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Bethany Piety  
*Bethel College*

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## Finding the Prescription for What Ails the Forensics Community: A Deeper Examination of Burnout of Directors of Forensics

Bethany Piety  
Bethel College

Being part of a forensics team in any capacity requires a certain amount of rigor that often times is much greater than one expects. Williams and Gantt (2005) compiled a small laundry list of tasks that a DOF must attend to; the list included: “handle[ing] significant or all coaching duties, plan travel arrangements, coordinate team functions, monitor individual growth, produce[ing] public relations efforts directed toward the department, college, university or local community” (p. 54). As reported by Rives and Klopff (1965), the general sentiment as to why DOFs retire was directly related to time, workload, travel demands, compensation, institution and departmental support, competition, and ethical concerns. Gill (1990) noted that issues surrounding travel, training, and competition were correlated to satisfaction; however, whether or not these correlated positively or negatively was not revealed in the study. Gill’s (1990) concluding thoughts were that more studies ought to be conducted in areas that examined the “pragmatics of day-to-day living as a coach and less concerned with variables such as ethics and competitiveness” (Gill, 1990, p. 187).

Since Gill’s (1990) study was published, several former DOFs have stepped forward to discuss their concerns with the forensics community in regards to the healthiness of the DOF lifestyle. Leland (2004) discussed the physical ramifications of a tournament season upon his health. He noted that the hours spent preparing his students for tournament, led to a marginal diabetic condition, weight problems, elevated blood pressure, and a potential ulcer. Dickmeyer (2002) argues that the length of a typical forensics season has a measurable impact on the overall health (relational, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and career) of the DOF. For many teams the official forensics season begins anywhere from mid September, and finishes sometime in April. However, off-season tournaments have become more prevalent in order to provide students with ways in which to practice their pieces and receive feedback prior to the official season start time. Dickmeyer (2002) continues by writing, “Individual events coaches are at their ‘unhealthiest’ when traveling and participating in tournaments” (p.58). This is due to little or no time for exercise, sleep, eating properly, nicotine use, and overindulgence in caffeinated beverages or alcohol (Richardson, 2005; Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992). Ann Burnett (2002) goes so far as to say, “Forensics is a dead end job” (p.79). This is due to the fact that it is difficult for DOFs to strike a balance between the pull of academic research, the ability to meet the demands of a tenured position, and maintain a healthy personal life. All three of these former coaches cite time constraints as indicators towards their burnout, as well health (physical, mental, spiritual, academic) concerns. These personal accounts of burnout lend themselves nicely to Gill’s (1990) suggestion that research ought to be completed to uncover methods of job sustainability within the forensics community. Burnout is

the feelings of anxiousness, stress, fatigue or frustration brought on by a commitment to a cause or way of life (Maslach, 2001; Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992). Burnout has the potential to impact one’s self-identity, personal goals, and professional goals due to, “intense reactions of anger, anxiety, restlessness, depression, tiredness, boredom, cynicism, guilt...and in extreme cases, nervous breakdown” (Richardson, 2005, p.108). Maslach, et. al., (2002) cites emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement as the underlying causes to burnout. As noted in Dickmeyer (2002), often times DOFs are unable to attain personal and professional accomplishment and/or proper professional evaluation due to their commitment to the forensics team. This is an example of what Maslach, et. al. (2002) describe as reduced personal achievement. Maslach et. al. (2001) has found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are two large factors in how positively a person views their personal life. Upon retiring from their positions, Leland (2004), Dickmeyer (2002) and Burnett (2002) note that the quality of life they experienced became better.

One has to wonder if the effects of burnout are so apparent within the forensics community, why do DOFs continue to be involved in their coaching positions. It seems that both the DOFs and the students are motivated by something more than trophies and certificates. West and Deci (2008) suggest that the motivation that is fueling the forensics community is purely intrinsic. They suggest that all people have innate psychological needs, which become the basis of their personal and intrinsic motivation. When our personal and psychological needs are not being met, that person then begins to experience burnout. (Maslach et. al., 2002) These needs include competence (Harter, 1978; White, 1963), relatedness (Reis, 1994) and autonomy (deCharms, 1968). It was the failure to meet these needs that caused Leland (2004), Dickmeyer (2002), Burnett (2002) and many others to retire from their jobs as DOF.

