture for the team and ensure that each player understands and fits in with that culture.

…You bring in a culture and you set that standard, right? …For me, it’s been the most effective thing. …Saying ‘This is our culture. Our culture is really, really important to us so if you don’t fit that culture maybe this isn’t a good place for you.’ So, really just expressing those standards right away and saying, ‘This is where we’re going as a program’ and just clearly communicating that and not being afraid to communicate that even if that means losing a kid who is a great athlete.

Based on the coaches’ comments laying out expectations is defined as explaining to athlete what is expected of both them and the team.
4.4.3 Vocalize coaching decisions.

A third strategy that coaches have had success with is vocalizing and explaining some of their coaching decisions to the athletes. Coach D explained that it is not necessary to explain every decision to the team but rationalizing and explaining when possible can help eliminate issues before they begin. Coach C stated,

…The entitled ones...I have to spend more time with them. I have to explain things to them. If they don’t agree with a certain drill or they don’t understand why it pertains to them I have to go step by step on where we would use this drill within a game or within a certain movement. …I find myself breaking stuff down a lot more just so that they fully understand why I’m doing something and why I’m asking them to do it.

Coach D also discussed how it seems athletes have a harder time seeing things outside of their own perspective. However, when decisions are explained to them from another perspective they have an ‘ah-ha!’ moment and they understand the reasoning behind the decision. Coach G discussed the importance of open communication with athletes, “I think communication is the biggest key. Because if you have somebody who has a sense of entitlement you have to make sure that the lines of communication between you and that player are open often. …Without regular communication, a small problem can fester into a big problem.”

Based on the coaches’ comments vocalizing coaching decisions is defined as rationalizing decisions made by the coaching staff to the athletes.
4.4.4 Dismissal

Coaches were also in agreeance that ultimately, disruptions to team chemistry cannot be tolerated. Coach G discussed removing players from the team by saying, “I have had severe cases where we’ve had to take players off of the team. About five or six years ago I talked to a player and told them if that’s the way it’s going to be then they’re no longer welcome. And they didn't come back.” Coach E commented, “You can’t keep a cancer in a team too long…otherwise it spreads. So, I’m not going to put up with it too long.” Coach E went on to say, “In our instance, we don’t have players who have athletic scholarships. So, it’s not like I’ve committed a ton of money to somebody or have my job on the line. So, in my instance...if somebody is a problem, you just get rid of the problem.” Coach A, Coach D, and Coach H also mentioned that they would cut an entitled player for the ultimate benefit of the team.

Based on the coaches’ comments dismissal is defined as the removal of a player from the team.

4.4.5 Additional strategies. The above strategies were the most common among the coaches, however, individual coaches did have additional strategies they use that are worth mentioning. Coach F combats entitlement in players by praising and recognizing those who are unentitled. Coach H and Coach D both try to combat entitlement before players come on to the team by really getting to know the players and parents they are recruiting and making sure they are a good fit for the team, while Coach B puts a focus on team bonding and having players develop strong relationships with each other.

4.5 Summary of Results

Coaches in the study were clear that entitlement is a concept that does exists in sport. As previously stated, coaches feel that managing entitlement is something that is crucial to develop
and maintain a successful team. Coaches believe that handling entitlement issues early is key and that communication with athletes by laying out expectations and vocalizing their coaching decisions is the best way to handle athletes with high perceptions of entitlement. If the above strategies fail, the coaches agree that removing the athlete from the team is crucial for maintaining team chemistry and cohesion.
CHAPTER 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine if entitlement exists in sport, at least in the sport of softball, and strategies coaches can use to help manage these athletes with high perceptions of entitlement. Raskin and Terry’s (1988) definition of entitlement was used as the basis for which coaches based their responses around when discussing whether entitlement exists in sport and what strategies they use to manage it. Throughout the literature review, entitlement was defined and its presence in other areas such as academics and the workplace were identified. Findings from research in other areas often proved true or similar in the sport context.

5.1 Making Connections among Concepts

When discussed in the literature review, research suggested that hubris and entitlement did not have a strong correlation due to the fact that hubris is characterized by superiority for power, position, or pride and entitlement was not characterized by either in the previously known research (Van Damme et al., 2016). However, after speaking with coaches it could be possible that hubris and entitlement have a stronger connection in sport than originally anticipated since coaches all agreed that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement also have a sense of superiority. Although it was undetermined if there was an underlying motive for this sense of superiority, future research could be done to try and determine if these athletes have a motive that could ultimately cause a shift in the concept at hand.

