Punishment in Youth Baseball: A Question of Morality and Power

by

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate coaches’, athletes’, and parents’ perspectives on the use of punishment in youth baseball. Semi-structured interviews were conducted face-to-face with twenty-one participants: Three male coaches, eleven male youth athletes, aged 13-14 years, three mothers and four fathers. Interviews ranged between 30-150 minutes and were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed. In addition to exercise as punishment, participants reported that yelling and benching were alternative punitive strategies used in sport. Exercise was reportedly the most accepted form of punishment because of its perceived ability to improve physical development and sport performance. Majority of participants agreed yelling was the most detrimental punishment for athletes to endure because it produced feelings of fear, humiliation and anger in the athletes. Finally, benching was reportedly accepted as a strategic tool and a punitive tactic, as long as coaches’ communicated a reason for sitting the athletes on the bench.
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PERSONAL REFLECTION

At the age of six I began to play baseball and to this day, baseball has been the most dominant sport of my athletic career. My involvement in baseball does not strictly revolve around being an athlete. I have experienced this sport from multiple perspectives through various roles including an umpire, a camp counsellor, a trainer, and a coach. The variety of responsibilities associated with these roles has allowed me to develop a further appreciation for this sport. There are nine distinct positions in baseball and I have had the opportunity to experience each one. At a young age, coaches focus primarily on giving children equal playing time at each position in order for athletes to decide whether they enjoy that position or not. As athletes age, they progress into higher leagues and coaches emphasize development and specialization for specific positions. My primary positions have always been first base and right field.

In all of my years of playing, I have been a part of nine different teams and have been led by over twenty different coaches. Some of these coaches have had a positive impact on my playing career, while others have tarnished my love for the sport. Throughout my years of playing I have achieved both individual and team success. Individual success has come through my ability to lead a team as a captain and earn awards such as Most Valuable Player. Team success has been evident by achieving a winning team record and through the obtainment of noble awards such as the 2011 OUA Championship with the University of Toronto Varsity Blues. Participating in baseball has helped me develop an appreciation for other team sports. Growing up I was also heavily involved in basketball and volleyball and have been fortunate enough to achieve personal success such as being named team captain throughout high school and earning the Most Valuable Player multiple times. My involvement in many sports throughout high school allowed me to graduate as the Male Athlete of the Year.

Throughout my athletic career, I had many positive experiences that motivated me to continue sport and many negative experiences that influenced my decision to withdraw. The lack of knowledge, leadership, and expertise demonstrated by inexperienced coaches had to be overcome by strong personal relationships with teammates and my strong desire to compete in order for me to continue to participate in sport. The recurring inability of coaches to discipline misbehaving athletes adequately was a recurring theme. All of the sports I
participated in were classified as team sports and punishment was often administered to the whole team, despite at times, only one athlete being at fault. Coaches assigned excessive amounts of exercise, such as suicides, push-ups, or burpees to punish the team for perceived misbehaviour. Coaches who punished individual athletes did so by sitting them on the bench and limiting their play time. For these reasons, I developed an interest in exploring the topic of punishment in a scholarly way.

I began research on punishment in my third year of undergraduate studies, alongside the supervision of Dr. Gretchen Kerr. Listening to Dr. Kerr’s guest lecture on maltreatment of youth athletes persuaded me to further investigate this topic. Due to the lack of empirical evidence available, Dr. Kerr and I decided to study the use of punishment tactics, specifically exercise as punishment (EAP), in sport and the implications of these tactics being a form of maltreatment. At first, I struggled to see EAP as a problematic issue. As an athlete, I had experienced EAP from a young age and as a coach, I often relied on this method to discipline my athletes. I never viewed EAP as being detrimental to an athlete’s well-being, nor did I believe any other tactics should be implemented because I was confident that EAP worked best. I viewed EAP as an appropriate disciplinary method used in sport, which served to gain athlete compliance, condition the athletes, and develop ‘mental toughness.’ Nevertheless, I knew I needed to adopt an academic standpoint when embarking on this research topic and allow for the questioning of my personal views as an athlete.

In my third year of undergraduate studies I conducted my first independent study entitled, “Exploring physical conditioning as a form of punishment and its potential influence on the coach-athlete relationship”, which examined varsity athletes’ perspectives on the use of EAP. All of the participants admitted to experiencing EAP, and normalized this punishment as part of the sport experience. Surprisingly, the athletes associated benching as punishment (BAP) as being a more detrimental form of punishment than EAP. The findings of this study fueled my interest in further investigating the use of EAP and BAP by coaches, thus leading to my fourth year study, entitled, “Coaches’ perspectives on the use and effects of various disciplinary strategies.” Nine inter-university coaches were recruited for this study. All nine participants admitted to using EAP and BAP; however, they perceived these tactics to be disciplinary, as opposed to methods of punishment.
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Sport can be perceived as a complex cultural field governed by a unique set of rules, behaviours, and values in which generations of coaches and athletes may become socialized to accept. The socialization of participants into sport’s ethos may occur through the enculturation of coaches and athletes, who learn and normalize traditions (Wentworth, 1980). One tradition that appears to pervade sport is the use and acceptance of punishment tactics. Various methods of punishment may be relied on in sport to gain athlete compliance to certain standards of behaviour and expectations. Anecdotal evidence recognizes the prevalent use of exercise as punishment in sport (Bandealy & Kerr, 2014; Gurgis & Kerr, 2013); however, there is a dearth of empirical evidence that discusses the reasons for its use and its accompanying effects. While coaches may promote exercise and participation in sport for the pursuit of health and satisfaction, many may also use it as a tool for behaviour modification, through drills that require excessive exercise.

A lack of awareness of the potential physical and psychological effects of using exercise as punishment may help to explain why it is used in sport and physical education settings (Bandealy & Kerr, 2014). Potential concerns about the use of exercise as punishment include physical harm of an athlete, leading to severe injury or in extreme cases, death (Clarkson, 2006; Cleary, Ruiz, Eberman, Mitchell, & Binkley, 2007; Rico, 2002; Springer & Clarkson, 2003), as well as the potential for this punishment to escalate into a form of physical abuse. Additionally, athletes may experience a lack of enjoyment of sport and physical activity, potentially influencing an athlete’s decision to leave sport (McCarthy & Jones, 2007). Various organizations such as the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) (2013), the National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) (2009), and the U.S. Centre for Disease Control (CDC) (1997) advocate against the use of exercise as punishment, with the belief that it is counterproductive to the promotion of participation in physical activity. Although exercise as punishment poses numerous risks to athlete welfare, the physical and psychological well-being of athletes, it appears that some athletes and coaches normalize these punitive strategies as a necessary component of sport (Bandealy & Kerr, 2014; Gurgis & Kerr, 2013).
Pagnano and Langley (2001) found that teacher-coaches, who use exercise as punishment to establish their authority, were prior multi-sport athletes, who had also experienced exercise as punishment by their own coaches. This suggests that coaches may learn to use exercise as punishment through previous physical and vicarious experiences in sport. The students of the teacher-coaches, who used exercise as punishment, reportedly valued the punishment as a teacher-coach’s way of caring (Pagnano & Langley, 2001). Acceptance has been explained by the notion that exercise as punishment is “perceived [as a] normative...practice” because “the way that it may be perpetuated from generation to generation [leads] students to not perceive the use of exercise as punishment being inappropriate” (Burak, Rosenthal, & Richardson, 2013, p. 1437). The culture of sport appears to reproduce an ideology of punishment, which makes it an acceptable tactic for coaches to use, while overlooking the potential side-effects associated with punishment that may be detrimental to an athlete’s well-being.

**Purpose and Rationale**

In 2009, SHAPE America, the Society of Health and Physical Educators, released a position statement requesting coaches and teachers refrain from using exercise as punishment. SHAPE (2009) identified that various states, such as California, Massachusetts, and Hawaii, interpret the punitive use of exercise as corporal punishment because of the pain it may inflict on children. Interestingly, the related literature suggests exercise is continuously being used as a corrective strategy, and even more alarming, normalized by the coaches and teachers who use this strategy, as well as the athletes who endure it (Burak et al., 2013; Pagnano & Langley, 2001). With such contradicting views on the penal use of exercise, this study seeks to develop a further understanding of how coaches and athletes interpret exercise as punishment. To date, there is an absence of literature that considers the parents’ views towards the use of exercise as a behaviour modification strategy. Therefore, this study will also explore parents’ interpretations of using exercise punitively in sport. Furthermore, the following study will investigate alternative methods of punishment used in sport, and the purpose of using such punishments, as interpreted by the coaches, athletes and parents. The following research questions have been utilized in the pursuit of this study:

1. How do coaches, athletes, and parents interpret punishment in sport?
2. In addition to exercise as punishment, what alternative methods of punishment are used in sport?

3. Why are punishment methods, such as exercise, normalized in sport?
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Baseball: “The Old Ball Game”

Often referred to as America’s pastime, baseball has the longest legacy among major sports in North America, dating as far back as June 19, 1846, when the first modern baseball game was recorded in Hoboken, New Jersey between the Knickerbocker Baseball Club and the New York Base Ball Club (Rielly, 2003). Although origins of baseball have been thought to emerge from “English stick-and-ball games”, such as rounders and cricket, in 1905 Albert Spalding, founder of Spalding’s sporting goods, and former baseball promoter, American pitcher and manager, declared its origins began in America (Vaught, 2011, p. 1-2). To verify baseball’s American roots, Spalding “convened a special commission to determine the game’s origin”, which required them to place “advertisements in newspapers across the country asking ‘old-timers’ to recall their earliest memories of the game” (Vaught, 2011, p. 1-2). Based upon the responses, the commission declared “that in the spring of 1839” Abner Doubleday, a future Civil war general, “created baseball while fooling around with his schoolmates in a cow pasture in the village of Cooperstown, New York” (Vaught, 2011, p. 2).

What began as a source of amusement, baseball “evolved in the nineteenth century into an amateur sport of gentlemen and then into a commercialized spectator amusement operated by promoters and played by professionals within a nationwide, monopolistic structure called Organized Baseball” (Seymour, 1971, p. 1). Following the Civil War, baseball “quickly became the dominant summer pastime in villages, small towns, and rural whistle stops throughout the United States” (Dreifort, 2001, p. 19). In the 1860s, baseball was officially a professional sport (Dreifort, 2001). Baseball teams were in demand for talented players and began to recruit men, regardless of their socioeconomic status (Dreifort, 2001). In 1869, the Cincinnati Red Stockings became the first ever “all salaried team”, with athletes making between $600 and $2000 annually (Dreifort, 2001, p. 35). Two years later, there were enough professional teams to compete, leading to the development of a player-led league, known as the National Association of Professional Base Ball Players (Dreifort, 2001). Players often switched teams, with no hesitation, if they were offered higher salaries from other clubs (Dreifort, 2001). This, undeniably, led to unfair monetary distribution
among the players, consequently leading to the termination of this league after five years (Dreifort, 2001). In 1876, the National League (NL) emerged after the failed attempt of having a player-led league (Dreifort, 2001). The NL made “players subordinate to management through the reserve clause,” which was implemented in 1879 and “permanently bound the athlete to his contracting team, although the club could sell, trade, or release him whenever it chose” (Dreifort, 2001, p. 35). The successful management of players in the NL led to the development of other professional leagues, such as the American Association (AA) and the American League (AL), following the fallout of the AA (Dreifort, 2001). By 1900, teams were established in each league, fans routinely travelled to support hometown players, and professional baseball was coined as the “old ball game” (Dreifort, 2001, p. 35).

The expansion of baseball as a cultural movement in America occurred in the 1880s, when the sport evolved from a game, into a corporation involving the formation of team franchises and leagues, the introduction of spring training, prolonged seasons, electric players, product endorsements, smokeless tobacco, “weekly baseball newspapers”, and the iconic world series (Dreifort, 2001, p. 20). Baseball became an iconic American symbol, which led to thousands of youth boys, between the ages of ten and twenty years, participating in unorganized games, influencing “the huge critical mass of players, spectators and followers on which the mass baseball movement rested” (Dreifort, 2001, p. 21). During the nineteen century, many adults disproved of young boys participating in America’s game, with past stories claiming “fathers tracking down sons and whipping them off the ball field” and “mothers throwing iron pots and boiling water at team organizers” (Dreifort, 2001, p. 21). The first group of professional baseball players “were poorly regarded by the respectable classes, who categorized them with actors and boxers” (Dreifort, 2001, p. 36). Professional players were often referred to as low-class, unlike the amateurs, who were viewed as prestigious and chose to play for fun, rather than for pay (Dreifort, 2001). Additionally, professional players were known to be a relentless group, who “did anything necessary to win, like cheating or yelling at opponents to unnerve them” (Dreifort, 2001, p. 37). Nevertheless, young boys rebelled against their parents’ requests, demonstrating how “baseball was not only a mass movement, it was a youth movement” (Dreifort, 2001, p. 21).
Youth Sport

According to the 2015 ParticipAction Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth, 84% of Canadian youth, ages 3-17 years, participate in sport, whereas 60% of Canadian youth, within the same age range, participate in organized sport (SRG, 2014). As David (2005) indicated:

Sport can help young people to become more confident and progressively more autonomous, evaluate their own progress and set objectives. It reinforces their self-esteem and concentration, and teaches them to discipline themselves, work in a team and handle defeat and victory, as well as encouraging fair play and socialization (p. 33).

Although sport is promoted as an ideal pastime for children, there is an extensive amount of empirical research and media-related stories, which exposes the risks of participation in organized sport, as a result of poorly trained coaches, overly engaged parents, and unrealistic performance expectations.

Inadequate Coach Education Programs

The societal misconception that any individual is qualified to coach youth sport has led to a selection process that values availability and willingness over training and knowledge (McCallister, Blinde, & Kolenbrander, 2000). Consequently, youth athletes participating in sport may be vulnerable to violence and harm permitted by less academically informed coaches. Youth coaches are responsible for the holistic development of athletes, yet, coach education heavily emphasizes skill and technique acquisition, over anything else (Abraham & Collins, 1998). Anecdotal evidence suggests coaches are incapable of distinguishing between punishment and discipline, which may lead to the wrongful use of physically and psychologically damaging punishments (Gurgis & Kerr, 2014). The erroneous belief that punishment and discipline are interchangeable concepts may imply coaches do not receive sufficient training on the use of appropriate disciplinary strategies.

Coaches rely on formal and informal modes of education as training (Kuklick, Garity, Thompson, & Neelis, 2015; Trudel & Gilbert 2006; Vargas-Tonsing, 2007). Whereas formal training “entails ‘train and certify’ approaches that address sport-specific foundational knowledge and related concepts”, informal education is “learning through experience, which often involves collaborating with others in learning communities” (Kuklick et al., 2015, p. 1-2). Vargas-Tonsing (2007) found youth coaches valued the
information acquired through formal education. Formal coach education has been found to improve the self-efficacy of coaches (Malete & Feltz, 2000), reduce coaching stress and the risk of burnout (Frey, 2007), as well, foster the “psychosocial development of athletes” (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2006). However, previous research acknowledged the disinterest of high performance coaches pursuing formal education because it is not necessarily mandatory to obtain (Gilbert, Gallimore, & Trudel, 2009), “nor practical for voluntary youth coaches” (Kuklick et al., 2015, p. 2). Instead, high performance coaches preferably gravitate towards informal methods of coach education because learning is fostered through experiences and interactions (Callary, Werthner, & Trudel, 2012). Through informal education, coaches are granted the opportunity to assign meaning to what they perceive as important (Kuklick et al., 2015). With respect to harmful coaching practices, coaches may learn to use punishment tactics, such as exercise as punishment, and assign greater worth to this tactic as a result of other coaches communicating the perceived effectiveness of this method.

**Parental Involvement in Youth Sport**

Previous research has indicated parents are deeply immersed in their children’s athletic careers (Omli & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2011; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004). Parental involvement in sport has been defined as “the time, energy, and money parents invest in their child’s sport participation and includes things such as transportation, attending practices and games, providing instructional assistance and purchasing sport equipment” (Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999, p. 592). Most often, parents, who previously participated in sport, “may initially act as the child’s first coach” and “invest money, time, and emotional support” as a means of providing their children greater opportunities of success in sport (Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004, p. 22).

While many parents intend to have a positive impact on their children’s involvement in sport, there is evidence to suggest some parental involvement in sport may negatively influence a child’s experience (Omli & Wiese-Bjornstal, 2011; Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004). Hellstedt (1987) proposed an alternative definition of parental involvement, characterized by a continuum that ranges through the categories of underinvolvement, moderate involvement and overinvolvement. Moderate parent involvement “seems to facilitate a sport career;” however, “both underinvolved, disinterested parents and…overly engaged parents, may play a disruptive role” (Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004, p. 22).
Athletes with overly-involved parents experience extreme levels of pressure (Wuerth, Lee, & Alfermann, 2004), which may contribute towards additional performance stress, leading to burnout in some children (Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996) and poor sportsmanlike behaviour (Arthur-Banning, Wells, Baker, & Hegreness, 2009). Parental pressures have also been linked to increased state anxiety in youth athletes and less overall enjoyment with participation and competition, which contributes towards the early dropout dilemma affecting youth (Brustad, 1988; Passer, 1983).

David (2005) indicated “parents…often assume that abuse cannot occur in such a leisure-oriented activity” (p. 58). The assumption that sport is immune from harm puts athletes at increased risk of abuse. Parents are morally responsible for the holistic fulfillment of athletes’ needs (David, 2005) and yet, the socialization of parents into sport may lead to the normalization of potentially abusive practices, such as excessive training. Frequently, for example, “parents…justify the excessive amount of time a child spends training by telling others – and themselves – that it is the result of the child’s enthusiasm and passion for the sport” (David, 2005, p. 64). Parents, who normalize overtraining, may pose a physical threat to the well-being of athletes, who are susceptible to overuse injuries. To date, there is an absence of scholarly literature that discusses parental influence on punishment use in sport. This study will aim to discover whether parents normalize punishment tactics in sport.

**Youth Dropout**

Youth dropout has been identified as a significant concern as millions of Canadian youth leave sport each year. Dropout from sport is defined as the premature termination of an athletic career before peak performance is reached (Cervelló, Escartí, & Guzmán, 2007). A research paper on sport participation, published by Canadian Heritage (2013), indicated that between 1992 and 2010 there was a 17% decline in youth participation, with 7.2 million Canadians aged fifteen years and older withdrawing from sport. Similar trends have been noted in Canadian youth, ages 5-14 years, with an increasing decline in sport participation in both males and females (Statistics Canada, 2014). Several reasons have been reported to explain early withdrawal from sport. Youth may discontinue their participation in sport due to “conflicts of interests, as well as negative experiences such as lack of fun, coach conflicts, and lack of playing time” (Fraser-Thomas, Côté, & Deakin, 2008, p. 318-319). Furthermore, the ParticipAction Report Card on Physical Activity for Children and Youth indicated
“dropout is largely due to a lack of enjoyment, low perceived competence and an increase in family and intrapersonal pressure (e.g., stress)” (p. 18). There is an absence of literature that suggests punishment use may deter youth from further participating in sport; however, I speculate that negative experiences stemming from punishment, such as coach conflicts or injury, may influence athletes to discontinue their participation in sport.

**Punishment**

**What is Punishment?**

From the psychology literature, Skinner (1974) identified punishment as the presentation or removal of a stimulus in response to a behaviour, which decreases the probability of that behaviour being repeated. Locke (1963) defined punishment as “the infliction of pain and/or penalties, or the deprivation of privileges, by an authorized person or persons on a person or persons believed to be guilty of having broken the law or, more generally, of having done wrong” (p. 568).

Punishment manifests through positive and negative tactics, depending on whether a stimulus is applied or taken away. Positive punishment is demonstrated through the application of a stimulus, as opposed to negative punishment, which is “the withdrawal of a positively reinforcing stimulus” (McConnell, 1990, p. 248). In the context of sport, positive punishment is demonstrated through the assigning of excessive exercise drills, such as push-ups or sprints. In comparison, negative punishment is seen when a coach purposefully limits athlete playing time by sitting an athlete on the bench. The parent-child literature acknowledged that the use of positive punishment often occurs through methods that involve direct physical contact. Durrant and Ensom (2004) explained that contact punishment can be achieved through tactics that involve spanking, smacking, slapping, or paddling and “may be administered with the hand or may involve the use of objects, such as rulers, belts, and wooden spoons” (p. 1). Contact punishment is specifically known as corporal punishment, which Straus (1994) cited as being “the use of physical force with intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury for the purposes of correction or control of the child's behaviours” (p. 4). Positive punishment can also be achieved through non-contact methods, which “does not involve striking the child”, but instead, requires a child to withstand an uncomfortable position for an extended period of time or to “kneel on hard objects” (Durrant & Ensom, 2004, p. 1).
Sport is characterized by the use of positive and negative punishment tactics, in the forms of exercise and benching as punishment, respectively. The imbalance of power in the coach-athlete relationship allows a coach, who is in a position of authority, to apply these punishments to athletes who are perceived to be misbehaving. The use of exercise as punishment demonstrates a form of positive punishment, which is regularly used by coaches, who perceive athletes to be misbehaving (Gurgis & Kerr, 2014). This punishment commonly involves the athlete performing excessive amounts of exercise, consequently leading to discomfort and pain. Exercise as punishment is specifically known to be a form of non-contact physical punishment. The Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport (CCES) (2013) defined physical punishment in sport as:

*Any activity or behaviour required as a consequence of poor sport performance or some other undesirable behaviour that causes an athlete physical pain, discomfort, or humiliation and is: 1. disconnected from, or not logically related to, the sport performance or behaviour it is intended to change; or 2. disconnected from, or not logically related to, improving performance in the sport; and 3. not consented to by the athlete (and/or their parent or guardian) engaged in such activity or behaviour (p. 1).*

Notably, the CCES identified physical punishment as being an illogical response to athlete misbehaviour and poor performance because it is unrelated to performance improvement and does not contribute towards the promotion of athlete welfare. However, coaches frequently use this method of punishment with the intention of deterring athletes from repeating offensive acts. In comparison, negative punishment in sport may be seen through the use of benching or the removal of playing time. Overall, both contact and non-contact punishment achieves a level of physical and psychological discomfort that is intended to prevent recurrence of undesirable behaviours.

**Types of Punishment**

Methods of non-contact punishment, such as benching, are often assigned by coaches in response to undesirable behaviour, such as poor performance, tardiness, or poor attitude (Bandealy & Kerr, 2014; Gurgis & Kerr, 2014). Anecdotal evidence suggests that exercise as a form of physical punishment is the most prevalent use of non-contact physical punishment used in a sport setting. This can be seen by “coaches who require their losing teams to run laps or undergo punishment practices, or [physical education] teachers who require
misbehaving or late students to do push-ups, sit-ups, or squat thrusts” (Richardson, Rosenthal, & Burak, 2012, p. 356). The use of non-contact physical punishment by a coach against his/her athletes has not received as much scrutiny as the use of corporal (contact) physical punishment by a parent against his/her child. Andero and Stewart (2002) described that a parent, who uses corporal punishment, would do so by hitting various body parts on a child. Parents who rely on corporal punishment often use their hand, or objects that inflict pain such as canes, paddles, yardsticks, and belts, to spank, smack, slap, paddle, and whack their children (Durant & Ensom, 2004).