In the past several years studies have been published in regards to how to motivate students. These studies have found that teachers are able to foster the growth of intrinsic motivation merely by giving students responsibility in the classroom. Bowman (2007) suggests that there is a correlation between responsibility and cohesiveness within the classroom. Could it be that encouraging students to take responsibility via assisting in coaching, administrative work, recruiting new members, facilitating team meetings, or otherwise being the messenger thereby allowing the DOF to be absent (if need be) be the key to reducing the effects of burnout by the DOF and his or her coaching staff? Leland (2004) posited the suggestion that students take on more leadership roles in order to reduce burnout by the DOF. This begs us to question if there are specific ways a DOF can

structure their team in order to reduce personal and professional burnout.

Burnout is a, "state of fatigue and emotional exhaustion that is the end result of a gradual process of disillusionment" (Brown & Roloff, 2009, p. 5). Burnout is characterized by three components: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is a lack of energy that comes from putting all of one's energy into a variety of projects or day-to-day tasks. Depersonalization is characterized by the feeling as though our social identity within a group is not valued as much as we value the group. Finally diminished personal accomplishment refers to our tendencies to evaluate ourselves from a negative standpoint. McDonald (2001) writes that, "the structure of collegiate debate tournaments and the pressures placed on directors has necessarily created an unsustainable cycle that threatens the physical and mental well being of coaches and undermines the long-term health of the activity of collegiate debate" (p. 115). While many people in the forensics community have devoted time to discussing the symptoms of their burnout, few have provided a theoretical background in which to examine the triggers of burnout.

Just as much as coaches need to be motivated to partake in the forensics community so too do their students, which is why no discussion of organizational and group communication would be complete without a discussion of motivation and cohesion. Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that the desire to be a part of a team is part of our desire for competence, relatedness, and autonomy. They utilize self-determination theory (SDT) to explain the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. While the characteristics of these types of motivation are important to comprehend for the student's welfare, they are also important to understand insofar as the DOF is concerned. It just so happens that the three precursors of burnout (emotional exhaustion, reduced personal achievement, and depersonalization) are a result of a lack of competence, relatedness, and autonomy within one's group (Maslach et al., 2001; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Ryan and Deci (2000) assert that, "the needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy appear to be essential for facilitating optimal functioning of the natural proponents for growth and integration, as well as constructive social development and personal well being" (p. 68). When we feel that our needs are being met within a group then we begin to have more intrinsic motivation and begin to personally invest time and energy into a group.

Social psychologist Christine Maslach has spent the better part of twenty years refining her measure for burnout. Her measure, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, was not only used by Brown and Roloff (2009) but has been used in other areas within the workforce as well. Maslach et al. (2001) suggests that there are "six categories of work life [which] come together in a framework that encompasses the major organizational antecedents of burnout" (p.414). The antecedents are very similar to the ones noted within Bowman (2005), Ryan and Deci (2000), and Pachanowsky and Trujillo (1982). Maslach et al. (2001) defines the antecedents that

contribute to burnout as workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. These six areas create a psychological contract that serves as a check for an individual in a given job (Rosseau, 1995). If one were to group all the various theories of satisfaction together then he or she would see that the theories boil down to one message: when a person is unable to keep up with his or her work, loses control of situations that fall under his or her jurisdiction, and have a lack of appreciation and community; that he or she will be less productive at his or her job, and less intrinsically motivated to take on responsibility for the good of everyone.

The researcher wanted to have a better understanding of the various obstacles that create an atmosphere of burnout, in an attempt to find some solutions to the problem. Thus, the type of research used for this study was qualitative, as the interview process provides a more multifaceted view of some of the issues DOFs have to cope with professionally and interpersonally. Interviewing DOFs in the forensics community would not only shed light on the current concerns, but it would also allow the interviewer to ask participants to disclose more deeply about specific issues related to the community. The questions posited to the participants allowed them to disclose anonymously about the conditions they work within on a day-to-day basis.

During the interview the researcher was able to guide the interviewee through their past and present experiences in the forensics community. The interview highlighted some important areas of life that are often times neglected by individuals in high stress occupations such as, personal goals, professional goals, and the factors contributing or hindering the progress of achieving them. The interview process allowed for a deeper level of connection between the researcher and the interviewee.

In order to obtain participants for the interview, the researcher asked her former forensics coach and current thesis advisor to send out a call for participants on a variety of listserves devoted to the forensics community. Upon the approval of the university Institutional Review Board, a total of fifteen participants were interviewed. The questions for the interview were set up intentionally to facilitate discussion about Maslach et. al. (2001) three areas of personal and professional burnout, as well as Ryan and Deci's (2000) areas of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The answers to the interview questions confirmed some of the standard issues that are debated regularly, as well as shed light on some possibly new methods of approaching the forensics team.