Additionally, many of the characteristics mentioned by coaches were the same characteristics mentioned by researchers when looking at entitlement in academics and the workplace (e.g., lack of work ethic, expectation of rewards, superiority, uncompromising, difficult to coach). Baer and Cheryomuichin (2011), Fullerton (2013), Gresse et al. (2013), Kopp (2011) and Lippmann et al. (2009) described entitled students’ behaviour which included characteristics
such as making demands, low effort, high expectations, and a disrespect for authority which are all very similar to the descriptions provided by the coaches in this study. Consequently, the ideas of Campbell et al. (2004) which says that entitlement is a “stable and pervasive concept” are likely correct in that an individual’s sense of entitlement will carry over into all aspects of their life (p. 31).

Furthermore, Lippman et al. (2009) provided suggestions for working with students who have high perceptions of entitlement which included making expectations clear, providing examples of quality work, giving students something to lose, and re-socializing so that the teacher is considered the authority figure in the teacher-student relationships. Some of these strategies for working with students are also similar to the strategies the coaches suggested. Research in both areas now supports that making expectations clear is crucial to managing these individuals. Additionally, vocalizing coaching decisions is similar to providing examples of work in the sense that coaches suggested that demonstrating the how and why behind drills (as well as other coaching decisions) is beneficial. In sport, both the movements and strategies of the game are essentially the ‘work’ discussed in the academic setting. Moreover, when coaches would meet with their athletes to discuss expectations, it was typical for them to also give the player something to lose (remove them from the team) if changes were not seen.

Lessard et al. (2011) and Lippmann et al. (2009) also suggested that a sense of entitlement could be beneficial in settings where confidence and self-esteem are needed. Coaches were in a general agreeance that athletes with high perceptions of entitlement can appear more confident and that confidence could be seen as a positive in a sport setting. However, coaches also agreed that, ultimately, the negativity surrounding other characteristics of entitled athletes outweighed the potential benefit of their confidence.
As discussed in the literature review, it was anticipated that if coaches provided similar
descriptions, experiences, and strategies for working with entitled athletes as found in other
disciplines, it could potentially open doors to a wealth of knowledge that could then be applied in
the sport setting. Since coaches reported similar findings, it is the belief of the researcher that
coaches could likely apply the strategies for working with entitled individuals found in other
areas to sport and also experience success.

5.2 Category Development

Since there was no prior research that could be found on entitlement in sport the
researcher found it important to gain insight on how athletes with high perceptions of entitlement
operate and how they impact the team before being able to determine the best strategies for
coaching them. This led to a broad range of categories tied to the various sections of the
interview process (introduction, defining entitlement, characterizing entitlement, how entitlement
impacts the team, managing entitlement). Categories were identified that do not seem to directly
answer the two research questions but ultimately play a role in understanding how athletes with
high perceptions of entitlement operate. Philippe and Seiler (2006) discuss the importance the
importance of coaches and athletes forming personal relationships where they understand one
another and develop a sense of closeness as a way to maximize the effectiveness of coaching
strategies. It is the belief of the researcher that it is difficult and unwise to apply coaching
strategies to athletes without first understanding who the athlete is and the rationale for their
behaviour.

Two main categories were found when characterizing entitlement – (a) the characteristics
displayed by athletes with high perceptions of entitlement, and (b) how/where entitlement is
developed. Five subcategories were identified when examining characteristics of athletes with
high perceptions of entitlement (lack of work ethic, expectation of rewards, self-importance, uncompromising, and difficult to coach). Additionally, two subcategories were identified when observing where entitlement stems from (upbringing, societal views/attitudes). When looking at how entitlement impacts the team, two main categories emerged – (a) entitlement is seen as a negative, and (b) entitlement issues are disruptive to team chemistry. Additionally, four main categories (or strategies) were ultimately identified after careful examination of the coaches’ experiences when working with athletes with high perceptions of entitlement which included (a) conferencing with the athlete as soon as entitlement characteristics are displayed, (b) provide the athlete with clear expectations, (c) vocalize coaching decisions, and (d) remove the athlete from the team if entitlement characteristics are not remedied.

An understanding of how an athlete with high perceptions of entitlement behaves and their impact on the team led to determining which strategies are most effective when working with these athletes. Categories were developed revolving around the final three sections of the interview process (characterizing entitlement, how entitlement impacts the team, managing entitlement). Through the qualitative process, the researcher was able to confirm that entitlement does exist in sport and how coaches can manage athletes with high perceptions of entitlement. The theoretical, practical, and research implications of the results will be discussed below.