**Punishment versus Discipline**

Punishment may easily be mistaken as being an interchangeable concept with discipline (Gurgis & Kerr, 2014). Discipline derives from the word “disciplinare”, meaning to teach or instruct, and “refers to the system of teaching and nurturing that prepares children to achieve competence, self-control, [and] self-direction…” (Stein & Perrin, 1998, p. 723). The Joint Statement on Physical Punishment of Children and Youth described discipline as “methods properly aimed at protecting, socializing and guiding children toward self-control, independence, and respect for oneself and others” (Durrant & Ensom, 2004, p. 2). Baribeau (2006) explained that:

Discipline is training that develops self-control, character, order, and efficiency... It is a process that decides on rules for the mutual benefit of coach and players. It is a process that teaches about rules, cooperation, responsibility, and respect for authority...Discipline is guidance (p. 68).

Punishment is used to change behaviour through tactics that involve applying or withdrawing a stimulus, while discipline takes an educational approach to changing behaviour and focuses on the imparting of knowledge. In sport, mistakenly assigning physical punishment as a form of discipline may signify coach negligence. Carpenter (1988) stated that:

Negligence exists when a duty to protect from a foreseeable risk of unreasonable harm is breached and that breach causes harm. A teacher who demands 5 laps or 25 push-ups as a form of corporal punishment may be moving toward negligence (p. 19).

To deliver effective discipline, the American Academy of Pediatrics proposes that parents establish “a learning environment characterized by positive, supportive parent-child relationships, a strategy for systematic teaching and strengthening of desired behaviors (proactive) and a strategy for decreasing or eliminating undesired or ineffective behaviors
(reactive)” (Stein & Perrin, 1998, p. 723). By complying with these three recommendations, parents can help to ensure that discipline will result in improvements in child behaviour (Stein & Perrin, 1998). Similarly, coaches who focus on developing positive relationships with their athletes and promote a system that differentiates between positive and negative behaviours may potentially see improvements in athlete behaviour and the quality of the coach-athlete relationship.

**Punishment in Sport**

**Exercise as Punishment**

Coaches and parents, who use physical punishment as a method of punishing others, may do so in order to eliminate or control behaviour. Seifried (2008) suggested that punishment is intended to be used as a strategy to deter individuals from unfavourable behaviour and to help the punished distinguish between right and wrong. Dubanoksi (1983) opposed these beliefs and proposed that individuals who use physical punishment have the common misconceptions that punishment builds character, teaches respect, and is the only effective type of punishment that children understand.

Although the literature refutes the use of contact physical punishment in controlling child behaviour, there remains a paucity of evidence that suggests the same negative consequences arise when using non-contact physical punishment within a sporting context. The dearth of literature is potentially associated with society accepting exercise as punishment as part of the sport and team culture, which, in turn, can lead to culturally appropriate behaviour in sport (Richardson et. al, 2012, p. 362). Connecting this type of punishment with the values of team culture explains why “young athletes do not perceive the use of exercise as punishment as being inappropriate” (Burak, et al., 2013, p. 1437). Athletes’ views on exercise as punishment are influenced by coaches’ beliefs regarding this type of punishment. The coaches who hold “more positive attitudes towards exercise as punishment may be inculcated into a sport culture that values punishment as part of sport and the management of sport teams” (Richardson et. al, 2012, p.362). Positive attitudes displayed by coaches may be shaped by “an ideological stance consistent with their prior sport experience (Pagnano & Langley, 2001, p. 58). Thus, past experiences of adhering to a specific sport culture may potentially carry across generations, leading to athlete acceptance of this normative practice.
Seifried (2008) identified a need for exercise as punishment in sport because it offers athletes the opportunity to reflect on behaviour and repent for forgiveness; however, exercise as punishment must occur at the appropriate developmental age of an athlete, who is able to associate certain behaviours with punishment and reward. The prevalence of exercise as a form of punishment is “linked to participation in highly organized and competitive activities known as power and performance sports” (Pagnano & Langley, 2001, p. 72). At the competitive level, coaches are expected to produce a winning team and develop high performance athletes. There is the belief that “the pressure to win and to maintain their coaching jobs if they lose may contribute to coaches’ use of exercise as punishment, especially if they feel that ‘important others’ want them to use it” (Richardson et al., 2012, p. 362). Therefore, exercise as physical punishment may be seen as culturally appropriate when its use serves to produce well-behaved elite athletes and a winning team.

**Organizational Views on Exercise as Punishment**

Although exercise as punishment has been socially accepted in many sport cultures, a variety of sport and physical activity-related organizations have produced position papers that disapprove of the use of this practice as a “disciplinary” measure. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (NASPE) (2009) stated that “coaches should never use physical activity or peer pressure as a means of disciplining athlete behaviour” (p. 17). Furthermore, the Canadian Centre of Ethics in Sport (2013) identified that exercise as punishment is associated with “significant negative effects on the short- and long-term development of children and youth” (p. 1). A major concern of using exercise as punishment is the potential for young athletes to associate physical activity as being a negative practice. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC, 1997) indicated that “using physical activity as punishment risks creating negative associations with physical activity in the minds of young people” (p. 12). NASPE and CDC, as well as the Women’s Sport Foundation, “have developed position statements decrying the use of exercise as punishment…highlighting its potential dangers and risks” (Burak et al., 2013, p. 1437). In addition, the American Sport Education Program (ASEP) has “developed a series of youth coaching books, and in each of the books, coaches are exhorted to never use physical activity as a type of discipline…doing so would cause athletes to resent physical activity” (Burak et al., 2013, p. 1437). The unified message expressed by organizations that “using exercise as punishment (EAP) or behaviour
management is a practice considered…inappropriate and counter-productive in helping children become active for the rest of their lives” (Richardson et al., 2012, p. 356) has influenced a decline in its use, with eight Canadian provinces and the three territories prohibiting the use of exercise as punishment in educational settings (Ensom & Durrant, 2010, p. 44).

**Proposed Consequences of Physical Punishment**

Coaches and parents who rely on punishment tactics do so with the impression that it will induce a change in behaviour in the individual(s) being punished. German philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, would concur with this statement, for he believed that “punishment is supposed to possess the value of awakening the feeling of guilt in the guilty person…” (Nietzsche, 1887). Punishment may be associated with the belief that it will lead to the internalization of behaviours. However, the use of physical punishment has been connected with negative outcomes in both athletes and children. Albrecht (2009) suggested that within a sport context, the use of physical punishment can “damage the coach-athlete relationship, induce a fear of failure, decrease the chance of risk taking, increase performance anxiety, reinforce the lowest level of moral development, and lower self-confidence in the athlete” (p. 472-473). These findings are similar to those of Dubanoski (1983), who cited the use of corporal punishment may lead to child avoidance of a punitive adult, counter-productive behaviour, a loss of self-esteem in the child, and a loss of communication between the child and adult. In addition, physical punishment subjects children to “physical injury…weaker internalization of moral values, restricted cognitive development and poorer academic achievement, poorer mental health, bullying and other antisocial behaviour, poorer adult adjustment, and tolerance of violence in adulthood” (Ensom & Durrant, 2010, p. 43).

Researchers of the parent-child relationship have cited that the use of physical punishment is “emotionally and psychologically harmful to children and youth, both in the short- and the long-term” (CCES, 2013, p. 2). Furthermore, physical punishment applied by stressed parents can potentially escalate to abusive punishment (Rae, Mckenzie, & Murray, 2010). Gershoff (2002) explained that physical abuse of children is the consequence of parents who intended on physically punishing their children for misbehaving, but have caused serious injury, or even worse, death.
One problem with the use of exercise as punishment is that it “teaches the student to see the very activity which we try to characterize as healthful and good to be a humiliating or painful punishment and thus something to be avoided” (Carpenter, 1988, p. 18). As a result, the use of exercise as punishment may lead to a fear of participation by athletes, which consequently may contribute to “both dropout of sport and subsequent lack of enjoyment of physical activity” (Richardson et al., 2012, p. 361). Athletes who remain in sport and experience exercise as punishment may be subjected to “a total exercise load which is harmful” (Carpenter, 1988, p. 18), which can result in severe injury, or even worse, death (Burak et al., 2013, p. 1437). Using exercise as punishment within an educational setting can reduce purposeful participation in physical activities, which will hinder students’ ability to develop the skills, strategies, and fitness characteristics required to be successful in physical education (Rosenthal, Pagnano-Richardson, & Burak, 2010, p. 47-48).

Seifried (2008) considered that “discipline taught through sport might help individuals, especially children, better acclimate themselves to our competitive world and community values” (p. 381). In addition, using exercise as punishment may be beneficial in sport by improving attitudes, fitness, and ‘mental toughness’ in athletes, while establishing coaches as an authority and increasing athlete awareness, so that it is understood that there are consequences to their actions (Burak et al., 2013, p. 1439). As indicated above, many authors disagree with the speculation that physical punishment leads to positive outcomes. In addition, Weinberg and Gould (2007) acknowledged that the use of physical punishment temporarily suppresses undesirable behaviour, but does not address or correct the original problem.

**Benching in Sport**

Currently, there is an absence of literature to suggest benching is used by coaches as a punishment tactic. Anecdotal evidence alludes some athletes may interpret benching punitively, subsequently leading to decreased feelings of self-worth, increased anxiety, and lower self-esteem (Gurgis & Kerr, 2013). Kretchmar (2013) agreed benching may lead to harm, which is why “concerns over winning and excellence should be toned down in favor of better meeting the rights and interests of the players to get on the court or field” (p. 121-122). Athletes, who routinely sit on the bench, are referred to as benchwarmers, which Kretchmar (2013) defined as participants:
Who rarely play in actual games or play only for short periods when the game outcome has been decided. Typically, these are the younger, less seasoned, and less skilled individuals. These are the players who sit at the proverbial end of the bench (p. 123).

Many youth coaches fallaciously believe they may replicate the strategies and coaching techniques used by professional coaches. Kretchmar (2013) indicated “the fact that it is morally appropriate to keep a reserve on the bench at one level of sports, it does not necessarily follow that it is equally appropriate at other levels or in other athletic contexts (p. 122). Although coaches may use benching strategically, youth athletes deserve meaningful playing time, which “has to do with when an athlete plays as much as how long that individual is on the court or field” (Kretchmar, 2013, p. 123).

Youth coaches, who profoundly rely on benching, appear to value winning and personal achievements, over the development and satisfaction athletes gain through participation. Kretchmar (2013) agreed “youth sport…should afford participation opportunities for the talented and untalented alike. Winning, if it is to have any influence on coaching decisions, should be a secondary consideration at most” (p. 124). Expanding on the notion of fair play and the theory of rights to basic benefits, Kretchmar (2013) explained:

In youth sport, the focus should be on learning the game, on developing personal skills, and on enjoying the activity. Every kid, it would seem, has a right to learn and improve. Every child has a right to play in a physically and psychologically safe environment. Because of this, playing time should be well distributed. Performance anxiety should be kept to a minimum. This is a time for development and fun (p. 125).

Youth coaches, who prioritize development and fun over winning, positively influence children to seek participation opportunities and “continue their activities into adulthood and even old age”, ensuring these individuals “lead healthier, happier, and longer lives” (Kretchmar, 2013, p. 125). The holistic development of athletes not only includes meaningful participation, but requires the sport experience to be educational. Kretchmar (2013) argued:

We do not usually cut students out of any significant learning opportunities at this level of education. We don’t say to those who are less capable in math or English that ‘they do not get to play anymore.’ Should we not, therefore, keep the educational door open and the play spirit alive a little longer in the athletic domain? A heavy focus on winning and excellence can come later (p. 126-127).
Refusing children the right to participate in sport, by constraining them to the bench, denies youth athletes of the educational opportunities, available through participation in sport. To enable children in sport, “the coach should…be far more the inclusive, duty-bound educator than the exclusive coaching technician or instrumentalist” (p. 128).

**Theoretical Perspectives on Punishment**

Social learning theory proposed by Bandura (1977) would suggest that using exercise as punishment is a tactic that is learned and reinforced through observation. Social learning theory states that “new patterns of behaviour can be acquired through direct experience or by observing the behavior of others” (Bandura, 1977, p. 3). Expressed behaviours are said to be “learned, either deliberately or inadvertently, through the influence of example” (Bandura, 1977, p. 5). Furthermore, the likelihood of an individual repeating a behaviour is “largely governed by the rewarding and punishing consequences that follow any given action” (Bandura, 1977, p. 3). Exercise as punishment is understood as a punishing consequence that serves to deter athletes from repeating undesirable behaviours. Coaches may use exercise as punishment in sport because they have been reinforced through vicarious observation that punishing through exercise successfully achieves a desirable outcome, such as athlete compliance. Bandura (1977) argued that “responses are automatically and unconsciously strengthened by their immediate consequences” (p. 3). Therefore, it is suggested that athletes will adhere to acceptable standards of behaviour if they are immediately punished through exercise. Social learning theory addresses the notion that “actions are…regulated to a large extent by anticipated consequences” (Bandura, 1977, p. 3). Thus, athletes are likely to adjust their behaviour so that it is consistent with coach expectations, with the understanding that this will decrease the possibility of being punished through exercise.

Coaches and athletes may accept physical punishment in sport because they have normalized the practice as being part of the ‘sport ethic.’ The sport ethic illustrates the ideal athlete as being an individual who emphasizes the importance of sacrifice for The Game, seeks distinction from others, takes risks, and challenges limits (Hughes & Coakley, 1991, p. 309-310). Athlete behaviour is described by the sport ethic using a “statistical ‘normal curve’, locating everyday athlete behaviour at the heart of the curve and behaviour that deviates from the sport ethic at either tail of the curve” (Young, 2012, p. 13). Athletes who refute the use of exercise as punishment demonstrate a rejection of the sport ethic and are
described as being negatively deviant (Young, 2012, p. 13). In comparison, athletes who agree to the use of exercise as punishment express positively deviant behaviour, which exhibits over conformity to the sport ethic. Hughes and Coakley (1991) stated that “athletes’ uncritical acceptance of and commitment to what they have been told by important people in their lives ever since they began participating in competitive programs…is the result of being too committed to the goals and norms of sport” (p. 308). Thus, many athletes accept exercise as punishment for the purpose of establishing or maintaining a relationship with the coach through adherence to rules and expectations; as well, athletes learn to accept exercise as punishment as being part of the coaching style and obey this practice to demonstrate support of the sport ethic. Normative over conformity of the sport ethic may be an athlete’s attempt of increasing “the likelihood of being chosen or sponsored for continued participation” (Hughes & Coakley, 1991, p. 311). Athletes believe that by over conforming to the sport ethic, they will receive increased praise by the coach, as opposed to being accused of demonstrating a lack of effort, hustle, or care during participation (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). Therefore, athletes may participate in exercise as punishment in order to receive compliments for adequately representing the sport ethic. Athletes who over conform to the sport ethic do not view their behaviour as deviant, but instead, “see it as confirming and reconfirming their identity as athletes and as members of select sport groups” (Hughes & Coakley, 1991, p. 311). Furthermore, athletes will “continually strive to confirm their identity and eliminate self-doubts by engaging in behaviors that please their coaches…” which will influence “young people [to] willingly sacrifice their body and play with reckless abandon in the pursuit of affirmation and approval by athletes” (Hughes & Coakley, 1991, p. 312). Coaches are said to encourage this behaviour, “intentionally or naively,” thus demonstrating their contribution towards athlete over conformity of the sport ethic (Hughes & Coakley, 1991, p. 312). Coaches’ influence of over conformity to the sport ethic is viewed as a form of social control (Hughes & Coakley, 1991). When athletes accept and participate in exercise as punishment, it demonstrates how coaches can control athlete behaviour by supporting over-adherence to the sport ethic.

**Maltreatment**

Stirling (2009) cited that “current research on maltreatment in sport is limited by a lack of consistency in definitions of maltreatment” (p. 1091). Thus, definitions are often
retrieved from other disciplines before being incorporated into the sport literature. From the parent-child literature, Crooks and Wolfe (2007) defined maltreatment as “volitional acts that result in or have the potential to result in physical injuries and/or psychological harm” (p. 3). When maltreatment occurs within the context of a critical relationship, it is referred to as relational maltreatment (Stirling, 2009). A critical (caregiving) relationship exists when one individual has “significant influence over [another] individual’s sense of safety, trust, and fulfillment of needs” (Crooks & Wolfe, 2007, p. 17). Within the context of sport, the coach-athlete relationship accurately portrays a critical relationship (Stirling & Kerr, 2013), whereby athlete welfare is dependent on the behaviours exemplified by a coach. Relational maltreatment manifests through acts of physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect. Maltreatment that does not occur within the context of a critical relationship is referred to as non-relational maltreatment (Stirling, 2009). Non-relational maltreatment encompasses behaviours such as harassment, bullying, and exploitation (Stirling, 2009).

Previous literature has acknowledged that some athletes suffer from emotionally abusive coaching practices (Stirling & Kerr, 2013; Gervis & Dunn, 2004). Various studies examining abuse within the coach-athlete relationship suggest that emotional abuse is the most frequent form of abuse occurring in sport (Kirby, Greaves, & Hankivsky, 2000). Emotional abuse within the coach-athlete relationship may threaten the psychological well-being of elite athletes (Gervis & Dunn, 2004) and cause emotional upset (Stirling & Kerr, 2008). However, some athletes normalize this abuse as a “means for attaining successful athletic performance” (Stirling, 2013, p. 626; Gervis & Dunn, 2004). Although few athletes have reported perceived success in response to emotional abuse, this should not condone the expression of emotionally abusive behaviours as a tactic of coaching.

In a study by Stirling and Kerr (2008), fourteen retired elite female swimmers were interviewed about their experiences in sport and whether they had experienced behaviours from their coach, which may be perceived as problematic. Findings suggested that emotionally abusive behaviours manifest through physical behaviours, verbal behaviours, and the denial of attention and support (Stirling & Kerr, 2008). The participants expressed that “emotional abuse was inflicted by their coaches in the name of performance and winning” (Stirling & Kerr, 2008, p. 178). Although coaches did not intend to inflict emotional harm on their athletes, the authors make clear that “intent to inflict harm is not
required for a coach’s behaviour to be classified as emotional abuse” (Stirling & Kerr, 2008, p. 178). This study recommends that these emotionally abusive behaviours be further investigated in order to gain a clear understanding as to why coaches are able to behave in ways that would otherwise, not be tolerated in “other instructional settings” such as schools (Stirling & Kerr, 2008, p. 179).

All fourteen elite athletes in a study by Stirling and Kerr (2013) had reportedly experienced some form of emotional abuse, and the effects of such psychological harm were broadly categorized as: psychological effects, training effects, and performance effects (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). Psychological effects reflected athletes’ feelings of anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, decreased self-efficacy, and low mood (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). Training effects encompassed athletes’ feelings of reduced enjoyment, decreased motivation, impaired focus, and difficulty with skill acquisition (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). Surprisingly, some athletes were motivated in response to emotionally harmful behaviours, with desires to increase training efforts and regain coach’s approval (Stirling & Kerr, 2013). This is consistent with the athletes who reported feelings of enhanced performance in response to a coach’s emotional abuse. However, the majority of athletes felt that their performance was hindered as a result of the psychological harm they endured through emotionally abusive coaching practices.

When asked about the use of emotionally abusive coaching practices, coaches admitted to using emotionally harmful behaviours, in the form of verbal behaviours such as yelling, and through physical behaviours such as kicking equipment (Stirling, 2013). Coaches explained that emotionally abusive behaviours were used “to achieve a desired outcome”, which was categorized as an instrumental use of emotional abuse (Stirling, 2013, p. 631). Additionally, there is an expressive category of emotionally harmful behaviour, whereby coaches reported acting “out of frustration…to push…athletes to perform better” (Stirling, 2013, p. 631).

Given the position of power and authority held by the coach, it is important to consider coaching styles and the ways in which these styles may influence punishment use.

**What is Autonomy-supportive and Controlling Coaching?**

Within sport, various coaching styles exist as a means of facilitating athletic development and success. Although there is no definitive style that can guarantee optimal
results, empirical evidence supports that there are coaching styles which are more likely to create a positive experience for athletes, while there are other styles that may be detrimental to an athlete’s development. Specifically, autonomy-supportive coaching has been associated with an overall positive athletic experience, as opposed to controlling coaching behaviours, which tend to be linked to a negative athletic experience.

There is an extensive body of literature pertaining to the expression of autonomy-supportive and controlling behaviours within the parent-child relationship. Empirical evidence supports that parental involvement in a child’s education has a significant impact on school performance (Grolnick, Gurland, DeCourcey, & Jacob, 2002, p. 143). Parents who are consistently involved in their children’s academics facilitate an enhancement in child motivation (Grolnick & Slowi`aczek, 1994) as well as improvement in school success (Grolnick et al., 2002, p. 143). Parental involvement has been suggested to be most effective when it “supports children’s autonomy rather than controlling their behavior” (Grolnick et al., 2002, p. 143). Parental autonomy has been “conceptualized in terms of the encouragement of adolescents’ enactment upon their true personal interests and values (i.e., promotion of volitional functioning)” (Soenens, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Luyckx, Goossens, Beyers, & Ryan, 2007, p. 633). This can be demonstrated by parents who “work with their children on homework in a way that supports children’s initiations, allows them to solve their own problems, and facilitates their taking responsibility for their own work” (Grolnick et al., 2002, p. 143). In comparison, a controlling parenting style, which is understood as the “pressure parents put on their children to behave in desired ways” (Bruggen, Bögels, & Zeilst, 2010, p.141) is illustrated by parents who “…direct and channel children’s behavior, and solve the problems for the children” (Grolnick et al., 2002, p. 143). Field studies on autonomy-supportive and controlling behaviours demonstrated by parents have shown that “children display higher motivation and do better in school when parents allow give-and-take and involve children in decision making rather than pressuring and directing them and squelching open discussion” (Grolnick et al., 2002, p. 143). Children who have controlling parents are reported to be less self-regulated in school, act out more often in the classroom, and obtain a lower grade point average, as opposed to children with parents who are autonomy-supportive (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). Furthermore, children who are raised by a controlling parenting style exhibit higher cases of trait anxiety (Bruggen et al., 2010, p. 141).
Anxious children raised by a controlling parenting style have an increased perception of threat and perceive they have less control over potential threats (Bruggen et al., 2010, p. 141).

Literature on autonomy-supportive styles in the parent-child relationship may also be reflected within the teacher-student and coach-athlete relationship. Autonomy-support is referred to as “the interpersonal sentiment and behaviour teachers provide during instruction to identify, nurture, and develop students’ inner motivational resources” (Reeve, 2009, p. 159). Autonomy-supportive coaching is demonstrated by:

An individual in a position of authority (e.g., an instructor [or a coach]) takes the other’s (e.g., a student’s [or an athlete’s]) perspective, acknowledges the other’s feelings, and provides the other with pertinent information and opportunities for choice, while minimizing the use of pressures and demands (Black & Deci, 2000, p. 742).