5.3 Theoretical Implications

Hypothetically, the categories presented in this research, represent how most softball coaches view athletes with high perceptions of entitlement. Almost all coaches were in agreement on the behaviours they typically see exhibited by these athletes as well as how their behaviour ultimately impacts the team.
When developing strategies for working with these athletes with high perceptions of entitlement, coaches first had to consider the characteristics of the athlete and the ultimate implications they have on the team. It is important to note these findings, as it is vital to understand the athlete before employing strategies to work with them. Philippe and Seiler (2006) discuss that a sense of closeness between the coach and the athlete is crucial for both coach and athlete success. Once a coach understands how an athlete operates, then they are able to develop strategies for working with that particular athlete. Coaches additionally have to be aware that those who have a sense of entitlement have often been raised this way and that managing the athlete will likely not be easy.

5.4 Practical Implications

Olusoga, Maynard, Hays, and Butt (2012) discussed the importance of experienced coaches sharing their knowledge and experiences for other coaches to learn from. This research aimed to equip coaches with strategies to help manage a previously neglected problem. The use of an interpretive methodology allowed for these eight collegiate coaches to share their combined 173 years of coaching experience and shed light to an area that has lacked attention. The collegiate softball circuit is competitive and requires continual growth and adaptation from coaching staffs. It is the hope of the researcher that other coaches’ will be able to take the experience and knowledge discussed and find use for it in their own programs.

When looking at the application of the suggested strategies, using a combination of the four main strategies the coaches listed would likely produce more desirable results for coaches and teams. For example, if we imagine a situation where an individual believes they should have a starting position, we could combat their sense of entitlement most effectively by employing the first three strategies together. As a coach, vocalizing coaching decisions from the beginning
could play a role in helping to manage these athletes. Understanding the reasoning behind an action helps us to better accept the decision. Providing the team with explanations when possible can help alleviate entitlement issues before they begin. Letting the team know why certain athletes are in certain positions can help others to see the strengths in their teammates and also the weaknesses in themselves. If Player A is the starting centerfielder because of her assertive defensive style and strong bat, let the team know that is the reason she is holding that starting position. In turn, it may allow Player B to see where she needs to strengthen her own game.

Additionally, laying out expectations before problems arise can also help curve entitlement issues. It is suggested that one-on-one meetings with all players every few weeks could help keep players in the loop about where they stand, what’s expected of them, and how they can improve. However, once entitlement characteristics appear, it is crucial to address them immediately. Conferencing with that player and being up front about what needs to change allows the player the opportunity to make those changes and fix the problem. If Player B starts to exhibit a sense of entitlement, conferencing with her could help eliminate the problem before it grows and negatively impacts the team. In an instance where Player B continues to exhibit undesirable characteristics which have a negative impact on the team, her dismissal from the team would prove beneficial for team chemistry and cohesion.

5.5 Research Implications

The research implications of this project are formed by its limitations. Limitations included the sample and providing the definition of entitlement to participants. Future research on the topic could benefit from using a large sample size and by involving coaches from other sports. Additionally, coaches were from both the United States and Canada. Although culturally similar, the U.S. coaches are paid unlike their Canadian counterparts; not to mention the fact that

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the U.S. schools offer athletic scholarships for softball while most Canadian schools do not.

Future research could consider comparing entitlement levels across genders, sports, and countries.

Although this research was labeled as exploratory, the definition of entitlement was given to coaches during the interview after first asking participants to provide their own definition. It was important for the research questions to ensure that all participants were speaking on the topic of entitlement rather than deservingness. This research was qualitative in nature with an aim to gain insight into coaches’ experiences with entitlement and identify how they perceive to manage athletes with high perceptions of entitlement in order to create success for their team. Hence, the phenomenological approach. Future research could consider looking at entitlement levels in athletes and whether or not it is a predictor of success (statistics).

With each generation showing higher entitlement levels, continued research in this area could be vital to both coach and team development. Understanding how to coach these athletes could ultimately play a role in the success of a program, which, in the collegiate system, affects job retention. Additionally, as most coaches also feel it is their job to be a positive role model and mentor to young athletes, it would be important to not only learn how to manage these athletes but to also help these athletes develop new beliefs and outlooks as they are not only the future coaches of the game but also the future of our society.
CHAPTER 6: Conclusion

As previously discussed in the introduction, this research was formulated due to my experiences as an athlete and my desire to prepare for my future profession of coaching. My background has been the entire foundation on which this research was conducted on and is something that has enabled me to gain insight into an area that was lacking in formal research.

This research aimed to provide evidence that entitlement is present in softball as well as identify strategies softball coaches use when working with athletes with high perceptions of entitlement. Through this process, I have gained insight into the characteristics of entitled athletes, their impact on the team, and strategies that can be used to successfully manage these athletes. Although it was my background as an athlete that brought about this research, ultimately, the results of this study have impacted my future as a coach. I hope that other coaches are able to use this information in a way that creates success for both their individual athletes and their team.
References


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Appendix A

University of Regina Research Ethics Board Approval

[Image of Certificate of Approval]

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR
Mikalise Sue Etheredge

DEPARTMENT
Kinesiology and Health Studies

REB#
2016-219

SUPERVISOR:
Dr. Kim Dorsch

TITLE
Coaching strategies for working with athletes who have high perceptions of entitlement

APPROVED ON:
January 10, 2017

RENEWAL DATE:
January 10, 2018

APPROVAL OF:
Application for Behavioural Research Ethics Review
Consent Form
Initial Letter of Contact
Transcript Release

Full Board Meeting ☐   Delegated Review ☑

The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above-named research project. The proposal was found to be acceptable on ethical grounds. The principal investigator has the responsibility for any other administrative or regulatory approvals that may pertain to this research project, and for ensuring that the authorized research is carried out according to the conditions outlined in the original protocol submitted for ethics review. This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above time period provided there is no change in experimental protocol, consent process or documents.

Any significant changes to your proposed method, or your consent and recruitment procedures should be reported to the Chair for Research Ethics Board consideration in advance of its implementation.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions: http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms1/ethics-forms.html.

Dr. Katherine Robinson
Chair, Research Ethics Board
Appendix B

University of Regina Research Ethic Board Amendment Approval

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<td>Mikalis Sue Etheredge</td>
<td>Kinesiology and Health Studies</td>
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SUPERVISOR:
Dr. Kim Dorsch

TITLE
Coaching strategies for working with athletes who have high perceptions of entitlement

AMENDMENT APPROVAL OF
- Expand recruitment to participants who have held a head coaching position for at least one year
- Revised Initial Contact and Consent Form

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AMENDMENT CERTIFICATION
The University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed the changes to the above-named research project as outlined in your memo dated March 6, 2017, and they are approved.

ONGOING REVIEW REQUIREMENTS
In order to receive annual renewal, a status report must be submitted to the REB Chair for Board consideration within one month of the current expiry date each year the study remains open, and upon study completion. Please refer to the following website for further instructions:
http://www.uregina.ca/research/for-faculty-staff/ethics-compliance/human/forms1/ethics-forms.html

Ara Steininger
Research Ethics Board
Appendix C

Consent Form

Title: Coaching athletes with high perceptions of entitlement

Researcher: Mikaila Etheredge - Graduate Student at the University of Regina - Kinesiology and Health Studies - etheredm@uregina.ca (256-221-7432)

Supervisor: Kim Dorsch - Faculty Member at the University of Regina - Kinesiology and Health Studies - kim.dorsch@uregina.ca (306-585-4742)

Procedures:
You will be asked to participate in a one on one interview via Skype, in person, or over the phone. The interview process will take approximately sixty to ninety minutes to complete. It is asked that you answer all questions truthfully, provided you feel comfortable responding. If you do not feel comfortable responding, you may skip any question. After the interview process, you will be given the opportunity to review and make changes to your interview transcripts. Additionally, after the researcher has reviewed your data and pulled categories, you will be asked to review the categories to ensure they are representative of your thoughts. This will take approximately twenty to forty minutes to complete. Your total time commitment to this project will be between 2 and 2 ½ hours.

Potential Risks:
We do not anticipate that you will experience any risks by participating in this research. However, if at any time during the interview, you feel uncomfortable or stressed, you can stop the interview. You may also skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering.

Potential Benefits:
To date, the research involving both women’s softball players and entitlement are extremely limited. By participating in this study, you may help lay the groundwork for future research in the area of softball as well as impact the academic community in a positive way.

Confidentiality:
The information gathered in this study will be used for the master’s thesis of the primary researcher. Only the researcher and supervisor will have access to the information collected during the interview. Your identity will be kept confidential. Although direct quotations from the interview will likely be used, you will be given a pseudonym, and all identifying information such as the team you coach will not be used.