Autonomy-supportive coaches create an environment that offers “athletes opportunities for input and decision making (e.g., choosing an appropriate tactic during a game), providing a sound rationale for tasks, and acknowledge athletes’ feelings and perspectives” (Stebbings, Taylor, & Spray, 2011, p. 255). Autonomy-supportive coaches tend to “consider their athletes as separate individuals with unique needs and feelings” (Carpentier & Mageau, 2014, p. 329) and empower their athletes by providing “meaningful choice” (Katz & Assor, 2007). An athlete’s ability to participate in the decision making process with the absence of pressured and coercive tactics demonstrates a coach’s ability to express autonomy-support (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989).

In comparison, a controlling motivating style is recognized as “the interpersonal sentiment and behaviour teachers provide during instruction to pressure students to think, feel, or behave in a specific way” (Reeve, 2009, p. 159). A coach who adopts this style “will act in a highly coercive and authoritarian manner (e.g., telling athletes how they will play the game), and will use criticism or tangible rewards to manipulate athletes” (Stebbings et al., 2011, p. 256) and “to impose a specific and preconceived way of thinking and behaving upon their athletes” (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, & Thøersen-Ntoumani, 2010, p. 194). A controlling coach uses “power-assertive techniques” to influence how an athlete will think, feel, and behave in a controlled environment (Stebbings et al., 2011, p. 255). Coaches who adopt a controlling style are more likely to use exercise as punishment “(e.g., extra running
or exercise repetitions) and embarrass athletes (e.g., by emphasizing past mistakes) to force them to comply with the coach’s expectations and demands” (Stebbings et al., 2011, p. 256).

Various behaviours have been identified in association with an autonomy-supportive coaching style. To enhance autonomy-support, it is essential for coaches to provide descriptive rationales, rules, and tasks, teach using non-controlling language, be patient and allow for self-paced learning, and acknowledge as well as accept individual feelings of distress (Reeve, 2009). Furthermore, autonomy-supportive coaches consistently allow athletes to be part of the decision making process, provide athletes with initiatives to do independent work, offer non-controlling competent feedback, avoid the use of persuasive criticisms, and promote task-oriented work through the prevention of ego-involved behaviours (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003).

Contrary to autonomy-supportive coaches, controlling coaches are likely to exhibit behaviours that may put an athlete’s well-being and career at risk. These coaches employ “behaviours that are used to intimidate [and]…power-assertive strategies designed to humiliate and belittle, such as verbal abuse and threats, yelling, and the threat or use of physical punishment” (Bartholomew et al., 2010).

Coaches who adopt an autonomy-supportive coaching style contribute to the positive growth and development of athletes. Supporting an athlete’s autonomy leads to “better performance, increased persistence, an increase in self-determined motivation, and enhanced psychological well-being” (Rocchi, Pelletier, & Couture, 2013, p. 853). Coaches, who are not autonomy-supportive, and lead athletes through controlling acts increase the likelihood of athletes experiencing a poorer quality of motivation, which may increase the risk of athletes dropping out of sport (Stebbings et al., 2011).

Coaching styles are indicative of athlete satisfaction. Autonomy-supportive coaches may enhance athlete satisfaction by exhibiting behaviours that empower athletes, as opposed to controlling coaches who intimidate athletes, which may lead to athlete dissatisfaction. Addressing athlete satisfaction and the variables that promote or hinder athlete enjoyment in sport may help explain why athletes remain in sport or choose to dropout.

Summary

As illustrated, there is a paucity of empirical evidence pertaining to the use of exercise and benching as punishment in sport and the potential side-effects of these practices
on an athlete’s quality of sport experience. Numerous position statements exist that advocate for the eradication of exercise as punishment practices from sport, but anecdotal evidence suggests that they are used continuously to modify athlete behaviour (Bandealy & Kerr, 2014; Burak et al., 2013; Gurgis & Kerr, 2013). Using punishment in sport may be related to the type of coaching style. While autonomy-supportive coaches are characterized by empowering athletes to create a positive learning environment in sport, controlling coaches tend to use coercive tactics, which may potentially include using punishment, to demand conformity from athletes. The potential links between coaching styles and punishment use may have implications for athletes’ enjoyment of the sport experience, their sense of self, and the desires to maintain or cease sport participation.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

Epistemology

Social Constructivism

Constructivism is “the process by which reality is created by the observer” (Rapmund, 1999, p. 241). Social constructivism is an interpretive paradigm that posits individuals are “actively involved in constructing their own understandings of things” through interactions with society and the environment (Campbell, 2002, p. 421). Social constructivists uphold the impression that we create, rather than discover, properties of our world through individual interpretations (Kukla, 2000). Our perceptions of reality are influenced by social and cultural considerations (Rapmund, 1999). To further comprehend the experiences of punishment in sport, as perceived by the athletes, coaches, and parents, data of the study are interpreted through a social constructivist lens. By doing so, we acknowledge the participants’ knowledge of punishment in sport is gained through subjective meanings that surface through interactions with each other, with the culture of baseball, and more broadly, sport.

Theoretical Perspective

Interpretivism

An interpretivist epistemology was employed to make sense of the experiences and opinions shared by the participants. Angen (2000) explained that interpretivist researchers understand reality as being “intrasubjectively and intersubjectively” created through the manifestation of “meanings” and considerations manifested from a constant social world. Our attempts to apply meaning to an ever-changing, “intersubjective” reality, and to interpret experiences and events purposefully, characterizes interpretivism (Angen, 2000, p. 385). Interpretive research strives to gain a “deeper understanding of how humans experience the life world through language, local and historical situations, and the intersubjective actions of the people involved” (Angen, 2000, p. 386). Interpretivists comprehend reality as socially constructed through our intersubjective relationship with the world, thus contributing towards a discrete interpretation of truth (Angen, 2000). Interpretivism seeks to understand the subjective meanings of studied individuals and “to acknowledge their existence, to
reconstruct them, to understand them, to avoid distorting them, [and] to use them as building-blocks in theorizing” (Goldkuhl, 2011, p. 137-138).

Methodology

**Qualitative**

For this study, a qualitative approach will be used to investigate coaches’ use of punishment and the perceived effects it has on athlete welfare. Qualitative research focuses “on subjective meaning and context,” which varies among qualitative researchers and participants because “a person’s subjective sense of the world is derived from the society and cultures which they live in and move through” (Smith & Caddick, 2012, p. 61). Qualitative researchers “are interested in the multiple meanings that people attach to their subjective experiences and seek to identify, describe and interpret the social structures, spaces and processes that shape these meanings” (Smith & Caddick, 2012, p. 61). Qualitative research permits the researcher flexibility to use an array of investigative methods (Eklund, Jeffery, Dobersek, & Cho, 2011; Smith & Caddick, 2012). A flexible approach to conducting research avoids “simplistic descriptions of human lives, societies and cultures,” and instead, embraces the intricacy of individual and social interactions within an ever-changing world (Smith & Caddick, 2012, p. 61).

Methods

**Participants**

The study sample included twenty-one participants, consisting of athletes, coaches, and parents. There were eleven elite male baseball players, between the ages of 13 and 14 years, playing at the Representative (Rep) level and three male coaches, between the ages of 45 and 50 years, coaching within the Ontario Baseball Association (OBA). The head coach was NCCP (National Coaching Certification Program) certified and the two assistant coaches were NCCP trained, as required by the Baseball Ontario Coaching Program. Finally, seven parents were recruited, consisting of four fathers and three mothers, whose sons also participated in the study. All participants were recruited from the same Rep team within the OBA, which was thought to improve the likelihood that they will “share critical similarities related to the research questions” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 317).
Rationale for Participant Inclusion Criteria

According to Baseball Ontario (2015), between 2011 and 2014 there were 5833 individuals between thirteen different age groups actively playing baseball within the Toronto Baseball Association (TBA); only 164 of these athletes were female. Thus, a male sample was chosen because there is a larger sample of male teams to fit the age criteria of the study in comparison to female teams available. It will be very important in future studies, however, that female baseball players be sought as participants. Baseball athletes were chosen because there is an absence of scholarly literature studying this sample of athletes at the youth level. As well, my knowledge and experience pertaining to baseball has simplified the recruitment process by making me an appropriate candidate for an assistant coach position for multiple teams. Rep-level athletes were chosen because harmful coaching behaviours reportedly increase as the competitive level increases (Gervis & Dunn, 2004). A youth sample between the ages of 13-14 years was selected because of the significant attrition from sport after the age of fifteen (Statistics Canada, 2013). There were no additional criteria to consider for parents to participate, other than having a son who played on the team. Furthermore, the only consideration for coach participation was that they were coaching an elite team and therefore had the minimal requirement of NCCP training, as specified by Baseball Canada.

Anonymity of Participants

A pseudonym was assigned to each participant to ensure his/her identity and personal information remained confidential. Pseudonyms begin with either the letter “A” for Athlete, “C” for Coach, “M” for Mother or “F” for Father, and end with a numerical value. Coaches were also referred to by their nicknames, which were provided by the athletes during the interviews. The Head Coach was referred to as “The Boss” and the Assistant Coaches were referred to as “The Motivator” and “The Buddy.”

Measures

Data collection involved the use of semi-structured interviews. Interviews started in August 2015, at the end of the regular season, and were completed through January 2016. The original methodological approach to the study envisioned the use of a participant observation, which would include informal interviews and the collection of fieldnotes, as
alternative methods of data collection to complement interviews; however, ethics approval was delayed until August 2015, three days prior to the conclusion of the season. Details pertaining to ethics approval will be expanded on under the section, Ethical Considerations, on p. 37-39.

**Interviews**

Many qualitative studies rely on the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews, which are considered the most prevalent method of data collection in qualitative research and can occur individually or in groups (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Semi-structured interviews “are…organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee/s” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 315). Open-ended questions provide greater value over close-ended, yes or no, questions because they encourage thick and rich descriptions (Smith & Caddick, 2012). As well, in-depth interviews tend to involve personal, intimate encounters that provoke descriptive narratives and stories to be shared by the interviewee (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

Interviews were conducted individually with the coaches, athletes and parents. Interviews ranged between 30-150 minutes and were held at locations convenient to the participants such as coffee shops, the baseball diamond, or their houses. Individual in-depth interviews allowed me to probe into the social and personal lives of the participants. I developed a strong rapport with the participants through my season-long commitment as a volunteer assistant coach. Rapport is characterized by a sense of trust and respect for the interviewee and the information he or she communicates during the interview (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Building rapport “is also the means of establishing a safe and comfortable environment for sharing the interviewee’s personal experiences and attitudes as they actually occurred” (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006, p. 316). An interview guide was prepared to ensure conversations had meaningful direction; however, DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) suggested that at any time, the interviewer must be equipped to digress from the predetermined questions “because digressions can be very productive as they follow the interviewee’s interest and knowledge” (p. 316). Three separate interview guides were designed to specifically address the roles and responsibilities of the distinct participant groups. However, all participants were asked to share their views on the use of exercise,
benching, and yelling as corrective strategies; as well, each participant was asked to
distinguish between punishment and discipline. Please refer to Appendix A: Athletes’
Interview Guide, Appendix B: Coaches’ Interview Guide, and Appendix C: Parents’
Interview Guide between p. 121 and 122 to access a copy of the interview guides prepared
for each sample group participating in the following study.

Procedures

Recruitment

All participants – coaches, athletes, and parents – were recruited from the same
Representative baseball team within the OBA. A recruitment letter was prepared and
distributed via email to multiple coaches, whose email addresses were made accessible on
team websites. Please refer to Appendix H: Coach Recruitment Letter, on p. 134 to view a
copy of the recruitment letter. Nearly thirty coaches were contacted between February and
April of 2015, with a request for me to participate on the team as an assistant
coach/researcher for the duration of the season. The initial intent of this study was to gather
data as a participant observer as well as from the interviews. As a result, the recruitment
procedures involved requests to serve as an assistant coach. Many coaches expressed
disinterest with the idea of my participation as a coach/researcher, with the belief that I
would be distracting to the athletes. Disinterest was also evident by the lack of responses
from many coaches. One coach, the Head Coach of the team participating in this study,
accepted my request to participate and conduct research. Upon meeting with the Head
Coach, details of the study, such as the purpose of the study, risks and benefits of
participation, and the rights of being a participant were thoroughly communicated. The Head
Coach was also provided the consent and assent forms, which contained informative details
pertaining to the study. The Head Coach conveyed the information acquired from our
meeting to the parents and athletes of his team, to seek their approval before granting me
permission to join as an assistant coach/researcher. Parents provided verbal assent for their
sons to participate and some of the parents provided verbal consent to also participate in the
study. All eleven athletes consented to participate. Once the Head Coach communicated to
me the parents’ and athletes’ approval, I received written assent and consent from all
participants. Additionally, league consent was granted from the organization’s president for
me to participate as an assistant coach and conduct research.
Data Analysis

With the permission of the participants, interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Data were collected through interview transcriptions and thematically analyzed.

Thematic analysis “is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis follows six distinct phases in order to generate an accurate description of the data. The first phase requires the researcher to familiarize him/herself with the data. A reflexive approach is required at this phase as the researcher is expected to repeatedly read over the data in search of meanings and patterns. Coach, athlete, and parent data were methodically examined in search of significant patterns. Phase two involves generating initial codes from the data. Codes are an aspect of the data that are appealing to the researcher and regarded as the most rudimentary form of raw data that can be appraised in a meaningful way, relevant to the studied phenomenon. Phase three requires the researcher to search for themes. Codes are sorted and combined together to form potential overarching themes. Codes may gather to form major themes from the dataset or can be used to represent sub-themes. Phase four entails the reviewing of themes. The researcher must refine themes from phase three. At this phase “it will become evident that some candidate themes are not really themes…while others might collapse into each other” (p. 91). Reviewing themes involves two distinct levels. Level one “involves reviewing at the level of the coded data extracts…this means you need to read all the collected extracts for each theme and consider whether they appear to form a coherent pattern” (p. 91). Level two is similar, however, the researcher must consider “the validity of individual themes in relation to the data set, but also whether the themes accurately reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole” (p. 91). Themes are defined and named in phase five to ensure that they accurately portray the data (p. 92). Finally, phase six requires the researcher to produce a report consisting of “fully worked-out themes” and a final analysis (p. 93). All interview transcriptions were meticulously examined following this systematic, data analysis approach. Themes that emerged from the data set are analytically presented in the results chapter.
Ethical Considerations

Health Canada’s Research Ethics Board (2009) recognized children as a vulnerable population to conduct research. To minimize the risk associated with a vulnerable population, a Parental Consent form (Appendix D: Parental/Guardian Letter of Information and Consent Form) and a Child Assent form (Appendix E: Letter of Assent for Youth Athletes) was prepared for the parents and their children to outline the purpose of the study and additional, significant information such as potential risks and benefits of participation. Parents, athletes, and coaches were provided adequate information to make a premeditated and informed decision to participate in this study. To further assure the appropriateness of my participation as an assistant coach and researcher, I received a Vulnerable Sector Screening, prior to interacting with any youth. Moreover, I anticipated that my NCCP training, personal training certification, my background as an elite baseball player, and most importantly, my academic training pertaining to coach education and qualitative research methods, would be conducive to receiving ethics approval. Unfortunately, this was not the case.

Ethical concerns, presented by the Research Ethics Board (REB), revolved around the study design, use of deception, and the topic of punishment. Specifically, the REB questioned the necessity of pursuing this study through a dual role, as an assistant coach and a researcher, and instead, recommended conducting the study without participating as a coach. Furthermore, the REB was apprehensive to approve of the study because of its involvement with a vulnerable, youth population and the focus on a sensitive topic, such as punishment. As a result, the overall risk level of the study escalated to level two, and a full board review was required before proceeding further.

Various changes were made to the ethics protocol to address the concerns of the REB. For example, the PI agreed not to use deception in the study. Instead of framing the study as examining coaches’ use of punishment tactics, the study proposed that I would also explore coaches’ use of motivational and disciplinary tactics and athletes’ and parents’ responses to such methods. Although most changes were made, Dr. Kerr and I were repeatedly asked to justify my participation as an assistant coach/researcher with an adolescent population. Studying a youth sample was justified with the understanding that “inclusion of children in research advances the commitment to justice in research by
improving our knowledge of, and ability to respond to, the unique needs of children throughout their development” (TCPS 2, 2014, p. 51). Furthermore, we acknowledged the notion advanced by Messner and Musto (2014) that researchers often shy away from studying kids’ involvement in sport because of fear that university ethics boards “put roadblocks to research” and “make direct research access to kids difficult, if not impossible” (p. 107). Consequently, research has “largely ignored kids as active participants…and have mostly failed to study the ways in which sport, both for good and for ill, is so often an important and meaningful part of the larger landscape of childhood” (Messner & Musto, 2014, p. 103). Using this evidence as a means to highlight the importance of studying a youth sample through a participant observation approach eventually led to the approval of the study design.

**Dissemination of Findings**

At the conclusion of the study all participants – coaches, athletes, and parents – were provided with a summary report of group-related findings. No individuals or individual data were disseminated and anonymity was assured. The findings included a description of results centred on major themes and subthemes that emerged from the study.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the punishment culture of sport. More specifically, this study explored the ways in which punishment tactics were used in sport by coaches as a cultural tool to ensure athletes adhere to the standards of the sport culture. The following study relied on interviews and participant observation over the length of a four month baseball season, as methods of data collection. Collectively, twenty-one interviews were conducted of participants from the same elite youth baseball team, including: eleven male athletes, aged 13-14 years; three male baseball coaches, aged 45-50 years, including one NCCP certified coach and two NCCP trained coaches; and seven parents, aged 40-50 years, consisting of four fathers and three mothers. The findings have been divided into sections according to the themes: conceptualizing punishment and discipline, exercise for behaviour modification, yelling as punishment, benching as a multipurpose tool, coaching styles and acceptance of punishment in sport.

Conceptualizing Punishment and Discipline

When asked to distinguish between punishment and discipline, some athletes interpreted punishment and discipline as being synonymous, many recognized a distinct difference between these concepts, and a few were uncertain as to how to differentiate between them. Of the three coaches, one understood punishment and discipline as being synonymous, achieved through exercise, whereas the remaining two coaches acknowledged a difference between the concepts. Of the seven parents, only one father admitted to interpreting punishment and discipline similarly.

Synonymous interpretation of punishment and discipline

Without hesitation, when asked if there is a difference between punishment and discipline A10 shared, “I see it as the same thing. If you do something bad you have to do something you don’t like to make up for it, so that you don’t do it again.” C2 had expressed similar views as he confessed, “It’s the same thing.” Similarly, F4, a father on the team, admitted, “They’re more or less the same to me.” A4 believed that punishment and discipline have the potential to be the same, however, coaches and athletes may interpret its use differently:
It depends on the situation and the context leading up to that. It could be viewed as the same thing. Like a coach may feel he needs to punish, but a player can view it as discipline, or the other way around.

Interestingly, some athletes understood punishment to be a branch of discipline as both achieve a similar result, such as improved performance or increased respect; however, the means by which the result is achieved varies. A5 indicated, “Discipline is to get your attention, fill you with hope. It’s supposed to be positive criticism. Punishment is a form of discipline, but it is to hurt you. It’s supposed to hurt you in a way.” A5 recognized a difference among the concepts, with punishment being administered with hurtful intentions and discipline being used positively; however, the similarities between the two exist in the intention to achieve a similar outcome, which is adherence to a certain standard or expectation. Ultimately, A5 understood punishment to be the negative form of discipline. A7 had shared a similar thought with the notion of discipline through punishment. He explained, “The coach is trying to get a point across to the kids by using the wrong strategy. So the coach might have good intentions, but it didn’t come out that way.” Once more, this athlete demonstrated the understanding of punishment as being a negative type of discipline.

Punishment and discipline as distinct concepts

Punishment and discipline were distinguished by many participants on the bases of being positive or negative or by the severity of the punishment. Some athletes understood discipline, as opposed to punishment, as a teaching strategy. A4 explained, “I think discipline is used more for teaching the player a lesson, while punishment is basically…punishing the player for doing something wrong, not really teaching the lesson.” Similarly, A7 and A1 both indicated respectively, “Discipline would be more of the act of teaching…punishment is the result of being a cativo [bad]…I guess exercise is the athletic way of getting a schiaff [smack]”, and: “Discipline is teaching and not doing the same thing next time…punishment is supposed to be bad. It’s supposed to hurt. It’s supposed to not make you feel great, you know?” Generally, athletes construed punishment as negative, while discipline is a positive pedagogical tactic. Moreover, exercise was perceived as punishment, more so than discipline. A9 indicated that, “punishment is physical, like exercise. Discipline is like benching and timeout.” Further, the severity of the exercise was a characteristic that distinguished between punishment and discipline. According to A3, “…punishment is more
of you being bad so now you have to do ten laps. Discipline, I feel like, is running four laps instead of ten.” A4 expressed a similar understanding, as he stated:

If there’s a visible difference, like…doing ten laps and knowing your players can’t do it versus doing one lap and having a conversation with the player about what he did wrong and how he could improve, that’s the difference between punishing and disciplining.

In addition to punishment being physical and rigorous, it is usually viewed as unpleasant. Innocently put, A8 stated, “Punishment sounds meaner.” He continued:

Punishment is to make us feel down…and make us do something we don’t want to do for something we did bad. Encouragement is doing something the kids don’t want to do to help them and make them become a better player.

Punishment reportedly occurs in response to bad behaviour, consequently leading to the athletes feeling guilty and “down.” Interestingly, A8 also referred to discipline as encouragement, which speaks to the notion that discipline may be a positive, pedagogical method, if used correctly. Similarly, A3 also recognized the association between punishment and bad behaviour. He stated:

I feel like punishment is a lot more like when you’re doing something bad, you get punished. But discipline is more all around. A coach could be disciplining you by making you work harder…I guess you can learn the same thing as you do from discipline, but punishment I think tells you the coach is upset, while discipline tells you to smarten up. Discipline also tells you to work harder.

Again, discipline is seen as the preferred corrective strategy for its positive contribution towards athlete development. Contrastingly, punishment appeared to carry a negative connotation due to its association with anger and coach frustration. A2 attested to this, as demonstrated when he stated, “I would say punishment is more out of anger and discipline is for not meeting standards that someone had set in charge.” For many athletes, there is a clear understanding that coaches punish when they are angry and use discipline to either teach or encourage their athletes to work harder and follow rules. Although behaviour modification strategies may achieve the same result, athletes identify punishment as being the harsher choice.

The majority of coaches understood punishment and discipline as separate notions. Without hesitation, C1 noted, “No, they’re different. Punishment is a negative reinforcement to something that has just occurred versus discipline would be a methodical way of doing
something to avoid repeated behaviour… and there should be a penalty in response to unacceptable behaviour.” Although C1 acknowledged a difference between punishment and discipline, he agreed that both strategies work to achieve the same outcome: “Well, the goal is to achieve the same outcome. The question is, which method is better to achieve said outcome. I’d say discipline.”

C3 was the only coach who had not defined discipline as a punitive strategy, but instead, the ability to adhere to admirable standards of behaviour, which is defined by the culture you establish. Specifically, C3 stated:

Discipline to me is about your culture. It’s about your team attitude. So discipline is staying in the game, keeping focus, that’s discipline. It’s making it to practice on time, showing up, getting there and working hard. It’s warming up for real instead of just going through the motion. That’s discipline. You spend the time on deck doing what you need to do, instead of eating seeds and talking to your buddies.

In contrast, punishment was understood to be a negative, least desirable method of behaviour modification. C3 explained:

[Discipline is] completely different from punishment. Punishment is a repercussion for not doing something, of which what discipline could be for some people, I just choose it not to be. Punishment is kind of somebody’s strategy for getting a certain reaction versus getting a reaction in a different way, like talking to the players. Do you want to be in their face and have them scared of you, be the mean boss? Or do you want to be the professional boss who’s not mean, but instructional.

Interestingly, C3 addressed alternative methods, such as talking to players, to be instructional and more appropriate when trying to correct behaviour, in contrast to punishment, which relies on instilling feelings of fear to achieve a similar result.

The majority of parents identified punishment and discipline as distinct concepts. M2 recognized the pedagogical nature of discipline, as she explained:

Well, discipline is to teach them a lesson. Punishment is just punishment. It kind of sounds the same, but no, discipline is to teach them the right way or teach them the way they shouldn’t be doing it. Punishment is out of anger, so it’s difficult to teach them anything if you’re getting mad at them.

Similarly, M1 recognized how discipline may be administered as a method that teaches athletes right from wrong. She stated:

Discipline is more of a learning mechanism. So if there’s some sort of behaviour that needs to be corrected, there has to be a lesson and the outcome needs to be seeing what was done wrong and why it’s wrong. Punishment is more punitive and it’s not a
learning mechanism. It’s not a cause and effect kind of thing. It’s not a learning tool. You did bad, so that’s it, something bad happens to you, but there’s nothing positive that comes out of that.

F2 agreed that punishment and discipline were separate concepts. He explained:

Punishment isn’t discipline. Discipline doesn’t take the form of punishment. Punishment is you didn’t do something so you’re giving something that’s not even related to the activity to get to change the behaviour. Well that’s not how you do it, all that does is get them angry at you. Discipline would be, ‘okay, let’s do the drill again, let’s do it over.’

Interestingly, two parents described how discipline as team structure. F3 explained:

Punishment is when you’ve done something wrong, you’re being punished for it. Discipline is having good structure. Everyone knows where they’re supposed to be, how they’re supposed to be doing things. I think that’s a lot more along the discipline line as opposed to punishment is when you’ve crossed that line, so now you’re in trouble and either trying to get out of trouble or paying the consequences for the trouble you’ve caused.

M3 expressed similar views, as she indicated, “I think of punishment as a negative response to behaviour or to an action that you don’t want to happen again. Discipline is more being able to provide structure around which you behave.”

**Uncertainty in distinguishing between punishment and discipline**

Some athletes struggled to confidently distinguish between punishment and discipline. When asked if punishment and discipline are the same, A1 hesitantly replied, “It is, but I don’t know. It’s confusing. It is, but it isn’t at the same time.” Likewise, A9 responded, “…no, I don’t think they’re the same thing…oh no, yeah, yeah, they are the same thing. I’m pretty sure.” Again, the inability to differentiate and detect the defining attributes of punishment and discipline led to a skeptical understanding that they are the same. A7 nearly defined discipline by accurately addressing its pedagogical nature: “Discipline would be more of the act of teaching…sorry…the act of teaching if someone is…just not…you’re being taught, you’re almost being taught…it’s tough, I’m not sure.” Comparable to the previous two examples, A7 admittedly expressed doubt when answering, suggesting that athletes may struggle to understand when they are being punished or disciplined on the field. Interpretations of punishment and discipline were indicative of how the participants would perceive exercise for behaviour modification. In the upcoming section, participants
acknowledge the purpose and effectiveness of using exercise as punishment, as well as the significance of pain as a defining characteristic of this punishment.

Exercise for Behaviour Modification

The athletes reported that exercise could constitute punishment or discipline, depending upon the severity of the exercise administered and feelings of pain. The observational data indicated that exercise as punishment was seldom used this season through sprints, laps, and push-ups. While both assistant coaches were supportive of using exercise as punishment, only one took on the responsibility of administering it to the athletes. The head coach did not use, nor did he recognize any benefits stemming from this punitive method, unless it was to teach the importance of hustling. Surprisingly, all of the mothers suggested using exercise as a corrective strategy and only one of four fathers suggested the same.

Pain as a defining characteristic of punishment

According to A3 and A4, a defining characteristic of exercise as punishment is its ability to produce pain. When asked why this type of punishment is effective, A3 replied, “Because there’s a bit of pain involved.” Similarly, A4 admitted, “The pain. When you feel pain it tells you not to screw up again or else this is what’s going to happen…nobody wants to experience pain.” M3, a mother on the team, explained that the most important factor associated with exercise as punishment is that, “They’re going to feel a little pain. Even if it’s the best player. They’re going to feel some pain.” She continued to explain, “They’d run until they’re exhausted. Keep going. Keep going, I’ll let you know... You know the kids enough to give them enough laps for them to feel it, but not get hurt by it.” A11 believed for punishment to be effective there needs to be enough exercise for the boys to struggle, but not to the point of injury. M2, another mother on the team, suggested that for exercise to be effective, “They need to be tired or sore. I’m not saying bring out the chains and whips, but it’s got to be physical enough for them to feel, ‘well shit, this is tough.’” A11 suggested, “…you never want to get to a point where you’re straining the players or they’re hurting themselves doing punishment. Sometimes it goes too far, but you can’t have too little.” At the very least, the minimum requirement for exercise as punishment is that it produces pain, with the absence of injury.
**Severity of exercise as a corrective strategy**

The number of repetitions or severity of the exercise required to be classified as punishment varied among the athletes, perhaps because of the variance in physical abilities possessed by each individual athlete. When running laps as punishment A4 shared what he felt was an appropriate amount:

I feel like as punishment, and I know this is going to make me seem like a lazy ass, but 2-3 laps I think is a good enough punishment because even after one full lap most of us are already gassed.

When asked if he would run ten laps as punishment, A4 replied:

I’d hate you. I would hate you…doing ten laps and knowing your players can’t do it versus doing one lap and having a conversation with the player about what he did wrong and how he could improve, that’s the difference between punishing and disciplining.

Interestingly, A4 contrasted punishment with discipline, noting that discipline is less severe and involves communication between the coach and athletes. A10 agreed that ten laps is an extreme request for coaches to make: “That’s torture…if it’s over excessive running, at the point where you can’t run anymore or continue, coaches need to know the limits of the kids and not go beyond that.” A7 believed that running ten laps is not only excessive, but a poor use of valuable practice time: “That may be a little much and it’s also a waste of practice. All that achieves is getting kids pissed off at you. Running ten laps, where do you make time to hit, throw, and field?” A3 believed running a few laps is suitable, but ten is unacceptable: “…three or four laps done more frequently is discipline because it forces athletes to work hard, but ten laps is to make them tired, maybe piss off the athletes for doing something wrong.” One dissenting view was presented by A2, who viewed an example of ten laps as discipline for behaviours such as arriving late:

I think that would be discipline because you’ve set the practice to start at a certain time and so you’re trying to drill in the players’ head that being late is not acceptable. [Fifty laps] is more punishment because at that point coaches have gone overboard with it. They’re obviously mad and rightfully so, maybe.

**Purpose and perceived effectiveness**

Although it was not used often, the athletes had reportedly experienced exercise as a form of punishment in the form of push-ups, sprints, and running laps, which was supported
by the observational data. The majority of athletes approved of this tactic being used because they viewed the exercise as being beneficial to their physical development. A4 admitted:

It’s the type of punishment you know can go a long way in helping you. I mean, in hockey and more physical sports, laps and push-ups build that muscle and strength to help you excel in the game. Even though it’s a punishment, it does help you.

A9 and A3 also acknowledged the importance of exercise as punishment as a method of training, as they each stated, respectively:

I think it is appropriate because if you go for a lap or two, you’re kind of helping yourself too because you’re exercising. Yeah, I think it’s appropriate…they want to become stronger, physically stronger. Even mentally stronger because it gets in their head and they start thinking to themselves, ‘I need to do better. I need to work harder because I don’t want to be punished.’ Some might find it motivating because they want to prove the coach wrong.

I’m fine with it…I wouldn’t mind it at all…honestly, running laps and doing push-ups, it’s not comfortable doing, but technically for your body doing all that stuff is good. It’s exercise. It’s not necessarily bad for you…It can help you.

According to A11, exercise as punishment is essential in all sports:

I think it is crucial to have in all sports. Sometimes you need that extra exercise to keep in shape and this allows you to fit it in during a busy season of games….it’s just natural to be punished with exercise when you aren’t doing something right…only athletes would understand it.

Furthermore, the athletes believed that exercise as punishment can improve mental focus by forcing athletes to pay attention. A7 clarified:

[Exercise as punishment] is fine because if we’re not listening you have to kind of emphasize some technique to get us to listen…running laps is great because it tires you out to the point where you say ‘I don’t want to do that again’, so you may actually start to pay attention.

A6 agreed as he stated, “Well I do like it [exercise as punishment]…because it gets us more focused.” The boys understood, and seemed to accept, the punitive actions taken by coaches who perceived their athletes to be distracted and mentally unfocused. For this reason A8 was not hesitant to admit:

I’m fine with it…I’m used to it. Last year, like every single game, our coach would make us run…when they make you run it helps you re-focus. You’re running now because something happened that took you away from the game. Running clears your mind and makes sure that you are only thinking about the game and what your responsibility is.
Interestingly, A8, who was new to the team, had experienced exercise as punishment elsewhere as a method of improving mental focus. A1 agreed with this, as he believed that professional athletes had also received similar punishments. He explained:

I’m sure the guys in the majors did the same punishment we’re doing now. If Donaldson dropped a ball at third he probably ran, but as life goes on you learn from your mistakes; so if he drops a ball now he probably won’t get punished because he learned his lesson as a kid.

Both assistant coaches accepted the use of exercise as punishment as a punitive tactic within sport. C1 agreed that exercise is an appropriate punishment “because they [athletes] need to know when they’re not doing something that they haven’t met expectations.” Specifically, exercise may be used as a punishment when the athletes commit mental errors as a result of not paying attention or hustling on the field. Exercise as punishment was used to enhance the athletes’ focus and engagement, as well as to instill strong a work ethic in the athletes. C1 explained, “See for me, my personal philosophy is that exercise as punishment is directly correlated to lack of effort. A lack of effort or mental engagement during warmup or in the game. A lack of hustle, that’s it.” In response to mental mistakes, C1 admitted, “A lot of the time you make them run or something of that variety.” He explained that exercise “teaches them to wake up. That the mistakes they have made are unacceptable and that they are better than that.” During the Ontario Championship Qualifiers C1 had perceived the boys to be slacking off during their warmup. He addressed the matter by having the boys sprint to centre field and back. C1 explained the situation:

Was more like ‘come on guys, get your head in the game, you know the expectations of a warmup before a game, therefore, it’s time for you to reset. Go run to the fence and back and come back and do what we are supposed to be doing.’

When reflecting back on the scenario C1 admitted, “It was probably a little more of a penalty or a punishment, to get them to reset”, followed by a rationale: “The purpose of it [exercise] is to engage them. Re-engage them so that they’re focused on the task at hand.”

C2 supported the belief that exercise was an appropriate method to use in response to errors; however, in addition to punishing mental faults, he believed it was an effective punishment in response to physical mistakes. In regards to his son making a throwing mistake, C2 believed punishing with exercise would be acceptable because it would scare his son into performing better: “He’s scared to make the same mistake because he knows he’ll
have to run after so he concentrates on the fundamentals to make the throw.” C2 rationalized that instilling feelings of fear may influence athletes to focus on the task at hand, thus, demonstrating an improvement in performance. The physicality of the punishment within a physically active culture had also been noted as a means to justify the use of exercise as a retributive method. C2 argued that exercise as punishment was acceptable “because they came to be active…push-ups may not be as bad because it’s an active punishment.”

Various reasons were reported by the parents as to why exercise would be an appropriate punishment to use against the athletes. F3 explained that he had also experienced this punishment playing basketball growing up, and thus, it was an appropriate method to continue using today: “I had to run suicides, push-ups with my hands on a basketball, things like that. It’s uncommon to hear of an athlete who didn’t have to do some form of exercise punishment. It just makes sense in this environment.” M1 reported that exercise was an effective method to have athletes release pent up energy: “Maybe to get their high energy out, have them run a few laps. Enough laps to get that high energy out of their system so that they can come back and focus…Hopefully after that you would have their attention.” M3 shared a similar response: “I think running laps is just a way to get rid of all that excess energy and maybe get you a bit of an attitude adjustment.” M3 also supported the use of exercise as punishment because of its ability to embarrass kids to the point of changing their behaviour:

I want them to stand out to let everyone know what they did was ridiculously stupid and unacceptable. Running the actual lap isn’t what’s effective. To me, the separating and identifying, and I guess a little bit of the embarrassment…why is he running the lap? Well, because he’s being an idiot.

C3, the head coach, refrained from using exercise as punishment all season, despite pressure from assistant coaches and some parents who encouraged him to adopt a more militant approach on the field. When notified that some athletes preferred exercise as punishment, C3 responded:

That’s what I find most interesting because I would think that some would view that as punishment. I would think, especially with our boys, that some would look at other teams and start asking why they need to do this. Don’t get me wrong it probably happens on all teams, but [C1] knows I’m not into those methods.
C3 rejected this method because of the lack of reasonable association between behaviour and performance improvement in response to exercise. C3 explained, “I don’t see the relationship between the two, that’s why I never use it.” In this example, C3 had reflected on a scenario during the season when the outfielders were asked to run for dropping multiple fly balls during practice. He continued:

I’ve never been the type to say ‘oh we didn’t do this so we’re going to run laps.’ That to me has never really been the way to go. It’s not effective at all. I think it gets the message across, but it’s not the reason why I want kids to follow me. You know what I mean? I don’t want it to be me saying, ‘if we lose we’re going to run laps.’ A11 was telling me on the Jays every time they walk a guy they do a pole…That’s the last thing I want my pitcher thinking about. There’s no question, that A11 is going to be on the mound and if he has a 3-0 count on the kid he’s going to be thinking, ‘shit, one more ball and we have to run another pole.’ That’s the last thing I want my pitcher thinking about during a game. I don’t care about poles. I want my pitcher thinking, ‘what did I do wrong there and how can I fix it for the next batter?’ It’s just never been my thing to run the kids.

Notably, C3 acknowledged that exercise can communicate to athletes a need to change behaviour; however, he believed that in the long-term, this method may create feelings of apprehension and fear. Instead, C3 was supportive of teaching athletes to become critical thinkers, which he perceived as a more effective strategy to change behaviour than using exercise.

F1, a father on the team, explained that exercise as punishment is ineffective because it tires the athletes out and prevents them from learning:

A lap would be punishment. When they run the lap they’re going to come back tired. Then their mind will be tired so they can’t focus now. You want them to come to you with an open mind, not a tired mind. Because when you do 10 laps and you come back with your muscle aching, and all you want to do is go home and sleep, take a shower, you’re not learning there.

Aside from exercise as punishment, the participants identified yelling as an alternative method to punish. All participants perceived this method to be negative, unless delivered in a positive, encouraging manner.
Figure 1. Coaches’, Athletes’ and Parents’ Interpretations of Exercise

Yelling

Rejection as punishment

Many of the athletes explained that being yelled at, especially following a physical or mental error, contributed towards feelings of anger and distress. When asked if yelling is an effective coaching method, A7 responded, “Nah that just pisses your kids off. It’s going through everyone’s mind that this guy’s a dick.” A7 indicated that yelling “…shouldn’t be used as a coaching technique.” A4 also expressed bitterness towards yelling as a coaching tactic, as revealed when he stated:

I would hate it. I know everyone would hate it. They [athletes] don’t want to be punished for the little things. I know that [club] coach yelled at a player for a base running mistake in the first inning in a 0-0 game. There’s no reason for that. I know coaches like that are so useless, they aren’t helping the team at all.

A9 believed that, “First yelling, then benching, then exercise” was the order of worst to most tolerable method of punishment. Other athletes expressed their preference for exercise as punishment instead of yelling. A7 agreed that exercise is “…a much better strategy then
yelling.” A5 supported this notion, as he adamantly stated, “I would rather do exercise as punishment than get yelled at…I just hate getting yelled at if I drop something or do something wrong.”

Consistent with A5’s beliefs, other athletes expressed aversion towards situations that involved a coach yelling in response to a mistake. A6 shared “…I don’t like being yelled at when I already know I made a mistake.” Similarly, A3 expressed his dislike for being yelled at for mistakes. He explained, “Let’s say he [coach] yells at me for fumbling the ball and making a bad throw, that I wouldn’t like as much…I don’t like if he [coach] yells at me for errors.” A1 explained “…it [yelling] can put you down. If you’re yelling at me and I know I did something wrong and you yell at me that could put me down even more.” A11 agreed, as he indicated, “No, that [yelling] just brings them [athletes] down. That’s really bad.” A8 agreed that yelling is not an appropriate method to use with athletes. He shared, “I don’t like getting yelled at…it gets me down…I just don’t like it…I don’t see how yelling can help.”

A few athletes explained why yelling is not an effective method of punishing. A10 responded, “When I yell at my dog for barking, he’ll bark even more. Kids are the same. They won’t respond well.” A11 recognized that, “when it [yelling] consistently happens I don’t think it’s necessary…when guys are making the same mistake or are constantly disrespectful then you need to find another way because yelling isn’t working.”

Although not often used, the coaches sometimes raised their voices towards the athletes to express dissatisfaction with behaviour and performance. None of the coaches agreed that it was an appropriate tactic to use with youth athletes. C2 confessed:

I never like raising my voice towards the kids. They’d hate us. I don’t want them to hate me, especially when I don’t know everything about the game. It’s not my place to yell…I don’t believe in it. It turns them off.

C1, who had yelled the most at the athletes this season, admitted, “Oh, I hate it [yelling]. Even though I do it often, I don’t like it.” When asked why he yells at the athletes, even though he expressed a dislike of this method, C1 explained:

It’s to shock. Shock them to get their attention. It’s to get a different reaction from what I normally get with my regular tone of voice. My loud voice is trying to get attention with the impression that what I’m about to say is very important so you better listen. Therefore I’m hoping it goes into their head, or they start thinking about it.
C1 relied on his voice to demand the athletes’ attention, instruct them, and encourage them to comply with orders. Although he hoped to achieve this through yelling, he understood that it is an ineffective method:

I know full well that it [yelling] doesn’t [work], but when you’re in the moment you’re trying to drive a change in behaviour quickly and you know you can’t use any physical options, none at all, so you have to use something. So you use your voice to get a response and player engagement. It’s all about engagement, use your voice to get them engaged as quickly as you can.

An inability to rely on effective, alternative methods led this coach to resort to yelling, despite knowing that this tactic is limited in achieving an optimal outcome. C3 agreed that yelling was ineffective because it distracts the athletes from focusing on the task at hand:

When the boys drop a ball, they’re not thinking about me, they’re thinking about their own anxiety and doubts that prevented them from catching the ball. When the ball is coming at you the only thing you’re thinking about is that ball coming your way. Last thing I need are players to start thinking about me yelling while the ball is approaching them because then they lose focus on fielding the ball. They just focus on getting yelled at after. So I don’t think yelling helps. It’s detrimental to be in a kid’s ear just yelling. I don’t understand how that can make anyone better.

C3 believed:

If I’m yelling at a guy, maybe I shouldn’t be coaching…For me, I much rather try to help someone than have to yell. If I can help someone each practice, each game, I’m working towards something a lot bigger. I’m setting us up as team for greater success. If I yell, I’ll go home and ask myself, ‘why did I do that. Who did I help today by yelling?’ I always question myself.

The parents agreed that yelling was one of the worst methods a coach can use with athletes. When asked about her views on yelling, M3 responded, “Yelling is pointless.” M2 explained, “To do it [yelling] over and over, it just keeps the kids down. It’s not right…when used negatively, yelling is probably the worst thing the kids can experience on the field. No one ever wants to be yelled at.” F1 passionately rejected the idea, with the belief that yelling contributed to a further hindrance in performance:

Oh…no, no, no. Nah, nah, nah, that’s wrong. No. No kids are supposed to get yelled at because when you yell at the kids, what do you think is going through that kid’s mind? The next ball that goes to him he’s going to be so nervous that he’s going to try not to mess up, and that’s when he’ll mess up. But if you give him relaxation, like say he messes up, you go clap for him. Congratulate him for trying. Nice try. You’re give that kid confidence, that the next ball that comes to him, he’s not going to mess up. He’s going to catch it. But if you yell at him, he’s going to go…have you seen a
turtle? Right in his shell… Every kid out there is nervous and they’re going to say, ‘please don’t let the ball come to me, because if I mess up the coach is going to yell.’ You know, it’s a no, no for me. If you want to protect your kids, don’t yell.

Acceptance of yelling

Although most athletes perceived yelling negatively, some were able to find the silver lining in its use. A2 was one of a few who found yelling beneficial, as he confessed, “I like it, personally, because it gets us focused before the game, but some kids don’t like it at all…they [coaches] don’t use it always because they’re angry, but sometimes just as a wakeup call.” Likewise, A3 admitted:

I am perfectly fine with it [yelling]…because if he [coach] is yelling at me he’s basically telling me what to do better…it helps you in the future…if he pushes you and yells at you, it’s to help…if he’s yelling at me to do something better or to hustle, then I don’t mind.

Some athletes recognized the value in yelling if it was delivered in a motivating and encouraging manner. A7 stated, “If he [coach] is yelling to amp the team up then that’s fine…if he [coach] yells and he says stuff like ‘let’s go’ or ‘hustle’ then it’s fine.” Similarly, A10 admitted that “if it [yelling] is encouraging then it can be fine.” M2 a mother agrees, as she stated, “Speaking loudly and encouraging is okay.”

Some boys did not necessarily accept yelling as an appropriate method; however, they identified a meaningful purpose for its use. A11 agreed “…when it [yelling] happens once or twice then it can be necessary by indicating next time don’t make this error or don’t behave this way.” Simply put, “Sometimes it [yelling] works and scares kids to get their shit together” (A9). In the absence of exercise and yelling as punishment, athletes perceived benching as an alternative punitive strategy. Benching served additional purposes, as few participants understood benching to be tactical, while others perceived its use as disciplinary or motivating.
Figure 2. Coaches’, Athletes’ and Parents’ Interpretations of Yelling

**Benching**

Each athlete reportedly experienced benching, however, the purpose of this tactic was interpreted in four distinct ways: as punishment, as discipline, as strategy, and as motivation. Throughout the season, the coaches relied on benching primarily for strategic reasons. Benching became disciplinary if the athletes disrespected the coaches, parents, officials or their peers. Benching had also been interpreted as a disciplinary tactic used in response to mental errors. Parents accepted benching as punishment on the condition that the coach communicated reasons as to why the athlete was being benched. Despite accepting this method, parents addressed that this tactic may be the least preferred by athletes because it takes them away from the game.