Data Storage:
The original audio recording of our interview will be deleted once transcribed. The anonymized transcript will be stored on password protected USB stick in the Motivation for Active Living Laboratory at the University of Regina (CKHS 157) under the supervision of Dr. Kim Dorsch indefinitely. Any identifying information will be kept in a secured location separate from the transcripts.

Right to Withdraw:
Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions that you feel comfortable responding to. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort. Any data collected to this point will be erased. Whether you choose to participate or not will have no effect on your reputation or how you will be treated within the softball community, or your relationship with the University of Regina. Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until seven days post-interview. After this time, it is possible that some results have been analyzed, written up and/or presented and it may not be possible to withdraw your data. If you wish to withdraw from the study without penalty, up until April 1, 2017. If you wish to withdraw from the study, please send an e-mail to etheredm@uregina.ca simply requesting a withdraw from the study.

Follow Up:
A research summary and copy of the final paper will be sent to participants. It is anticipated that results will be analysed and documented by May 1, 2017.

Questions or Concerns:
If you have questions or concerns, please contact the researcher(s) using the information at the top of page 1.

This project has been approved on ethical grounds by the University of Regina Research Ethics Board on January 9, 2017. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed
to the committee at (306) 585-4775 or research.ethics@uregina.ca. Out of town participants may call collect.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the description provided; you have had an opportunity to ask questions and your questions have been answered. You consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to you for your records.

___________________________     __________________________
Name of Participant                                     Signature                                Date

___________________________     _________________________
Researcher’s Signature                                     Date

A copy of this consent form will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.
Appendix D

Interview Questions

- What is your current job?
- How long have you been in this position?
- When did you start coaching?
- What made you decide to go into coaching?
- Can you describe your coaching philosophy?

1. **Definition** – The purpose of this section is to determine if entitlement, as defined by the literature, is present in sport.
   
a. How would you define entitlement?
   
i. Move forward based on response – could also lead to deservingness
   
b. One of the concepts that is often connected to entitlement is deservingness. For you, are these the same or different concepts?
   
i. Give them the definitions provide in the literature and ask their opinion.
      1. Entitlement is the expectation of special privileges over others and special exemptions from normal social demands”
      2. *Deservingness* differs from entitlement in that it is characterized by the expectation of a reward as a result of a person’s actions (Feather, 2002).
   
c. Do you associate entitlement with anything else? Any other words of concepts?
   
d. Do you think this sense of entitlement/deservingness exists in sport?
   
e. Do you have experience working with athletes who you would deem as entitled?

2. **Characteristics** – The purpose of this section is to help describe what these players look like. This helps us get a better idea of how the coaches perceive entitlement in sport.
   
a. What do you think an entitled athlete acts or behaves like?
   
b. Do you think of entitlement as positive or negative? Or both – explain.
   
c. When you think of your entitled athletes, have they been successful?
   
d. Where do you think this sense of entitlement stems from?
      i. What do you think entitlement is related to? Personality? Family? Societal attitudes? Or something else?
   
e. Do you think entitled players have more confidence?
      i. Is that confidence warranted or unwarranted?
      ii. Is confidence, whether warranted or unwarranted, something you want in a player? Can it be a good thing?
3. Impact – This section builds on what entitled players look like and it lays a foundation for answering the final research question about what strategies coaches use to manage entitled athletes.
   a. Can you tell me what impact having entitled players has on a team?
      i. What good things do these entitled players bring to the team?
      ii. What bad things?
   b. Is it possible to be a team player and still be entitled?
      i. Do you think other people are envious of this sense of entitlement?
   c. Do these entitled athletes disrupt the concept of “team”?
   d. Do you think these entitled players bring something to the team that is necessary?
   e. How do you think others (e.g., players, parents, fans, administration) feel about these entitled players?

4. Strategies – This section answers the research question about what strategies coaches use to manage entitled athletes.
   a. What strategies do you use to manage these entitled athletes to help your team be successful? To help the individual be successful?
   b. Do you find entitled athletes to be difficult or easy to work with?
      i. How do these players need to be “handled”?
      ii. Have you ever felt that you had to cater to an entitled player?
   c. How important is your role in managing these players?
      i. Can someone else manage them (asst. coach) or does it need to come from the top?
   d. Do you do anything to encourage entitlement? Do others?
   e. Would you put someone on your team who you knew was entitled?

5. Is there anything else you’d like to add about entitlement in sport and how to manage it as a coach?