**Benching as punishment**

Many athletes agreed that playing poorly influenced coaches’ use of benching as punishment. A2 explained, “I think that’s the whole point of benching, is to let somebody know that they aren’t doing well enough or they aren’t up to the standards set by the coach.” Correspondingly, A11 stated:

Let’s say the guy on the bench was in a slump and the coach didn’t want that player on the field because he wanted his best offensive or defensive player playing, then the guy on the bench is probably getting punished.
Some athletes recognized the use of benching as punishment in response to a poor display of behaviour or commitment. A8 shared “When a kid misses practices or if they’re really late coaches will bench them for a couple of innings, punish them for not being there.”

Furthermore, A7 added, “If the problem kind of subsided and you’re still being benched, then that would be punishment. Punishment for your previous actions.” The length of time an athlete spends on the bench was perceived as an important criterion. A3 indicated “…if you’re sitting completely out it’s punishment because you probably didn’t do something well and now you need to sit on the bench. As a punishment you’re completely out of the game.”

Benching for too long may be perceived as a punishment because of the athletes’ reactions. A7 stated, “…if you bench them for too long they start to not understand why they’re on the bench. They’ll start to think it’s just because they’re shit.” Regardless of the scenario, A5 believed with benching, “You’re trying to assert dominance and send a message to me, so you’re punishing me.”

In response to an athlete talking back to a coach, C1 adamantly stated, “I won’t tolerate that. That’s a go sit on the bench. Go sit.” C3 supported this statement, as he indicated:

Being disrespectful, whether it be to a coach, a teammate, a parent, an ump, that’ll get somebody benched. Automatically. If a guy is mouthing off to a coach he’ll probably sit half a game. It wouldn’t necessarily be a full game, but enough time for the message to get across, that you can’t talk to us or anyone else that way. That’s one of our no tolerance team policies.

C2 believed that benching was a subtle way of punishing athletes for poor performance:

From my perspective I think they are getting punished…at a certain time of the game, like in the sixth inning the guys on the bench are probably there because they aren’t the ones we trust to close out the game…you could say that [they are punished for being weaker]. We’re not mad at them, but they are sitting for not being as good as the other guys.

According to C2, athletes who are unable to demonstrate a high level of proficiency on the field are most likely to be punished through benching.

M2 explained that in response to athletes who misbehave, coaches should, “Make them sit out a whole game. To punish individuals, you can bench them the whole time.” F3 agreed that punishment through benching was an effective method as long as the reason was communicated with the athletes. He admitted:
During a game, I guess you can do a little bit of benching. Get them to sit out and think about what they’ve done. Then after it all you let them know, ‘okay, you’ve done your punishment, let’s get back to square one and do what we need to.’ It’s important to communicate with them.

F3 elaborated:

Lots of times it gives the kids a time to reflect. Think about what they’ve done. Lots of time a coach may need to communicate with them why they are sitting and what they could have done instead. If all coach says is ‘you’re sitting’…well, yeah they are aware that they are sitting, but they need to understand why. If a coach takes the time to communicate why they are sitting, what to think about and what to do next time they are in that situation, those are tools you could use. In that sense when they are sitting they have a chance to really think of their behaviour and what needs to change. You would hope that after sitting, it would be some time before you see them repeat the very behaviour that put them on the bench in the first place.

M1 supported the idea that a coach must provide the athletes with reasons as to why benching has been used as punishment:

There needs to be a conversation with players as to why he’s been put on the bench…without the conversation the kids are probably more inclined to be upset about being benched, so I would say that’s a punishment. At least with the communication piece, athletes may come to understand why they were benched.

**Benching as discipline**

Based upon interview data coaches expressed desire to eliminate or reduce the mental mistakes committed by athletes on the field by disciplining through benching. C2 explained:

It [benching] is discipline, it’s good. I like benching because it’s quick feedback. For me, the best form of feedback is when it’s immediate because you know what happened. You know exactly what happened and why the penalty was issued. I’m okay with benching as long as the error is mental versus physical.

Athletes who perceived benching as a form of discipline found it to be used for the purpose of teaching. According to A3, “If you learn something from benching it’s discipline.” Benching can help instill appropriate behaviours in athletes when used as a form of discipline. A7 recalled an incident, as he shared:

Earlier this year coach benched me for an inning because I threw my helmet. I struck out with a man on third and I was pissed so I threw my helmet. That’s discipline. He’s basically telling me that I have to stop thinking about myself and think about my team.
Although athletes do not like to be benched, they understood that it served a purpose beyond just punishing. When asked if benching is a form of discipline, A4 explained:

Yeah, because it gives the player time to reflect on what they did wrong and how they can improve on it. I mean, of course they will be upset at the coach at the time because obviously they want to play, not just sit because that’s pretty boring. But, I mean, in the long run it [upset feelings] will go away.

There are certain conditions that need to be met in order for benching to be understood as a form of discipline. A7 explained, “If you bench someone right after they mess up and then let them play after, they’ll understand the reason behind it.” Thus, benching needs to be short and immediately following a blunder in order for athletes to perceive this method as a discipline.

Similar to the use of exercise as punishment, severity, which for benching is measured as a length of time one spends on the bench during a game, is a defining characteristic that athletes’ relied upon to distinguish between discipline and punishment.

**Benching as strategy**

Benching, in addition to being used as punishment and discipline, was also perceived as a strategic tactic used by coaches. Many athletes recognized benching’s strategic purpose as being for the greater good of the team’s performance. A7 explained:

It’s more strategy. If they’re on the team then they’re good enough to play, but relative to the other guys, if they’re not as strong then the coach is choosing to play whose better. That’s strategy…When a coach needs to win a game he will play the best guys. So it’s not really punishment. The better players will play.

Similarly, A8 agreed that benching is a strategic decision used by coaches to ensure the whole team benefits:

Benching is used when it’s best for the team…if someone is being benched it’s usually because there is a situation where someone else fits the role better. So the coach needs to do what’s best for the team, which is why people are benched. In house league I remember everyone got equal playing time, so people would feel good about themselves; but when you get to a higher level you have to do what’s best for the team.

Athletes appeared to accept the practice when used as strategy:

Like honestly, if the coach benched me, let’s say a tournament, and I sit an inning or two, I know the coach has a reason for that. And for me I don’t mind that at all. I see how the coach has strategy. He will start a guy on the bench, but maybe eventually
that will come in to pinch run or eventually pitch. So it’s not that bad. I find it could be used as strategy (A3).

Acceptance is influenced by athletes’ belief that as strategy, benching will be temporary. At the most appropriate time the coach will put his players in the game. The purpose of sitting prior to being entered in the game may serve to provide athletes extra time to prepare. A10 explained, “C3 says you need people to fill spots during the game. So if C3 needs me to catch or play the outfield he may sit me before to warm-up extra or mentally prepare.”

Although some athletes may have perceived their time on the bench as punishment for being a weaker player, C3 explained that the individuals who start on the bench most often have a significant role in finishing the game:

The thing people don’t understand, which I try to explain to the parents and boys, the two guys that start on the bench aren’t necessarily the guys I don’t want playing. They may be the two guys I actually want finishing the game. If I know I’m going to play everybody, and my intention is to always play everybody. I rarely went into a game thinking ‘that kid isn’t going to play’…rarely is the guy that I’m sitting a guy that I don’t have faith in, it’s actually the guy I want to finish the game.

The ability to communicate this message from game to game reminded the athletes that they each have a significant role, which contributed towards the success of the team. When benching athletes, C3 admitted:

It is [strategic]. In the end I got eleven kids and I got to try to get the best out of them…I think it’s my biggest threat as a coach. Whatever kids I have I’m going to get the best out of them. So even if a kid is struggling I know when to enter them in the game, what situation to put them in to make sure I’m still utilizing their abilities effectively. Everything’s about getting the most out of everybody. And if I give a guy one shot to do something, it means that’s the best opportunity for him to succeed.

**Benching as motivation**

A few athletes interpreted benching as a coach’s strategy to encourage players to work harder, which in itself, is motivating. A11 admitted:

I see it as a strategy to get a player to perform better because there are only nine positions and everyone is fighting for a spot. So there is going to be times when people are sitting and times when they are not. So everyone will be fighting for a position, which is a strategy to get guys to perform better than usual.

Athletes who interpreted benching as a tactical method of improving work ethic were likely to perceive sitting on the bench as motivating. When asked which method motivates more, benching or exercise, A9 replied:
Benching because if the coach benches me I’m going to think that I definitely did something wrong. So now I need to earn my spot back so I work harder to get on the field. I need to be better.

Likewise, A2 indicted:

For me it’s motivation. When I get benched for a shitty play I know I don’t want to get benched again so I try to do better. Or if some shit-stack takes my spot…I get pissed and sometimes need to take walks and shit just to let the anger out.

In addition to motivating athletes to work harder, benching motivated athletes to modify their behaviours. A10 admitted “it [benching] motivates me not to do anything wrong again so I can avoid sitting.” Thus, it is a possibility that coaches strategically use benching to improve athletes’ work ethic and modify behaviours.

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>A4, A6, A10</td>
</tr>
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Legend:  
A= Athlete  
C= Coach  
M= Mother  
F= Father

Figure 3. Coaches’, Athletes’ and Parents’ Interpretations of Benching

Preferred Methods of Behaviour Modification

Each athlete reportedly experienced exercise and benching for the purpose of behaviour modification, regardless of whether or not they interpreted the method as punishment or discipline. Although there was no consensus to definitively define exercise or benching as strictly punishment or discipline, athletes did show a preference towards exercise as a corrective strategy, primarily because it provided the athletes with the hope that
they may continue to play. Parents’ and athletes’ views were consistent in that benching was the least preferred tactic because it takes athletes away from the game and their teammates. A6 believed that benching was “worse than running” because he “wouldn’t be able to play in the game.” When asked which method of punishment was the worst for athletes to endure, F3 shared a similar view:

I think benching says the most, without actually saying anything. Not being able to play, well that’s the whole reason why they’re there in the first place. If you take that away they’re going to start asking ‘why am I even here?’

M2 agreed that benching was the worst punishment for athletes to experience, “because they really want to play. They all go out there every day and they really want to play. So if they’re benched, then that would hurt.” M3 agreed and admitted that the athletes may experience feelings of embarrassment:

Benching is the worst…It’s the embarrassment of knowing that you’re sitting, especially if you’re one of the better players. People are going to ask ‘why are you sitting?’ You have to make a decision whether to lie, to say ‘I don’t know’ or to tell the truth. I think it sets a really good example, to sit through all the positive energy and experiences of the team, and you have to sit there knowing that you won’t get out there to share that with them.

A7 admitted, “I don’t mind exercise so I rather that so I can still be on the field.” When asked which method they would rather endure, benching or exercise as punishment, A8, A10 and A9 answered, respectively, “I guess run laps because then I still get to participate in what the team is doing”; “I rather run laps because I’d want to get the chance to play”; “Benching [is worse] because benching you don’t get to play the game. So I rather be punished through exercise because I’m still on the field with everyone.” A5 stated that he would rather run “laps because that would make me better for the game when I play. Benching doesn’t make me better it just makes me regret things.” Notably, A5 justified exercise as punishment as being the preferred strategy because of the positive contribution exercise makes to his physical development, while benching has no perceived benefits and only contributes towards feelings of regret. A1 identified benching as undesirable, but effective: “I rather exercise, but to learn my lesson benching…because at least you can still participate in something physical, but if you’re benched you can’t do anything.” Similar to many of the boys, A1 recognized how exercise provided him the opportunity to remain
connected with the team or sport; however, he did acknowledge that benching is effective in learning right from wrong.

To further understand the coaches’ interpretations and rationale of punitively using exercise, benching, and yelling, the ensuing section will outline the defining characteristics of each coach’s interpersonal coaching style, to see whether a correlation exists between coaches’ use of punishment and style of coaching. Coaches’ described their coaching philosophy and how they believed it informed their style of leadership. As well, athletes’ and parents’ shared their perceptions of the coaches’ coaching styles, which were compared and contrasted with the coaches’ views.

Coaching Styles

**The Motivator**

Each coach described his personal coaching style in which he described individual strengths, which contributed towards the athletes’ development and enjoyment throughout the season. For C1, who the boys identified as being the motivator:

My coaching philosophy revolves around me being the motivator. That’s what I do, which is why it was so hard for me this year to be the disciplinary one. My strengths are inspiring others, setting goals and helping people find their own individual strengths. That’s what I do. My philosophy would be to motivate people, make them feel good, get the most out of them, congratulate them, a lot of positive reinforcement.

C1 addressed the difficulty in balancing his desired role to be a motivator and the role he perceived to have as the punitive coach. He continued to explain:

My philosophy has always been ‘hey that’s good.’ More about letting them know ‘hey, that’s good, keep it up.’ I think I did that this year. I would have liked to do it in the absence of a disciplinary role because I think having both roles can confuse the kids. One day they see you as encouraging, the next they see you blowing up.

Throughout the year C1 had voiced his discomfort with disciplining the kids because of the potential for the athletes to portray him as the “bad guy.” To avoid this outcome, C1 regularly made the effort to congratulate the athletes on performance, effort, and work ethic. C1 attributed his career for developing the leadership qualities that allows others to perceive him as motivating. A balance of positive reinforcement as well as clearly communicated expectations and consequences is what C1 interpreted as being a necessity in coaching.
The Buddy

Despite C2 expressing a preference for a more militant approach, which involved the use of exercise as punishment, he also expressed joy when participating with the boys on the field during pregame warmups and activities:

I love being on the field with the boys. They’re good kids. For me it brings me back to when I was their age playing. You see me I always got my glove ready to throw with somebody. Love high fiving the guys when they come in. I just get pumped to see them play and I get pumped to be on the field with [my son]. Sometimes we will come early and just play catch and it’s a good time for us to bond through the game.

C1’s style contributed to the athletes’ perceptions of him as “The Buddy.” While the other two coaches focused on managing and disciplining the athletes, C2 effortlessly fit in with the boys as if he was the twelfth player. C2 explained:

When you’re young you play to have fun, but also play to learn the game. Once you reach a certain age, like these boys, 13, 14, and you’re playing elite, it’s about winning. You play to win. At this level winning is fun. No one will enjoy getting together with friends to get their ass kicked…I’m all about playing hard, playing to win. Winning cures everything.

Many of the athletes addressed the importance of winning and how a lack of performance may contribute to athletes withdrawing from sport. Similarly, C2 expressed the importance of winning and how it influenced the degree of fun one may experience in the game, whereas his counterparts’ philosophies focused primarily on developing good habits and learning the game fundamentally.

The Boss

C3 viewed punitive tactics as ineffective and uncorrelated with the behaviour that is usually being punished. Instead, C3 admitted, “I’d work through them [the athletes] instead of punishing them.” He elaborated on his style, focusing primarily on the importance of teaching the kids the fundamentals of baseball and to become critical thinkers of the game:

I like to introduce the fundamentals with kids because it sets them up for future success in the sport. I believe in doing the little things right…It’s not even about physical skills, more about your ability to read the situation…That’s why I love teaching the fundamentals of the game. The little things people don’t focus on that actually help you win ball games. As much as fielding, hitting, catching, pitching is all important, I don’t get into too much detail about what they’re doing…I want to make you a smart player, wherever your position is…as long as you’re playing you will learn something from the game so I want to make these guys think and
understand baseball…It’s different then just picking up the ball and throwing it to first. We can all do that. I like to stay one step ahead.

C3’s background in elite baseball, both as an athlete and coach, informed his ability to critically analyze what is truly important for the athletes. The importance C3 placed on developing intelligent athletes may explain why he perceived himself as an educational coach:

Truthfully, I see myself as being an educational coach. For me, it’s the process. It’s all about the process. The outcome is irrelevant. You can’t control an outcome in baseball. You can do everything right and still lose the game. Baseball is about doing everything properly in order to give yourself the best chance to achieve the best outcome. But the outcome is an uncontrollable variable. The only thing that is controllable is the process you put in play. Good practice habits, your understanding of the game and with all that, you put yourself in a position to win. It’s all about the process, that’s my philosophy.

Views on Coaching

The athletes were asked to identify which coaching style and characteristics most accurately depicted each coach. The athletes had very positive reviews of their experiences with each one of the three coaches. The boys agreed that each coach had a distinct role and contribution, which could be accurately portrayed through the titles: “The Boss”, “The Motivator”, and “The Buddy”. The athletes’ respect for the coaches was highly influenced by admirable qualities they perceived the coaching staff to possess. A1 explained:

Coach C3 is very intelligent. He’s a great coach, knows a lot about the game. C2’s good with kids. He loves us, he helps us…he works with us and wants us to succeed. Coach C1 is kind of that motivational coach. He’s always there for us, always picks us up. He never wants to see us down.

When asked about the coaches A7 responded, “I really like them. You can’t ask for anything more, truthfully…they’re great as coaches, they help us stay mentally strong. They make it fun. They have what it takes to do something good with us.” Many athletes expressed similar views as this. A8 and A10 both shared, respectively:

I like them a lot. They have a lot of skill, they knew a lot about the game. They were very nice to everybody and treated everyone equally…I think they’re very good coaches, in comparison to other coaches I’ve seen…one thing I like about them is they use everybody in games.

They’re good, they knew what they were talking about. We worked on a lot of things until we got it right…they kept calm when we did something wrong, like if we didn’t
make a play. They gave good feedback. Instead of just telling us what we did wrong they would tell us what we did right. They balance out the positives and negatives well. Very supportive.

Many of the boys appreciated the calm demeanour of the coaches and continuous efforts to remain encouraging throughout the season. A3 shared:

Honestly, I like all the coaches. I like how they work things. I feel C3 is a good head coach. Most of the time when he talks to us he is calm. During a game if we make an error he’ll be okay with it. He’ll try to help you so you can stay confident for the rest of the game…at the end of the game is when he kind of talks to you about what you have to do and how to do it.

In regards to C3 specifically, A9 also demonstrated his admiration for the coach as he shared:

I like that he knows what he’s talking about all the time and he’s always in the game. I like the fact that he believes in his players. So if someone makes an error he doesn’t pull them out right away. He gives us a lot of chances to do things on the field and at bat.

The boys were provided a brief explanation of autonomy-supportive (AS) and controlling coaching and asked to choose which style best depicted their coaching staff. A7 responded:

Definitely AS coaches. Even coach on third, when he gets mad at an umpire he’s still very passive…He doesn’t get in his face very much. He’s very calm as a coach. Especially when you compare to someone like the guy on [other club team] or the [other club team] coach. Even at [American tournament] he won a coach’s award for being the most sportsmanlike. He was making an impression on the Americans about our team…at the end of the day coach did a good job of making a good impression and represented us well at the tourney.

A4 expressed similar views, as he stated:

They’re exactly like that [autonomy-supportive coaching]. You know, I prefer that because it lets the players know that they have a little more freedom with what they can do. Unlike those coaches who tell you ‘you gotta do this, like this’ and if you don’t do it then you probably get punished or disciplined. This make players not like the coach…a controlling coach just off puts the players. They don’t want to listen to him. It’s like, ‘ah here he is telling us what to do, how to do it, and we don’t want to do it.’ And this would probably break the relationship between the player and the coach.

Focusing on C3 specifically, A2 explained:

We’re not under him because he enjoys being with us, but C3 doesn’t take shit from any of us, which I admire about him…no he’s not controlling because he doesn’t try to manipulate us at all. He lets us do what we want, but he sets good guidelines and
he knows what he wants and he tells us to do something when he thinks it’s in our best interest. He doesn’t try to mould us a certain way.

The athletes recognized scenarios in which they were granted the freedom to act and make decisions for themselves on and off the field. Contrasted with coaches who authoritatively instruct, or control their athletes, these athletes reportedly preferred a pedagogical method influenced by autonomy-supportive strategies. Ironically, while the athletes accepted the coaches’ punitive measures and identified the coaches as autonomy-supportive, they rejected the notion of similar methods being applied in other learning environments, such as school.

**Comparing School and Baseball Contexts**

The majority of participants refuted the idea of using exercise as punishment in other settings such as the classroom with the belief that this punishment is unrelated to correcting behaviours in the classroom. Many athletes believed that exercise was not a teacher appropriate strategy to punish students because the classroom is not typically an environment where students would be required to perform exercise, unless it was physical education. When asked if exercise as punishment was an appropriate method to punish kids in class, A6 replied, “I wouldn’t like that one bit because why would I be disciplined in my class, like math for passing notes? How do push-ups help?” However, if the class was physical education A6 approved of exercise being used punitively “…because you’re physical in gym so you can punish kids with exercise.” A6 explained:

> On the field you can…make them run laps, but in class you can send them to the office or send them outside. Also athletes want to be faster and stronger so running helps you mature and get better, but you don’t need to be fast in class.

It appears that the physical nature of sport and physical education justifies the use of exercise as punishment, whereas the absence of physical activity from the classroom makes the use of exercise as punishment irrational. Again, exercise used punitively is supported through the beliefs that it contributes towards physical development; meanwhile, alternative methods, such as sending a student to the office, appeared to be a more appropriate school punishment. A3 agreed that exercise would be an acceptable punishment in physical education classes, but not in other academic classes:

> For gym class yes, but for every other class it would be weird because everyone would be working and you’re in the corner doing push-ups…not right…not appropriate for school, but for sports yes, to kind of make athletes work more.
Similarly, A9 addressed the physicality of sport as a reason for exercise being a normalized practice, but inactivity within the classroom makes exercise an inappropriate disciplinary tactic. In response to being asked if whether he would perform exercise in the classroom, A9 replied, “No, I’m in school, why would I have to do twenty push-ups for?” However, if exercise was administered in sport:

For sure…with school you’re in a classroom. There’s a lot of people, so you’re not just going to do twenty push-ups…sport is physical, math class isn’t…the people on the field with you are your teammates and they are there to be physical as well. In sport, you’re an athlete. You’re expected to know how to do push-ups. In school you are expected to learn, so there’s some kids who might not be able to do push-ups.

Notably, while A9 did not support the use of exercise in the classroom, he approved of timeout as a school punishment. With timeout being somewhat comparable to benching in sport, as a result of removing an individual from a specific environment, A9 showed distaste towards experiencing a “timeout” in sport. He responded, “In sport, exercise and at school timeout” as his preference for disciplinary action. A4 agreed that exercise in the classroom would be an odd form of punishment. He stated, “I wouldn’t think it’s reasonable to do it. I’d probably do it and ask the teacher why he or she told me to do that because it doesn’t seem like a thing a teacher would do in the class.” A4 supported the removal of a student from class through timeout or detention as a punitive tactic, but was strongly against the removal of an athlete from a practice or game for similar behaviour misconduct:

In the moment it shows that the coaches don’t want you. At least with benching or laps the coach is telling you what you shouldn’t do, but they still want you to be involved with the team. You still feel needed, which is a confidence booster. If you get kicked out, for me at least that would just shut me down for the next few days.

Interestingly, A4 reported feelings of neglect would manifest if a coach requested him to leave, but the same feelings are not as apparent if the situation involved a teacher asking him to leave the classroom. Without hesitation, A1 responded “of course” when asked if he would do thirty push-ups for speaking while the coaches were speaking, but adamantly stated “no” if it was a teacher speaking. He clarified:

School is every day. Baseball is only in the summer and this is a team you’re committing to. You don’t pay to go to elementary school. You only pay your taxes. You’re playing triple A baseball and you’re actually playing for something. Let’s say you’re in math class and you’re talking and the teacher tells you thirty push-ups.
You’re not really missing anything because eventually you’ll be able to do that math again. You can go ask the teacher after to help you or get a tutor. But with baseball you need to put 100% effort into everything because you might not get that opportunity again.

For A1 and many other athletes, baseball appears to hold greater significance in contrast with school because it is a temporary experience that provides more enjoyment, while school is a long-term, obligatory experience. Furthermore, an athlete may hold himself accountable to perform for the greater good of his coaches and teammates, whereas school performance would affect the individual personally.

While many parents accepted and suggested the use of exercise as punishment on the field, they had also rejected its use in the classroom. F4 believed that exercise as punishment would not be taken seriously in the classroom. When asked if twenty push-ups would be an appropriate method for a teacher to assign, F4 laughed and stated, “No, I think it would be more of a joke. They wouldn’t take it seriously.” M2 argued that exercise is not a fitting punishment because it is unrelated to the classroom environment. Instead, she recommended that classroom punishments should remain academic, while sport punishments remain physical:

No, it’s school. It’s different. We’re talking about a sport, compared to a class. Would you expect them to write an essay on the field for misbehaving? I think different situations calls for different punishments. If they’re in the class it should be writing essays, if it’s on the field or rink, it should be physical. Sport-wise, study-wise punishments. They shouldn’t cross over.

F3 shared a similar response, regarding the classroom being an inappropriate setting to assign a physical punishment:

The punishment kind of goes with the environment you’re in. I don’t think exercise would be appropriate in the classroom. As a coach you know the physical abilities of your athletes, which is why you can assign exercise as a punishment without necessarily embarrassing anyone. But in the classroom, you’re not aware of everyone’s abilities. A student who is asked to do 10 push-ups, who suddenly struggles in front of his peers, may not want to come back to class.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Summary of the findings

Exercise, benching, and yelling were used as behaviour modification strategies by the coaches in the current study. There was a consensus among the coaches’ views towards yelling and benching, with the former being interpreted as a negative corrective strategy and the latter being understood as both a disciplinary and tactical method. Most of the athletes reported no benefits associated with yelling as a tactic, unless delivered in a positive, encouraging manner, while benching was perceived primarily as forms of punishment, discipline, and strategy. In regards to exercise as punishment, the assistant coaches indisputably supported the use of this method, whereas the head coach denied the value and effectiveness of this tactic. The different views of exercise as punishment may be explained by the individual coaching style of each of the three participants. The majority of athletes interpreted exercise as punishment, yet also viewed it as beneficial because of its contribution towards physical development. The athletes preferred exercise over benching as a corrective strategy because it provided them with the opportunity to participate; conversely, benching took them away from actively participating in the game. Interestingly, while all parents expressed disdain towards yelling, four parents recommended using exercise as a corrective strategy. Parents accepted benching as a form of discipline as long as the coaches communicated reasons for using this method. All of the athletes had positive appraisals of their experiences with the coaching staff and described their coaches’ behaviour in ways that were consistent with the autonomy-supportive style of coaching.

Deontology, disciplinary power, and docile bodies

The findings of this study are interpreted using theories from Kant, Foucault and emotional maltreatment. Specifically, coaches’ uses of punishment strategies are scrutinized through the application of the categorical imperative, a foundational concept of deontological ethics, proposed by Immanuel Kant. Deontology is a form of moral philosophy that enquires: what determines a moral action (Kant & Paton, 1964)? Deontology considers two commands that elucidates how behaviours manifest. The first, the categorical imperative, emphasizes the moral duty individuals inherently possess, to act with good will intentions, irrespective of whether it achieves a desirable outcome (Kant & Paton, 1964). The second, the hypothetical
imperative, specifies that behaviours occur to satisfy personal desires and inclinations and is applied to explain the use and normalization of exercise as punishment. Finally, athletes appear to exercise self-discipline out of fear and respect of “The Motivator” and “The Boss”, respectively, consequently producing docile bodies, as Foucault would explain. Interpretation of the findings also draws upon the emotional maltreatment literature to address the potential negative effects of using yelling and benching punitively.

Deontological Coaching

Researchers have proposed that autonomy-supportive coaches prioritize the holistic development and empowerment of athletes; in contrast, controlling coaches value winning and justify their actions as a means of obtaining performance success (Carpentier & Mageau, 2014; Stebbings et al., 2011). Deontology is often juxtaposed with consequentialism, similar to the contrast between autonomy-supportive and controlling styles of coaching. Consequentialism is a theory of morality supported by utilitarianists, such as John Stuart Mill and Jeremy Bentham, which signifies a moral action is determined by the achievement of a desirable outcome or consequence. Although there is a dearth of empirical evidence that examines coaching styles through the ethical framework of deontology, I speculate that an autonomy-supportive coach fulfills the deontologist profile, while controlling coaches may represent consequentialists. By extension therefore, “The Boss” would be classified as a deontological coach and “The Motivator” as a consequentialist coach.

Given the degree of responsibility that coaches uphold within their critical relationship with athletes, coaches should be trained to deduce “right” from “wrong” when making decisions that affect athlete welfare. To explain the premise of morality in behaviours and decision making Immanuel Kant (1785) proposes that permissible behaviour manifests through “good will” intentions. This branch of normative ethics is referred to as Deontological Ethics. Deontologists define a moral action not by the goodness of the final result, but by the actions that led to the outcome; whereas, consequentialists classify ethical activity based on the outcome, not the process that had led to it (Kant & Paton, 1964).

Therefore, a deontological coach may strive to use methods, other than punishment, to achieve behaviour modification in athletes because he/she defines these methods as moral. Of more importance, a coach may refrain from using punishment strategies, such as exercise, yelling, or benching, because it is their innate, “moral duty” to act from “good will” (Kant &
Paton, 1964, Nelson, 1991). In contrast, the consequentialist coach relies on punishment tactics because it achieves a desirable result, which he/she identifies as moral. “The Motivator” uses exercise and yelling, without consideration of whether these tactics are appropriate or not, because it quickly accomplishes what he perceives as a desirable outcome. Demanding the athletes partake in these punitive tactics illustrates how “The Motivator” concerns himself more so with achieving a final result of compliance by any means, as opposed to achieving the final result through a meaningful way. By definition, “The Motivator” epitomizes the consequentialist profile of coaching. On the contrary, “The Boss” strives to achieve similar results as “The Motivator” using methods that maintain athlete welfare. “The Boss” relies on alternative methods, particularly communication, to encourage appropriate behaviour. The means of achieving a behaviour outcome is accomplished in the absence of punishment, perhaps classifying “The Boss” as a deontological coach. Kant would support the notion that “The Boss”, who refrains from using punishment, is demonstrating “good will” intentions because he has a moral duty to care for his athletes.

**Good will and duty**

The behaviour of deontologists is governed by “good will” in which Kant explains that: “the goodness of good will is not derived from the goodness of the results which it produces” (Kant & Paton, 1964, p. 17). Furthermore, “good will is not good because of what it effects or accomplishes—because of its fitness for attaining some proposed end: it is good through its willing alone—that is, good in itself” (Kant & Paton, 1964, p. 62). To understand the power of good will, Nelson (1991) explains that we must comprehend the importance of duty:

Acting with a good will is acting from duty, acting from duty is not a matter of actually achieving some purpose (like successfully alleviating the distress of someone in need). Instead, acting from duty is...a matter of acting in a way necessitated by respect for the moral law...A person who acts with a good will, a person whose actions have unconditional worth, is a person who endeavors to do what is right, just because it is required by the moral law. Such people act, as we might say, purely on principle and not as a result of any desire (p. 407).

It is important to note that good will manifests “from duty” to act, which has moral worth according to Kant, whereas actions “in accordance with duty” are subjective to self-interest.
and do not have moral worth, despite being a moral action (Kant & Wood, 2002). Actions from duty are performed because of an obligation to act, whereas actions in accordance to duty satisfy personal interests and are contingent to alter as desires change. Kant would argue that it is the moral duty of autonomy-supportive coaches to accentuate the importance of athlete empowerment and development, in the absence of punishment. This athlete-centered approach demonstrates good will through the consideration of the athlete’s needs, instead of using them to obtain a specific performance or behaviour outcome. Throughout the season, winning and performance success appear to be of greater value to “The Motivator” and “The Buddy” with respect to their sons, while “The Boss,” who does not have a son on the team, routinely expresses the importance of developing knowledgeable athletes. The importance of good will is demonstrated as Kant cited:

> Even if, by some special disfavour of destiny...this will is entirely lacking in power to carry out its intentions; if by its utmost effort it still accomplishes nothing, and only good will is left (not, admittedly, as a mere wish, but as the straining of every means so far as they are in our control); even then it would still shine like a jewel for its own sake as something which has its full value in itself (Kant & Paton, 1964, p. 62).

Good will alone is necessary, despite the potential of it not achieving anything. Actions should not be compromised to accomplish a certain goal, but instead, good will should be maintained when acting because it is our duty to adhere to moral law. While the intentions of “The Motivator” and “The Buddy” throughout the season appear to be genuine, they are quick to show a temper when their sons do not meet performance expectations. In the midst of performance errors, these coaches pull their sons aside and call them out on their mistakes. On the bench, it is clear to see the frustration of these coaches in response to their sons’ perceived failures, as the coaches pace aggressively and mutter expletives under their breath. Clearly, these behaviours do not follow the criteria of good will, suggesting that these coaches value a specific result more so than the well-being of their sons. Thus, Kant would support the notion that “The Motivator” and “The Buddy” are not fulfilling their moral duty as coaches.

Kant would argue that it is the moral duty of autonomy-supportive coaches to act out of good will, for he believed that “duty holds the highest place in estimating the total worth of our actions and constitutes the condition of all the rest” (Kant & Paton, 1964, p. 64-65).
Kant believed that “to preserve one’s life is a duty” and “to help others where one can is a duty” (Kant & Paton, 1964, p. 65-66). It is the moral duty of coaches to ensure athletes are protected from psychological harm; and thus, coach behaviours should be governed by good will. Coaches who act in a controlling matter increase the risk of athletes feeling degraded, belittled, and humiliated (Bartholomew et al., 2010). This behaviour does not adequately “preserve one’s life” as Kant would encourage individuals to do in order to carry out moral duty. However, controlling coaches may justify these behaviours if they achieve a desirable outcome. For example, justifying punitive measures reflects a coach’s acceptance of these practices as being successful. This accurately portrays the consequentialist view, whereby moral action is defined by the end result, and the process of achieving such result is not considered. Autonomy-supportive coaches who focus on the holistic development of athletes depict how the coaching process, not outcome, can ensure athlete welfare is maintained.

**Hypothetical and categorical imperatives**

One of the foundational concepts of deontology is the notion of imperatives; specifically, Kant proposes imperatives manifest hypothetically or categorically. Imperatives are laws, similar to laws of reason or morality, which dictate how we “ought” to act (Kant & Paton, 1961; Nelson, 1991). The hypothetical imperative, which is a commanding law that governs the consequentialist stance of morality, signifies the “practical necessity of a possible action as a means to attain something else which one wills” whereas categorical imperatives represent “an action as objectively necessary for itself, without any reference to another end” (Kant & Wood, 2002, p. 31). The distinct difference between both concepts is evident through personal desire, which drives our behaviours. While the former imperative implies behaviours are dependent on satisfying personal desire, categorical imperatives “tell us what to do regardless of our desires” (Hooker, 2002, p. 1). Categorical and hypothetical imperatives are classified as true or false. Categorical imperatives “are true regardless of the desires or inclinations of those to whom they apply” (Nelson, 1991, p. 410). In contrast, hypothetical imperatives are contingent, as Kant explained, and may transition from true to false once the purpose of the action is changed or abandoned (Kant & Paton, 1961; Nelson, 1991). Relevant to behaviour modification, coaches demonstrate adherence towards a true categorical if they wholly commit to not punishing athletes through methods, such as exercise, benching, and yelling, irrespective of the situation. Coaches who rely on
punishment through exercise, benching, and yelling demonstrate a true hypothetical because the purpose of these methods is to satisfy personal desires, such as instilling obedience among the athletes. The hypothetical becomes false when coaches refrain from using exercise, benching, or yelling as punishment and employ alternative methods to achieve athlete obedience. Although coaches desist from using these punitive methods, they continue to seek satisfaction of personal desires, such as receiving praise for using alternative methods. The hypothetical is false because these coaches may have the inclination to resort to punishing through exercise, benching, and yelling if their new methods appear ineffective. Since the categorical imperative may not be false, it is considered inescapable (Nelson, 1991).

Parents and the coaches, “The Motivator” and “The Buddy,” who use punishment or support the use of punishment through exercise, benching, or yelling illustrate adherence to a true hypothetical imperative. Their support of these punitive methods demonstrates how they desire to achieve athlete compliance and induce a change in behaviour. The use of exercise as punishment by “The Motivator” demonstrates a hypothetical imperative, as his will is to punish behaviour he perceives to be inappropriate. In this situation, “The Motivator” desires to achieve obedience from the athletes. “The Motivator” may achieve the same result from yelling or benching, which are also classified as hypothetical imperatives, as these methods consider his personal will to achieve athlete compliance. In the case where “The Motivator” uses positive methods, such as feedback and communication, which is a common method used by “The Boss”, this represents the demonstration of actions in accordance with duty, which are subjective in nature. Since these are not the primary methods of behaviour modification used by “The Motivator”, they are subjected to change at any moment where he perceives his desire to achieve obedience is not fulfilled. Thus, this demonstrates a false hypothetical, as “The Motivator” attempts to achieve personal satisfaction or praise from others for using appropriate methods. “The Boss” mostly acts from duty, hence representing a true categorical, which is not contingent on other factors. “The Boss” refrains from using exercise as punishment, as well as yelling and benching, because he understands that these methods are inappropriate.
Normalizing punishment as the hypothetical imperative

I believe punishment methods in sport have been normalized as a means of attaining the outcome of obedience and to satisfy coaches’ personal needs. Specifically, exercise as punishment appears to be a normative practice within sport, passed down from previous generations, thus explaining the perpetual use by coaches and physical educators and acceptance by athletes (Richardson, Rosenthal, & Burak, 2012). Individuals who normalize the use of exercise as punishment do so because they perceive the method to be “good…as a means to something else”, thus making it a hypothetical imperative (Kant & Wood, 2002, p. 31). The findings suggest that “The Motivator,” who expresses disdain towards yelling and exercise, agrees that these methods are effective in the moment because they quickly result in a change in behaviour. As a response, coaches normalize punishment as an effective tool to induce a change in athlete behaviour. Consequently, punishment becomes a standardised practice that is culturally reproduced in sport as a hypothetical imperative, as future generations of coaches and athletes begin to justify the use of these punitive tactics because they attain specific, desirable results. In a study conducted by Barney and Christenson (2014), 2400 elementary aged students, grades 3-5, completed a survey to assess their knowledge of acceptable pedagogical practices in physical education classes. The findings indicate that 57% of third graders, 51% of fourth graders, and 49% of fifth graders believe that students perceived to be misbehaving should run for an extended period of time or perform high repetitions of push-ups and sit-ups. The findings suggest that exercise as punishment is normalized at a young age, thus influencing their choice to justify these practices in the future as hypothetical imperatives.

On the contrary, coaches may culturally reproduce the categorical imperative, methods that are well-intentioned and without consideration of personal desires (Hooker, 2002, p. 1). The categorical imperative fulfills the criteria of Kant’s first law of ethics, which indicates: “Act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law” (Wood, 2002, p. 38). The “law” suggests that people should behave in such ways that they would accept their actions as universal norms. “The Boss” adequately satisfies the first law of ethics, as his decision to refrain from using punishment demonstrates a positive step towards ethical coaching habits. His desires do not
dictate his behaviour, rather his behaviour is a means of ensuring that he fulfills his duty as a coach, which entails educating the athletes on the game.

**Deontological-Disciplinary Coaching Framework**

I propose that coaches should adopt a deontological coaching style because according to Kant (1785), they have a duty to act out of good will and abide to moral law, which will govern their behaviours. A deontological coaching style encourages coaches to consider asking themselves whether their punitive behaviours are moral or not. While Kant identifies morality as the goodness in one’s actions, irrespective of the outcome, morality remains a subjective concept in sport, with many questionable practices, such as exercise as punishment, being normalized as part of the sport culture. When questioning what is moral in sport, coaches should contemplate the definition of maltreatment provided by Crooks and Wolfe (2007), who indicate that abuse pertains to any behaviour that leads to or may potentially lead to physical or psychological harm. Any behaviour that fulfills the criteria of this definition should be regarded as immoral. Therefore, the mere fact that exercise, yelling, and benching as punishment may potentially lead to physical and psychological harm arguably classifies these methods as immoral. Once coaches are able to identify whether their behaviour is moral or immoral, they may choose to avoid these actions, classifying them as deontological, or they may continue to use these methods, justifying that they serve a greater purpose. Continuing to rely on behaviours that may be identified as immoral would classify this style of leadership as consequentialist coaching. As illustrated in Figure 2, this framework provides a foundation of ethical coaching that requires coaches to follow three steps: Consider, Contemplate, and Choose.
Figure 4. Deontological-Disciplinary Coaching Framework

The Deontological-Disciplinary Coaching Framework provides coaches a step-by-step guide of identifying the moral foundation of specific corrective behaviours. This framework may help to identify whether a coach’s disciplinary behaviours are moral or not and is meant to encourage coaches to lead with a deontological coaching style. Moreover, this applied framework of ethical coaching supports the reproduction of the categorical behaviour, as moral behaviour is identified and accepted culturally in sport as universal law.

Power of a Panoptic Coach

Interview and observational data illustrate the complexity in definitively categorizing coaches as autonomy-supportive or controlling. Although the athletes perceived the coaches as autonomy-supportive, each coach displayed characteristics from both interpersonal styles. I interpret the findings to suggest that the coaching styles of autonomy-supportive and controlling are better represented as a continuum rather than binary categories. Furthermore, coaches may transition across this continuum based upon various situations; however, their predominant styles are portrayed in Figure 5. Interpersonal Coaching Style Spectrum. In this study, “The Boss” appears closer towards the autonomy-supportive side, “The Motivator” on the controlling side, and “The Buddy” lies in the centre of the spectrum.
Figure 5. Interpersonal Coaching Style Spectrum

While “The Motivator” is often supportive of the athletes, as seen through his constant efforts to assist the boys with their developmental progress as baseball players, he is also the only coach to use exercise as punishment. Along with exercise as punishment, “The Motivator” raises his voice as an alternative method to discipline and control athlete behaviour. Consequently, these tactics support the findings from Stebbings and colleagues (2011) who identify the use of exercise as punishment and yelling as frequently used methods implemented by controlling coaches. Yelling and exercise as punishment are known as power-assertive techniques; methods used to influence or control how individuals may think and behave within a controlled environment (Stebbings et al., 2011). Given that baseball, and sport generally, occurs within a controlled environment, coaches may regulate team behaviour through tactics that limit athlete autonomy. As a result, athlete compliance to coach demands appears to be driven by fear or intimidation of the coercive methods utilized by controlling coaches. Punitive measures demonstrate a coach’s ability to exercise power over the athletes by setting expectations for behaviour and ensuring compliance to these expectations. Adhering to expectations demonstrates athletes’ abilities to exercise power over oneself by ensuring conformity to preconceived rules of behaviour, which Foucault (1977) defines as disciplinary power.

Disciplinary power

Foucault (1983) refers to power as the “relations between people” (p. 217). Within a relationship of power, the actions of one individual are meant to “guide another’s conduct or direct ‘the possible field of action of others’” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 35). Human behaviour is also influenced by social processes, known as technologies of power, which are meant to “determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends of domination” (Foucault, 1988, p. 18). Technologies of power affect our perceptions towards normalization, classification, and discipline. Foucault understands power to be constraining, but never exclusively restrictive (Shogan, 1999, p. 4). Instead, constraints enable the production of new skills and behaviours, and to express these newly acquired skills and behaviours “is to exercise power” (Shogan, 1999, p. 4). Debra Shogan’s (1999), The Making...
of High Performance Athletes: Discipline, Diversity, and Ethics, refers to constraints as the game rules applied in sport, that limit athletes from certain behaviours, but consequently, encourage the production of new skills. Collectively, the implementations of these “social constraints of disciplinary power is the production of ‘normalized’ athletic bodies that are circumscribed by these constraints and hence both enabled and limited in their action” (p. 11).

To implement these new skills demonstrates the athletes’ abilities to exercise a productive power. Similarly, rules applied to behaviour, which limit athletes from arriving late, talking back to a coach, or disrespecting peers, sanction the acquisition of new, appropriate behaviours, which athletes are encouraged to abide by. While coaches may use the power of punishment to constrain athletes from misbehaving, athletes may exercise power by adhering to new behaviours. Shogan (1999) indicates, “the exercise of power by coaches produce skills that athletes require for performance. Skilled athletes, in turn, constrain other athletes’ actions during competition and in doing so, exercise power” (p. 36).

Additionally, Shogan clarifies (1999):

The constraints that actually make or produce skilled actions are technologies that make up the discipline of sport and that organize space, time, and modality of movement and seek to homogenize participants. These technologies constitute what Foucault referred to as disciplinary power (p. 8).

Foucault (1975) identifies disciplinary power as:

How one may have a hold over others’ bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed, and efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, ‘docile’ bodies (p. 137-138).

Foucault understands disciplinary power to be a modern form of power, which possesses “highly specific procedural techniques…[and] presupposes a tightly knit grid of material coercions rather than the physical existence of a sovereign” (p. 9). Although Foucault negates the effectiveness or existence of a sovereign power, it appears, in sport, that within the coach-athlete relationship, coaches possess an authoritative superiority over their athletes, similar to a sovereign. Sovereign power is understood to be repressive, while its function is to prohibit, forbid, and punish individuals (Shogan 1999, p. 10). Interestingly, it appears as though “The Motivator” relies on this superior power to control the athletes. This type of
power contradicts the functionality of power as suggested by Foucault, who indicates power may be used towards the production of new skills or behaviour. Shogan (1999) agrees that coaches tend to exercise more power than athletes in the majority of situations; however she insists that the “power is not owned by coaches” (p. 10). While this may be true, it appears that controlling coaches are more likely to adopt a sovereign role, which convinces athletes that the coach owns all the power. The power relationship between “The Motivator” and the athletes may explain why athletes choose to comply with rules and expectations set by “The Motivator” to avoid punishment, even though the athletes are free to behave as they wish. The authoritative actions of “The Motivator” persuade athletes to behave accordingly.

The unbalanced power relation in the coach-athlete relationship, which favours the coach, may be explained using the concept of the panopticon. Grounded in Jeremy Bentham’s work as an ideal institution to improve the efficiency of power and surveillance, Foucault uses the concept of the panopticon to illustrate the functioning of disciplinary power, a type of power that emphasizes control and discipline of the body, “exercised fundamentally by means of surveillance” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 39). According to Foucault (1977), the panopticon serves:

To induce in the inmate a state of consciousness and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effect, even if it is discontinuous in its actions; that the perfection of power should render its actual exercise unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the person who exercises it (p. 201).

In sport, the panopticon is personified through the coach, whose presence, or the thought of his presence, transform athletes “into agents who exercise power on themselves” (Rinehart, 1998, p. 43). With respect to “The Motivator”, the use of, or fear of potentially using, punitive methods conditions the athletes to exercise self-discipline as a means of avoiding punishment. The presence of “The Motivator,” whether he is watching or not, instills in the athletes a need to comply to previously set standards of behaviour because of the athletes’ belief that surveillance is constant. As a result, the athletes are conditioned to the extent that “The Motivator” rarely needs to exercise authority over the athletes, but instead, the athletes exercise power on themselves, leading them to act. In doing so, “The Motivator,” as a panopticon, produces disciplined and docile athletes. Shogan (1999) summarizes:
Conformity takes hold of an athlete, in part, because he or she is visible. Realizing that they can be seen by coaches, athletes come to monitor their own behaviour and shape it according to the expectations of the sport. In effect, the watchful eye of the coach and the normalizing standards of the sport become embodied by the athlete. Foucault refers to this embodiment of the gaze of authority as ‘panopticism’ – ‘a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the everyday life of men (p. 37).

**Panoptic parents**

Aside from coaches, parents have a significant influence on the quality of experience young athletes endure during their athletic careers (Stein, Raedeke, & Glenn, 1999). Similar to how coach surveillance regulates athlete behaviour, parents who attend games and practices are symbolic of the panopticon, as their presence encourages the self-policing of coaches’ and athletes’ behaviour. The presence of the parents creates an internal awareness in the coaches, which may regulate the frequency and intensity of their punishment tactics. As Shogan (1999) indicates, “The awareness that one may be watched leads to an internalization of the gaze and a policing of one’s own behaviour. The inmate becomes his own guard” (p. 37). Throughout the season, “The Motivator” and “The Boss” were particularly conscious of their behaviour in response to complaining parents. Specifically, few parents expressed concerns pertaining to the amount of playing time their son received in comparison to other boys on the team. In response to parental complaints, few athletes experienced significant increases in playing time, in their preferred positions. I propose that the parents’ complaints act as constant reminders that regulate coaches’ use of benching and in the presence of complaining parents, these coaches become hyper-aware of the duration of time they keep certain boys on the bench.

Observational data indicated that some parents, specifically fathers, were heavily engaged in their son’s athletic development, as illustrated by hovering along the fence or behind the dugout during games and being on the field during practices. Coakley (2006) agrees that in youth sports, “fathers are expected to support and guide children as they learn to play sports” (p. 154). Often, a father’s support and guidance manifests through multiple roles, as many willingly take on the responsibility of a coach, trainer, mentor, manager and an agent (Coakley, 2006). For some athletes, the overly active father triggers uninvited stress and pressure. Specifically, four athletes expressed the importance of succeeding in sport as a means of satisfying their fathers. While the presence of parents instills an internal awareness
in the coaches to regulate behaviours, overly invested parents are figurative of the panopticon, as they also encourage athletes to adhere to strict training regimens. With parents who constantly watch over their sons in games and practices, the athletes are restricted to behave in ways that satisfy their parents’ expectations. Shogan (1999) states:

Since less than intense participation in practice sessions often leads to some kind of punishment, the worst of which would be fewer or no opportunities for competition, high-performance athletes come to understand that it is in their best interest to train with intensity (p. 38).

While athletes are at risk of receiving punishment from the coaches for a perceived lack of effort, they are also at risk of receiving punitive action from a heavily invested parent. Thus, athletes play and practice under constant surveillance from coaches and parents. Consequently, athletes may shift priorities from playing sport to reap the benefits of participation, to instead satisfy the desires of additional parties watching over them.

**Docile athletes**

Sport discipline encompasses two connotations, as a body of knowledge and as a method of control (Shogan, 1999). Foucault identifies discipline as a technology that “carefully fabricates or creates individuals…shapes and produces individuals through techniques of surveillance that reverberate through the social and individual bodies” (Giulianotti, 2004, p. 212). Discipline, as a system of knowledge and method of control, functions to create docile bodies, “controlled, healthy, and regulated bodies, bodies whose training extends their capacity and usefulness” (Giulianotti, 2004, p. 212). Shogan (1999) explains, “the discipline of high-performance sport produces a set of knowledges about ‘the athlete,’ who is then controlled and shaped by these knowledges in a constant pressure to conform to a standard of high performance” (p. 10). Athletes abide by these knowledges because “conformity is rewarded with applause and fame” whereas “neglect is punished with poor test results, the shame of defeat, and extra training sessions” (Shogan, 1999, p. 13). Subsequently, sport reinforces the development of a homogenized, normalized docile group of athletes, who abide to knowledge set forth by the sport discipline, and disciplinary coaches.

An unfortunate reality of some youth sport settings is that, “children involved in competitive sports grow up in a world dominated by adults with little space for freedom, self-
initiative and creativity. Adults – parents, coaches and trainers…control competitive sports at all levels” (David, 2005, p. 35). Adults rely on this control to produce docile athlete bodies. In the current study, “The Motivator” produced docile athletes, who exercise self-discipline, as a result of him being a panopticon. “The Motivator” instilled in his athletes the belief that he is constantly watching, influencing a change in behaviour that demonstrates compliance; thus, allowing “The Motivator” to control his athletes through the use, or threat of using, punitive measures.

The dependency the athletes have on “The Motivator” may also facilitate the production of docile bodies. David (2005) states, “children are fully dependent upon adults, some of whom might exploit this situation, pushing children beyond their limits, especially as they tend to be more obedient and easier to control than adult athletes” (p. 64). Therefore, fearful and controlling tactics used by “The Motivator” may easily produce docile athletes because of their innate and innocent tendency to comply with an adult figure, an expectation of youth upheld by a majority of adults. In many situations involving competitive youth athletes:

Children who train intensively work so hard to please adults that they do not develop the critical sense that will allow them to say ‘no’ to their parents or trainers when they feel they have reached their physical and mental limits (David, 2005, p. 64).

As a result, coaches may “abuse their position of power, exploiting the young athlete’s trust in their competence and authority, imposing adult norms upon them”, in the pursuit of establishing well-behaved, compliant athletes (David, 2005, p. 64).

In contrast, athletes may also exercise disciplinary power through the influence of an autonomous coach, such as “The Boss.” During the season, “The Boss” exemplifies autonomy-supportive tendencies through his empowering coaching approach. His focus on educating the athletes and providing them with opportunities of “meaningful choice” without the influence of coercive tactics epitomizes an autonomy-supportive coach (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Katz & Assor, 2007). Of importance, “The Boss” did not rely on exercise as punishment or yelling to control athlete behaviour, but instead, questioned the purpose and effectiveness of these tactics. Interestingly, “The Boss” managed to achieve athlete compliance as well. Athletes exercised self-discipline out of respect for “The Boss.” In the presence of this coach, whether he was paying attention or not, the athletes demonstrated
self-control and behaved as expected by the coaching staff. Arguably, athlete compliance in this situation may be a result of “The Motivator” still being present; however, observational data confirmed that the athletes behaved equally as well under the supervision of “The Boss” alone. Thus, athletes recognized constant surveillance from the coaches. Their choice to exercise self-discipline seemed to be driven by fear and respect stemming from the surveillance of “The Motivator” and “The Boss” respectively. Power stemming from coach surveillance establishes a functional system of discipline that athletes learn to exercise upon themselves. This mode of discipline “produces subjected and practiced…docile bodies” (Shogan, 1999, p. 9).

**Emotionally Abusive Coaching Tactics**

The findings may also be interpreted through theories stemming from the emotional maltreatment literature. Emotional maltreatment encompasses both emotional abuse and emotional neglect (Stirling, 2009). Several definitions have been suggested to characterize what constitutes emotional abuse. Mash and Wolfe (2014) defined emotional abuse as “abusive behavior that involves acts or omissions by parents or caregivers that cause, or could cause, serious behavioral, cognitive, emotional, or mental disorders” (p. 514). Similarly, emotional abuse has also been defined as “a pattern of deliberate non-contact behaviours within a critical relationship between an individual and caregiver that has the potential to be harmful” (Stirling & Kerr, 2008, p. 178). The depth of these definitions indicates advancements in the maltreatment literature. Stirling (2009) indicated that emotional abuse is represented by “a pattern of deliberate non-contact behaviours within a critical relationship that has a potential to be harmful” (p. 1092), which is consistent with the former definitions. Generally, non-contact behaviours that are considered emotionally harmful fall under the categories of: physical behaviours, verbal behaviours, and denial of attention and support (Stirling & Kerr, 2008).

Within sport, “physically emotionally abusive behaviours [include] acts of aggression such as hitting and throwing objects at the athlete or in the presence of the athlete” (Stirling & Kerr, 2008, p. 175). On the contrary, a verbally emotionally abusive coach will exhibit behaviours such as yelling and shouting at an athlete or team of athletes (Stirling & Kerr, 2008). It will often include “belittling, name-calling, degrading comments, and humiliation” as well (Stirling, & Kerr, 2008, p. 175). The final category of emotionally abusive behaviour
is the denial of attention and support, which may occur through acts of expulsion or excluding an athlete or athletes from participating in practices or games (Stirling & Kerr, 2008). Arguably, the denial of attention and support may be interpreted as a form of emotional neglect, since the caregiver is becoming “emotionally unavailable” (Egeland, 2009).

Hornor (2011) acknowledged that emotional maltreatment “has been slow to achieve recognition as a serious social problem” due to difficulties in identifying the associated negative effects (p. 436). Furthermore, there is a misunderstanding that emotional maltreatment is less severe than physical and sexual abuse; further, emotional maltreatment may be the most prevalent form of maltreatment suffered by children (Hornor, 2011; Barnet, Miller-Perrin, & Perrin, 2005). Youth victims of emotional maltreatment “feel worthless, damaged, unloved, unwanted, or endangered” (Hornor, 2011, p. 436). Extreme cases of emotional maltreatment may increase the likelihood of children developing depression and anxiety, obesity, traumatic stress, and suicidal tendencies (Hornor, 2011). Hornor (2011) argued that emotional maltreatment, more so than physical or sexual abuse, “may predispose a person to developing depression or anxiety” (p. 438). Additionally, children who were emotionally abused also struggle with socializing and developing interpersonal relationships (Spetus, Wong, Halligan, & Seremetis, 2003) and may be more likely to develop poor emotional regulation skills, consequently leading to the inability of appropriately expressing feelings of anger and frustration (Hornor, 2011).

David (2005) concedes “too often coaches and parents perceive child athletes as miniature adults and treat them accordingly, forgetting that children are vulnerable and in a state of perpetual physical and psychological evolution” (p. 53-54). To undermine the vulnerability of youth athletes participating in competitive sport makes children susceptible to abusive coaching practices and the accompanying side-effects of these acts of maltreatment. The following sections will explore in detail the implications of coaches using benching and yelling as corrective strategies and how these methods may be representative of emotionally abusive coaching practices.

**Benching as an Emotional Neglectful Practice**

Emotional neglect is referred to as “an act of omission…a failure to meet the emotional needs of the child” (Egeland, 2009). Emotional neglectful parents are described as
being “emotionally unavailable, detached, avoidant, and unresponsive to their child’s needs or desires” (Egeland, 2009). A more recent definition provided by Mash and Wolfe (2014), identifies emotional neglect as the “failure to provide for a child’s basic emotional needs, including marked inattention to the child’s needs for affection, refusal of or failure to provide needed psychological care…” (p. 510).

In the context of sport, athletes may experience emotional neglect when punished through benching. Although the coaches attribute benching with having a strategic purpose, they admit that benching may be used as punishment in situations whereby the athletes are disrespectful to others. Furthermore, some athletes interpret benching as punishment when they experience it frequently and when the coach does not communicate reasons for sitting them. Sitting an athlete on the bench may increase athletes’ feelings of worthlessness, increase anxiety, and decrease self-esteem (Gurgis & Kerr, 2013). Moreover, benching separates the coach from the athlete, which may prevent the coach from adequately fulfilling his/her “duty” within this critical relationship. Instead of considering the psychological well-being of the athletes, coaches may rely on benching to obtain a specific result, such as compliance. Benching may demonstrate inadequate “nurturing or affection from a coach,” which is evident from a coach who provides less performance feedback and denies the athletes of attention (Stirling, 2009, p. 1095).

In the early child development literature, denial of attention occurs through the use of time-outs. Time-out (TO) is defined as “a period of time in a less reinforcing environment made contingent on a behavior” (Brantner & Doherty, 1983, p. 87). TO is often categorized as an incapacitative sanction, achieved through social isolation and meant to “confine individuals or limit their physical opportunities for unacceptable behavior” (Miethe & Lu, 2005, p. 509). TO is said to be effective because it requires the removal of a desirable stimulus in response to inappropriate behaviour (Everett, Hupp, & Olmi, 2010, p. 236). In sport, the desirable stimulus is playing time. Coaches are at an advantage because “the opportunity to participate in practice or to play in a game is a tool that the coach can leverage to gain compliance with team expectations” (Richardson et al., 2012, p. 363). Therefore minimizing playing time or removing an athlete from the starting lineup conveys the message that athlete behaviour is inappropriate or unacceptable (Richardson et al., 2012). Concerns stemming from socially isolating punishments, such as TO and benching, are that
the emotional needs of the dependent, reprimanded individuals, are deprived of attention and care from an adult figure. Emotional neglect may lead to feelings of unhappiness, depression, humiliation and social withdrawal from others, side-effects commonly reported by athletes who have been emotionally abused (Gervis & Dunn 2004; Stirling & Kerr, 2007).

Collectively, these side-effects produce a “mental pain”, which may be as equally debilitating as the physical pain tolerated by exercise as punishment. Athletes who endure benching as punishment may interpret their experiences as an indication of being a weaker or inadmissible player on the team, thus contributing to a negative self-schema in sport.

Rosenthal and colleagues (2010) argue that for benching to be an effective learning practice, coaches must communicate with their athletes the reason playing time has been withheld and the expectations that would grant athletes the opportunity to play again (p. 47). If benching and effective communication occur simultaneously, one may interpret this method as discipline. “The Boss” would often communicate with his athletes when they would play; however, only with a few players did he provide a justification as to why they were originally put on the bench. Athletes, who “The Boss” perceived to be the most talented, often received an explanation as to why they were sitting, whereas athletes who were considered weaker players, were only notified when they were expected to play. The influence of benching on athletes, with or without associated communication, is an area for further study.

**Yelling as an Emotionally Abusive Practice**

Glaser (2002) indicates that emotional abuse is characterised by a relationship between a child and caregiver, which involves non-physical, but detrimental interactions. Stirling and Kerr (2008) extend this definition, indicating that emotional abuse is a “pattern of deliberate non-contact behaviours,” implying that it is recurring, and specify that emotional abuse occurs within a critical relationship (p. 178). Emotional abuse is categorized as either verbal or non-verbal (Stirling, 2009). Verbal emotional abuse is evident in relationships whereby coaches yell derogatory and degrading comments at the athletes (Stirling, 2009). These comments can be humiliating, intimidating, and insulting (Stirling, 2009). Non-verbal abuse manifests through behaviours that include hitting and throwing objects, purposeful denial of attention and exclusion from activities, which is evident through tactics, such as benching (Stirling, 2009).
Similar to benching, yelling may be psychologically damaging to recipients. Research suggests that the severity of symptoms stemming from emotional abuse is comparable to that of child sexual and physical abuse (Gibb, Butler, & Beck 2003). In a study conducted by DeRobertis (2004), who examined maternal emotional abusive practices that included yelling, feelings of worthlessness emerged as the dominant symptom experienced by participants. Additionally, children who are yelled at frequently have an increased risk of displaying antisocial behaviours and may experience a lower self-esteem and other psychopathological symptoms (Brenner & Fox 1998; Joubert 1991; Kazdin, Griest & Esveldt-Dawson 1984; Nagaraja 1984).

Although “The Motivator” frequently engaged in yelling, it was neither derogatory nor degrading; however, he often used his voice to intimidate athletes, thus demonstrating how athletes may comply out of fear for the coach. There is a misconception in sport that verbal abuse from a coach can increase athlete resilience during competition. Coakley (1998) explains:

In coach–athlete relationships, it is generally accepted that coaches can humiliate, shame and derogate athletes to push them to be the best they can be. Athletes are expected to respond to humiliation by being tougher competitors willing to give even more of themselves in their quest for excellence (p. 503).

Some athletes perceived yelling to be unnecessary and a sign of inadequate coaching, as some participants suggest it should not be a tactic coaches rely on to punish. Yelling may infer that the coaches have lost control of a situation during a practice or game, consequently, leading to an outburst of emotions, which serve to induce a change in behaviour.

When watching their children participating in competitive sport, parents may develop “intensive emotions and feelings that they may lose all sense of perspective and self-control (David, 2005, p. 221). Parents who yell at their children during the car ride home, may do so because they are unable to control athlete behaviour when on the field or as a means by which to express their own frustration with their child’s performance and to punish them for perceived poor performance. In response, athletes may interpret yelling as an indication of parents caring for their development as elite athletes; however, in doing so, there is an increasing risk of athletes internalizing the verbal comments and developing the symptoms associated with this form of emotional abuse.
Academic and Coach Training

Evidently, coaches do not receive the same degree of holistic, intensive training as teaching does. As a result, amateur sport may often be led by unqualified individuals. Whereas teachers receive formal, curriculum-driven education led by a reputable institution, before consideration for employment, coaches are often provided a position with little to no relevant training. In fact, there are no entrance-to-practice requirements of coaches. Some relevant training may occur through non-formal and informal modes of education, such as workshops, conferences, or individual playing experience (Lyle & Cushion, 2010). It appears that the expectations that parents have for teachers supersede those for coaches, potentially because educational training may insinuate that teachers receive appropriate disciplinary training. The higher education received by teachers may explain why the participants of this study, specifically, the coaches and parents, feel apt to intervene if their child is being punished at school. As well, participants, such as parents, may value education more so than sport, thus influencing their inclination to interfere if a problem is presented in the classroom. These questions warrant further study.

Amateur youth coaching is dependent on volunteerism, which may explain why coaching practices are less often criticized in comparison to teaching. Lyle and Cushion (2010) explain “program designers try to develop training programs that require limited hours of investment from coaches and that can be accessible to a large number of coaches” (p. 149). Unfortunately, there is a scarcity of evidence that correlates coach education with coach competency, which may imply that the effectiveness of current coach education avenues are weak (Abraham, Collins, & Martindale, 2006; Cushion, Armour, & Jones, 2003; Cushion et al. 2010).

Interestingly, the two separate cultures of sport and education, which tend to the physical, psychological, social and spiritual development of young people, share distinct views on training and preparation of leaders. Whereas academia follows a selective process that requires teaching candidates to undergo years of meticulous training, the sport culture encourages any individual to volunteer, with significantly lower expectations of academic training, for the sake of providing children an opportunity to participate in organized physical activity. Even when obtaining further training, coach education appears to focus primarily on technical and tactical instruction for performance enhancement and less on the coaching
process (Cushion et al., 2013). Gould and colleagues (1999) indicate coaches tend to receive an abundance of basic information within a short period of time; yet are never adequately prepared and taught everything required to be a complete coach. There is no guarantee that coaches, who progress through the required training, are appropriate candidates to work with athletes, especially with children. David (2005) indicates “coaches are not sufficiently aware of children’s complex physical and psychological developmental needs and the stages they go through,” which speaks to the inadequacy of coach training. (p. 54). Lyle and Cushion (2010) believe “this attempt to reach as many coaches as possible might increase difficulty of measuring the impact of a coach education training programs” (p. 149). The question remains: should athlete welfare be compromised through poorly trained coaches, for the sake of providing athletes opportunities to play? It appears that the answer is yes, in a culture that emphasizes winning over personal development (David, 2005, p. 34). It is evident through this study and other empirical and anecdotal evidence that maltreatment is normalized and, to an extent, glorified in sport through practices, such as exercise, benching, and yelling as punishment, that have been rationalized as part of the game and beneficial for athlete development.

**Exercise: Punishment or Training?**

Coaches, athletes, and academics often question the distinction between exercise as punishment versus exercise as training. Previous research on the use of exercise for behaviour modification questions the integrity of this practice as a punishment (Gurgis & Kerr 2013; Gurgis & Kerr, 2014). The athletes participating in this study attempted to distinguish between the two quantitatively. It appears, athletes perceive exercise as punishment to consist of higher repetitions, relative to the physical regimen they routinely follow. According to the athletes, coaches who assign an unusual, strenuous amount of exercise, are punishing, or disciplining the athletes through exercise.

Quantifying exercise as punishment does not suffice when attempting to distinguish exercise’s punitive use from its training purpose, nor does the quantity justify the use of this punishment. The flaw in numerically categorizing exercise as punishment has led to a few participants challenging the authenticity of classifying this method as punishment, as seen through the following questions: Is one lap really punishment? And, what’s the difference between five laps as training and five laps as punishment? The timing of the punishment and
the coaches’ intentions when assigning exercise must be considered when distinguishing exercise as punishment from training.

Many organizations recognize exercise as punishment to be detrimental towards athlete welfare. Moreover, organizations, such as the Canadian Centre for Ethics in Sport, deem exercise as punishment as an illogical and unrelated response to poor performance or misbehaviour. In contrast, many organizations advocate for children to be physically active and engage in regular exercise, to experience physical, psychological, and social improvements in their health. Exercise is defined as “physical activity that is planned, structured, repetitive, and purposive in the sense that improvement or maintenance of one or more components of physical fitness is an objective” (Caspersen, Powell, & Christenson, 1985, p. 128). Rather than planning the use of exercise as punishment, “The Motivator” spontaneously assigns exercise because he intends to punish perceived misbehaviour. Unlike exercise for training purposes, which requires extensive planning and consideration of the physical abilities of each athlete, the impulsive use of exercise as punishment does not and may increase the risk of injury in athletes. Furthermore, to reap the most benefits from exercise as training, coaches may require athletes to engage in physical conditioning programs when well-rested. In contrast, exercise as punishment may occur at any time, with no consideration of rest. The Australian Sports Commission (2000) released a policy indicating, “Training techniques that give extra physical loads to children as ‘punishment’ can be dangerous to the health of children who are already physically tired.” Athletes are vulnerable to physical, bodily harm when engaging in unstructured, exercise as punishment after participating in long practices and tedious physical drills.
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study suggest that punishment manifests in youth sport through the use of exercise, benching, and yelling. In addition to the purpose of punishment, a few participants understood exercise to be an act of discipline, whereas benching was interpreted as disciplinary, motivational, and strategic. Participants explicitly agreed yelling was used to punish, when delivered with a negative tone or demeaning comments; however, if yelling involved encouraging statements, participants had a tendency to accept this tactic as motivational.

The study suggests there is a weak correlation between interpersonal coaching styles and the use of punishment. Stebbings and colleagues (2011) suggested controlling coaches are likely to use exercise as punishment more often; however, the majority of athletes and parents from the study shared positive appraisals of the coaches, to the extent of classifying them as autonomy-supportive, despite “The Motivator” using exercise and yelling as punitive tactics and “The Buddy” supporting the notion that these tactics should be used more frequently. It appears the binary juxtaposition of autonomy-supportive and controlling styles of coaching is problematic. Are coaches, who attempt to foster their athletes’ development, considered controlling if they use exercise as punishment? The study suggests that interpersonal coaching styles are most accurately depicted if observed along a continuum. The autonomy-supportive-controlling coach continuum acknowledges that coaches may possess characteristics from both interpersonal styles depending on the situation.

In spite of coaches justifying the use of benching for a strategic purpose, this tactic may compromise the emotional well-being of athletes, if interpreted as punishment. Similar to timeouts in parenting and in education, benching may be regarded as a form of emotional neglect, which communicates to the individuals enduring the punishment that they are not wanted or valued. Consequently, athletes who experience benching, as a socially isolating punishment, may have a lower self-esteem, decreased perception of self-worth, and feelings of shame. Coaches must be educated on the potentially adverse effects that surface from benching as punishment. To preserve the psychological welfare of athletes, coaches must ensure adequate communication is made with athletes who explains the strategic purpose of
being on the bench. Furthermore, coaches are advised to refrain from using benching as punishment to reduce the psychological harm experienced by athletes.

Interestingly, punishment has been normalized in sport for its ability to achieve a desirable outcome. As long as exercise, yelling, or benching as punishment achieves a desired result, coaches, athletes, and parents may continue to validate these tactics as adequate tools of control. Accordingly, these punitive methods are socially reproduced within a culture that rarely questions the ethics of our behaviours, in favour of obtaining specific behaviours or performance outcomes. Athlete welfare may be threatened if consideration is not given to the use of punishment. To disseminate knowledge that illustrates the importance of using positive disciplinary strategies, aids in the removal of the current, normalized ideology that punishment through exercise, yelling, or benching is acceptable in sport.

**Limitations**

Despite the significant findings that have emerged from this study, there are few limitations that ought to be addressed. The most apparent limitation was the reliance on interviewing as the sole method of data collection. Interviews are susceptible to participant biases, specifically, socially desirable biases, whereby participants attempt to portray themselves in a more culturally acceptable manner (Chung & Monroe, 2003). The sensitive nature of youth punishment may have influenced few adult participants, or athletes, to respond to interview questions in such a way that their answers appeared more socially appropriate.

The study was limited insomuch as the study focused on one team, from one sport, one geographical region, and one specific level of competition. Furthermore, the study consisted exclusively of male coaches and athletes. Findings are contingent on the experiences of this specific sample; however, may not be indicative of the punitive interpretations shared by other coaches, athletes, and parents.

**Future Directions**

The findings of the current study suggest several directions for future research. Firstly, the study should be reproduced with a more diverse sample population, which may include, female athletes and coaches, athletes and coaches from an array of sports, as well as
athletes and coaches from different levels of competition. More diverse samples may introduce new perspectives towards punishment use in sport, or, it may confirm the findings suggested in this study.

Future studies on punishment use in sport may consider implementing a new methodological study design, such as a multimethod or mixed methods approach to collecting data. Distribution of surveys or questionnaires may account for the perspectives of a broader population. Alternatively, conducting the study as an ethnography may illustrate the cultural significance punishment has in the lives of coaches, athletes, and parents.

Finally, future research and practice should consider developmentally appropriate, disciplinary strategies that may be implemented in youth sport. To replace exercise, benching and yelling as punishment, extensive research is required to develop effective and safe techniques that help athletes understand right from wrong. Furthermore, coaches must be educated on these techniques and the importance of leading with proper, moral disciplinary methods, which safeguard our athletes.
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Athletes’ Interview Guide

1. How much did you enjoy your season?
2. What was good about this season?
3. What was not so good about this season?
4. Do you plan on playing baseball next season? Why or Why not?
5. Do you plan on returning to this team next season? Why or Why not?
6. What are some reasons you think kids dropout of sport?
7. What would influence you to dropout of sport?
8. When you don’t do something the coach wants, what does he do?
9. Does being punished through exercise or benching influence your satisfaction in sport?
10. How do you feel running sprints or doing push-ups as punishment?
11. Why do you think coaches make players do sprints or push-ups?
12. How do you feel about being benched?
13. Why do you think coaches bench players?
14. Is benching punishment or discipline? Why or Why not?
15. How would you punish athletes who misbehave?
16. How would you discipline athletes who misbehave?

Appendix B: Coaches’ Interview Guide

1. Did you enjoy the season?
2. What was positive about this season?
3. What was negative about this season?
4. What could we have done to improve this season?
5. Do you think the kids had fun this season?
6. Are there times where you think the kids may not have had fun?
7. Is there anything you regret doing this season?
8. Do you think all the kids will return next season?
9. If a kid were to change teams what do you think the reason may be?
10. When kids misbehave, what do you think is the best way to handle it?
11. Do you see any differences between punishment and discipline?
12. What are the best tactics to punish athletes?
13. What are the best tactics to discipline athletes?
14. Do you view the use of exercise drills as an effective method of punishing athletes?
15. Do you view benching as an effective method of punishing athletes?
16. Can these methods influence athletes to dropout of sport?
17. Are their better methods to teach young athletes right from wrong?

Appendix C: Parents’ Interview Guide
1. What did you enjoy about this season?
2. What did you not enjoy about this season?
3. What do you think could have been done better to improve this season?
4. Do you think the kids had fun this season?
5. Are there times where you think the kids may not have had fun? If so, why?
6. Is there anything you wish you had done differently during this past season?
7. Do you think all the kids will return next season? If so, why? If not, why not?
8. If a kid were to change teams what do you think the reason may be?
9. Do you think kids were well disciplined this year? Explain.
10. Do you think the kids were motivated this year? Explain.
Appendix D: Parental/Guardian Letter of Information and Consent Form

Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Joseph Gurgis and I am currently a Master’s student at the University of Toronto, Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education. I am conducting a study about the quality of children’s experiences in sport and I would like to invite your son to participate. Please read the information below, and feel free to ask questions before deciding to consent.

Study Objective:

In Canada, it is quite common for youth athletes to drop out of sport before the age of 15. Various reasons such as a lack of fun, coach conflicts, and a lack of playing time have been reported as factors influencing early termination from sport. These reasons may contribute to a poor quality of experience, thus influencing young athletes’ withdrawal from sport. Therefore, through this study I hope to gain a better understanding of the things that contribute to young athletes’ satisfaction or dissatisfaction in sport.

Procedures/Description of the Research Methodology

The study will consist of a season long participant observation and a post-season interview with your child. I will be joining your child’s team as an assistant coach for the 2015 summer season. I have chosen to coach your child because I feel my credentials will benefit his development as an athlete. I have played 16 years of rep baseball, including two years with the University of Toronto Varsity Blues. I was a head counselor at the North Toronto Baseball Camp. I am also a certified Personal Training Specialist and a NCCP coach. I also have an up-to-date police check. Your child will meet me at his first practice, where I will introduce myself and explain the objective of my study. Throughout the season I will interact with the team during practices and games. My experiences as a coach and player have provided me the tactical and technical skills necessary to benefit your child’s athletic development. My involvement as a researcher will not distract your child during practices or games. I will take notes about my experiences with the kids and with the coaches. At the end of the season, an interview will take place that will involve the kids reflecting on the quality of their experience throughout the season and whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with the season and reasons for such answers.
Participation
Should you consent to your child’s participation in this study, your child will subsequently be given the opportunity to consent or decline participation themselves. An initial meeting with your child will be scheduled to explain the study and his involvement, as well as provide him with an opportunity to ask questions. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your child may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time, with no penalty. Withdrawing from the study will not impact your child’s participation on the team. If participants do withdraw from the study, information acquired/disclosed up to point of withdrawal will be destroyed and will not be included in the researcher’s data analysis. Ultimately, if your child does not agree to participate, regardless of your consent, the study will not proceed.

Potential Harms Associated with Participation
There are no direct short-term or long-term risks anticipated to your child as a result of participation in this project. However, it is possible that your child may feel some embarrassment or emotional upset when recounting unpleasant sport experiences. Should this occur, your child may decline answering any questions, pause the interview, reschedule the interview or cease participation in the study without penalty. There are no anticipated risks regarding your child’s interaction with me on the field.

Potential Benefits Associated with Participation
Participation in this study benefits your child, as it will allow him a chance for personal reflection and expression, something that may enable better understanding of his past or current sporting experiences. The study will also have applied implications by informing sport authorities regarding the use and effects of common practices, in addition to informing coach education workshops about ways to maximize youth sport experiences. Finally, your child will receive tactical and technical training in baseball, which will potentially enhance performance.

Privacy and Confidentially
Your child’s identity will remain anonymous throughout the study and in any publications that may stem from this study. More specifically, prior to data acquisition, participants will be assigned a pseudonym known only to the researcher. Any data collected during the study will be identified using only this name. Additionally, any data collected with potentially
identifying information will be stored on the researcher’s password protected computer. Only when disclosures of maltreatment occur is confidentiality not protected, as by law, the researcher is required to report any occurrences of maltreatment.

**Compensation**

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

The study will be conducted by Joseph Gurgis, a Master’s student in the Graduate Department of Exercise Sciences at the University of Toronto. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Gretchen Kerr, Professor and Acting-Dean in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education. If you have any question or concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to contact Joseph Gurgis at joseph.gurgis@mail.utoronto.ca or Gretchen Kerr, Ph.D. at gretchen.kerr@utoronto.ca. More specifically, if at any time you have any questions or concerns about your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics & Review Board at the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3273.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

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**Consent Form**

Please provide your consent to participate in the study and return the form to the researcher either in person or via email. Also, please keep a separate copy for your records, in case you wish to review this form at a later date.

By signing this form, I agree that:

- The purpose and objectives of this study have been clearly explained to me.
- Any questions that I asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- The possible harms and discomforts, as well as the possible benefits of this study have been explained to me.
- I understand my right, as well as my child’s right to participate or withdraw from this study at any time.
- The decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty.
- I am free now, and in the future, to ask any questions about the study by contacting the investigators, or the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board whose phone number is found on the previous page.
- I have been assured that records will be kept confidential and that no identifying information of my child will be released or printed in the future without my permission.
- All data (e.g. audio, electronic and paper copies) will be kept until full analyses have been performed and research has been completed.
- I have read and understand the information above and have had the opportunity to ask any questions. My child hereby has my consent to participate in this study.

Child’s Name

------------------------------------------------------

Parent or Guardian’s Name

------------------------------------------------------

Parent or Guardian’s Signature

------------------------------------------------------

Date

------------------------------------------------------
Appendix E: Letter of Assent for Youth Athletes

Dear Athlete,

My name is Joseph Gurgis, and I am a student at the University of Toronto. My email and phone number are at the bottom of this letter. I would like to invite you to participate in a study about your experiences as a youth baseball athlete. I am interested in your views of things in baseball that are positive and make you feel good, as well as things in baseball that make you feel not so good.

I will join your team this summer as an assistant coach and will be observing your daily baseball routine. I will also teach you new skills and strategies in baseball, which I have learned in my 16 years of playing and 5 years of coaching. At the end of the summer I would like to interview you, at a place you and your parent(s) feel comfortable. If you agree, the interview will be recorded and will last about 30-60 minutes. I will ask you some questions about baseball and your time as a baseball player. Your job is to answer questions as best as possible. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers to the questions being asked.

**Participation**

You can choose to participate or not. If you don’t want to join the study, I will still help to coach you. In the interview, you may decide not to answer a question if you don’t want to or don’t feel comfortable. Even if you agree to participate, you may change your mind at any time and there won’t be any consequences for you.

**Confidentiality**

The stories and experiences you share during the study will not be shared with anyone else, and your real name will not be used. All information collected will be safely kept by me on my password-protected computer. The only time when your stories will be shared is if you indicate that a coach has been abusive (e.g. hit you). It is the law that any time a child is abused, this is reported to the people in charge. Contact information to children’s helpline will be provided to help if these things have happened to you.

**Risks**

There is a chance that you may feel upset if you tell me a story that is not a happy one. If you feel upset, we can stop the interview or take a break or choose to skip the question. This information will not be shared with anyone else.
Benefits
There are no direct benefits to you by participating in this study. However, your answers may help teach coaches and other adults about ways to make sport more fun for young athletes. Also, you will benefit by receiving important instruction on how to improve your baseball skills. I have coached and played for many years and will be able to help you this season as an assistant coach.

Compensation
You will not receive any gifts or money for participating in this study. If at any time you have questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact Joseph Gurgis at joseph.gurgis@mail.utoronto.ca, or my supervisor Dr. Gretchen Kerr, at gretchen.kerr@utoronto.ca. Also if at any time, you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics & Review Board at the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3273. If you do wish to participate in the study, please sign below and return this sheet to Joseph. Please keep a second copy of this letter for your own personal records, in case you wish to refer to this form at a later date.

Sincerely,

___________________

Consent to Participate
I have read and understand the information above and have had the opportunity to ask any questions. I agree to be a participant in this study.

Participant’s Name (print name)
..................................................

Participant’s Signature (sign name)
..................................................

Date
..................................................
Appendix F: Coach Letter of Information and Consent Form

Dear Coach,

You are invited to participate in a research study that will examine your perceptions of athlete satisfaction in sport. Please read the information below, and feel free to ask questions before deciding to consent.

Study Objective:
In Canada many young people drop out of organized sport by the time they reach 15 years of age. Various reasons such as a lack of fun, coach conflicts, competing demands, and a lack of playing time have been reported as factors influencing early termination from sport. These reasons may contribute to a poor quality of experience, thus influencing young athletes to withdraw from sport. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to observe what maintains athlete satisfaction or contributes to dissatisfaction when participating in sport.

Description of the Research
The study will consist of a season long participant observation and a post-season interview. Granted your permission, I will be joining you and your team as an assistant coach for the 2015 summer season. Throughout the season I will interact with the team during practices and games. My experiences as a coach and player have provided me with proficient tactical and technical skills to benefit athlete development. My involvement as a researcher will not interfere with team dynamics, nor will it distract you or the athletes from regular routine. I will take notes about my experiences after games and practices. At the end of the season, an interview will take place that will involve you reflecting on your experiences as a coach and your philosophy of coaching.

Participation
Should you consent I will join you and the rest of the coaching staff for the 2015 summer season. Please be aware that I have an updated police check, as well as updated coaching qualifications. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time, with no penalty. Withdrawing from interviews will not interfere with your coaching responsibility. If you do withdraw from the study, information acquired up to point of withdrawal will remain confidential and will not be included in the researcher’s data analysis. However, if you choose to decline my attendance as an assistant coach/researcher, then I will not proceed with the study, nor work with any of the athletes.
Potential Harms, Injuries, Discomforts or Inconveniences

There are no direct short-term or long-term risks anticipated as a result of participation in this project. However, it is possible you may feel embarrassed or emotionally distressed when recounting unpleasant sport experiences. Should this occur, you may decline answering any questions, pause the interview, reschedule the interview or cease participation in the study without penalty. There are no anticipated risks regarding your interaction with me on the field. You will receive quality coaching influenced by my athletic and academic background.

Potential Benefits

Participation in this study benefits your team, as it will allow them a chance for personal reflection and expression, something that may enable better understanding of their past or current sporting experiences. The study will also have applied implications by informing sport authorities regarding the use and effects of common practices, in addition to informing coach education workshops about ways to maximize youth sport experiences. Finally, you will receive coaching assistance as I offer tactical and technical training in baseball, which will potentially enhance team performance.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Your identity will remain anonymous throughout the study and in any publications that may stem from this study. More specifically, prior to data acquisition, participants will be assigned a pseudonym known only to the researcher. Any data collected during the study (e.g. audio recordings or fieldnotes) will be identified using only this name. Additionally, any data collected with potentially identifying information will be stored on the researcher’s password protected computer. Only when disclosures of maltreatment occur is confidentiality not protected, as by law, the researcher is required to report any occurrences of maltreatment.

Compensation

There is no compensation for participating in this study.

The study will be conducted by Joseph Gurgis, a Master’s student in the Graduate Department of Exercise Sciences at the University of Toronto. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Gretchen Kerr, Professor and Acting-Dean in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education. If you have any question or concerns about the study,
please do not hesitate to contact Joseph Gurgis at joseph.gurgis@mail.utoronto.ca or Gretchen Kerr, Ph.D. at gretchen.kerr@utoronto.ca. More specifically, if at any time you have any questions or concerns about your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics & Review Board at the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3273.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

________________

Consent Form

Please provide your consent to participate in the study and return the form to the researcher either in person or via email. Also, please keep a separate copy for your records, in case you wish to review this form at a later date.

By signing this form, I agree that:

- The purpose and objectives of this study have been clearly explained to me.
- Any questions that I asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- The possible harms and discomforts, as well as the possible benefits of this study have been explained to me.
- I understand my right to participate or withdraw from this study at any time.
- The decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty.
- I am free now, and in the future, to ask any questions about the study by contacting the investigators, or the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board whose phone number is found on the previous page.
- I have been assured that records will be kept confidential and that no identifying information will be released or printed in the future without my permission.
- All data (e.g. audio, electronic and paper copies) will be kept until full analyses have been performed and research has been completed.
- I have read and understand the information above and have had the opportunity to ask any questions. I hereby give consent to participate in this study.
Coach’s Name

..............................................................

Coach’s Signature

..............................................................

Date

..............................................................
Appendix G: Parent Letter of Information and Consent Form

Dear Parent,

You are invited to participate in a research study that will examine your perceptions of athlete satisfaction in sport, in response to coaches’ methods of motivation and discipline. Please read the information below, and feel free to ask questions before deciding to consent.

Study Objective:
In Canada many young people drop out of organized sport by the time they reach 15 years of age. Various reasons such as a lack of fun, coach conflicts, competing demands, and a lack of playing time have been reported as factors influencing early termination from sport. These reasons may contribute to a poor quality of experience, thus influencing young athletes to withdraw from sport. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the motivational and disciplinary methods used by coaches, and the potential influence of these methods on youth athletes’ experiences in sport.

Description of the Research
The study will consist of a season long participant observation and a post-season interview. I will be joining your child’s team as an assistant coach for the 2015 summer season. Throughout the season I will interact with the team during practices and games. My experiences as a coach and player have provided me with proficient tactical and technical skills to benefit athlete development. My involvement as a researcher will not interfere with team dynamics, nor will it distract/interrupt you or the athletes from regular routine. I will take notes about my experiences after games and practices. From time to time throughout the season I will discuss with you your views of the baseball season and your perceptions of your son’s experiences with the team.

Participation
Should you consent I will make time to speak with you throughout the 2015 summer season. Please be aware that I have an updated police check, as well as updated coaching qualifications. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from this study at any time, with no penalty. Withdrawing from the interview will not interfere with your participation as a spectator. If you do withdraw from the study, information acquired up to point of withdrawal will remain confidential and will not be included in the researcher’s data analysis.
**Potential Harms, Injuries, Discomforts or Inconveniences**
There are no direct short-term or long-term risks anticipated as a result of participation in this project. However, it is possible you may feel embarrassed or emotionally distressed when recounting unpleasant sport experiences. Should this occur, you may decline answering any questions or cease participation in the study without penalty. There are no anticipated risks regarding your interaction with me on and off the field.

**Potential Benefits**
Participation in this study benefits you, as it will provide you a chance for personal reflection and expression, something that may provide insight on improving the culture of baseball.

**Privacy and Confidentially**
Your identity will remain anonymous throughout the study and in any publications that may stem from this study. More specifically, prior to data acquisition, participants will be assigned a pseudonym known only to the researcher. Any data collected during the study (e.g. audio recordings or fieldnotes) will be identified using only this name. Additionally, any data collected with potentially identifying information will be stored on the researcher’s password protected computer. Only when disclosures of maltreatment occur is confidentiality not protected, as by law, the researcher is required to report any occurrences of maltreatment.

**Compensation**
There is no compensation for participating in this study.

The study will be conducted by Joseph Gurgis, a Master’s student in the Graduate Department of Exercise Sciences at the University of Toronto. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Gretchen Kerr, Professor and Acting-Dean in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education. If you have any question or concerns about the study, please do not hesitate to contact Joseph Gurgis at joseph.gurgis@mail.utoronto.ca or Gretchen Kerr, Ph.D. at gretchen.kerr@utoronto.ca. More specifically, if at any time you have any questions or concerns about your child’s rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics & Review Board at the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or (416) 946-3273.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Please provide your consent to participate in the study and return the form to the researcher either in person or via email. Also, please keep a separate copy for your records, in case you wish to review this form at a later date.

By signing this form, I agree that:

- The purpose and objectives of this study have been clearly explained to me.
- Any questions that I asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- The possible harms and discomforts, as well as the possible benefits of this study have been explained to me.
- I understand my right to participate or withdraw from this study at any time.
- The decision whether or not to participate will not result in penalty.
- I am free now, and in the future, to ask any questions about the study by contacting the investigators, or the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board whose phone number is found on the previous page.
- I have been assured that records will be kept confidential and that no identifying information will be released or printed in the future without my permission.
- All data (e.g. audio, electronic and paper copies) will be kept until full analyses have been performed and research has been completed.
- I have read and understand the information above and have had the opportunity to ask any questions. I hereby give consent to participate in this study.

Parent’s Name
..................................................................................................................

Parent’s Signature
..................................................................................................................

Date
..................................................................................................................
Appendix H: Recruitment Letter

Dear Coach,

Participation in sport and physical activity has been shown to be integral for positive child development. Unfortunately, despite the numerous benefits associated with living an active lifestyle, the majority of Canadian youth are not active enough to reap the potential physical, psychological, and social benefits associated with sport participation. In fact, between 1992 and 2010, there has been a 17% decline in youth participation, with 7.2 million Canadians aged fifteen years and older withdrawing from sport (Canadian Heritage, 2013). Participation in organized baseball has suffered as a sport over the past two decades. Specifically, the percentage of youth athletes (ages 5 to 14) playing baseball has declined drastically between 1992 and 2005, from 13 to 5% respectively (Stats Canada, 2008). During this period, baseball had the highest percentage of youth withdrawal from sport, as compared with nine other sports.

Given my love for baseball and my long history of participation in the sport, I wish to address, through my Master’s degree thesis, the issue of young people withdrawing from baseball. My intentions are:

- To work with a team across a full season
- To observe athletes’ responses to individual and team experiences
- Assess athletes’ satisfaction through direct observation and face-to-face interviews
- Investigate the reasons why athletes may not wish to continue their participation in baseball
- Interview coaches about why they think athletes leave baseball
- My long-term hope is to reduce the percentage of youth withdrawal from baseball

If you would like to be part of this study or would like to know more, please contact me at: joseph.gurgis@mail.utoronto.ca or 416.892.0323