The overall process of reviewing the participants interviews, coupled with previewing the personal published accounts of DOF burnout provided data that was consistent with the themes that Maslach et. al. (2001) reported as leading to burnout. The themes initially researched were how emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement affected ones work life (teaching), forensics life (coaching), and personal life. Participants were asked how these issues affected their life from a personal, profes-

sional, and forensics perspective. As the interviews were conducted, the researcher made note of what sub themes were prevalent under each main theme. The sub themes that arose out of the interviews were as follows: qualifying for national tournaments, identity as a coach vs. identity as a teacher, lack of personal support within the community, and personal health and well-being of the DOF and personal support system.

### **Qualifying for National Tournaments**

An overarching theme that came out of the research is the idea that in order to be successful a team must be ultra competitive, and receives top accolades. Perhaps an answer to this is to reevaluate our teams from an administrative point of view. Instead of viewing winning as the end result, perhaps a return to learning would be best. As stated by many of the interview participants, when a student is properly versed in how to present and research then they are able to grow and evolve into a competitive public speaker. There seems to be a focus on competitiveness, and this could potentially, be why the problems with severe burnout still exist in the forensics community. Furthermore, with the advent of new issues (i.e. the economy, the fact that burned out DOFs feel as though they can't afford to take time off etc.) facing the forensics community it is important that the problems of burnout are taken under review before a new wave of early retirement from burnout occurs.

### **Coach VS. Teacher Identity**

In some cases the levels of burnout experienced by participants were affecting their job performance. Olson (2004) writes that, "Many a forensic educator has sacrificed a successful academic career and the security tenure offers for a chance at the brass ring of competitive forensic success" (pg. 3). The first section of the interview process consisted of ten demographic questions. The main goal of these questions was to gain a more clear understanding of how the participants viewed their role within their institution, as well as find out how long each participant had served within the forensics community. Interview participants reported being a part of the forensics community in a coaching capacity anywhere from 6-36 years. The main finding that came out of these initial demographic programs was that in each case, even in the case where in which the DOF was an undergraduate student attending the university they competed for, participants recognized that they were first and foremost a DOF (n= 6), and secondly an instructor for their institution. What is interesting about this is that without the backing of the institution, and the willingness of the students to want to participate in forensics there would be no team, and furthermore no DOF position within the school. This matters insofar as overall there was an overwhelming concern about the economy and how it is affecting higher education. In each interview the current economic crisis came into play as DOFs discussed their fear of budget cuts to their team. This is a very valid concern as budgetary concerns are affecting the whole of the academy. In a recent New York Times article, Patricia Cohen (2009) reported that, "public universities are bracing for severe cuts as state legislatures grapple with yawning deficits...even the wealthiest private colleges have

seen their endowments sink and donations slacken since the financial crisis" (p.1). Many participants noted having a fear of their program being cut if the team was unable to perform well, so that the university would have more money to allocate elsewhere. As previously discussed, the forensics team is a branch of a much larger entity, which is the institution. If the school is not faring well financially, the administration has the potential to cut a program. Furthermore, the regard for an instructor and their involvement in a campus activity has no bearing on whether or not that instructor is able to maintain their position. To that end, is it more important to identify oneself as a forensics coach, or as a distinguished instructor that takes time to facilitate a forensics program for an institution? The purpose of this question is not to suggest that a DOF does not care about teaching, but more so to challenge DOFs to evaluate how they view their team. Do they view the forensics team as an extension of the classroom, or perhaps an extracurricular activity? Or do they view forensics as a sole reason they are affiliated with an institution?

### **Mentoring Program**

Many individuals have come forth to discuss the benefits of having a mentoring program within the community (Schnoor, 2004; Hefling, 2008; Carver, 1991). Providing an outlet for support for DOFs who feel as though they need some encouragement in regards to their team would be well in line with something that the community could do to support their members. Many interview participants expressed that they might experience less burnout if the forensics community had some more support for DOFs to meet their personal and professional goals. The main issue discussed pertained to lack of child care at tournaments, finding the time to attend enough tournaments to qualify for nationals, and a general level of frustration due to an inability to meet research demands, or continue with their education so that they could qualify for tenure etc at their institution. There is plenty of documentation in existence speaking to many of these concerns (Burnett, Brand & Meister, 2001; Kay, 1990, Parson, 1990; Worth, 2002 Burnett, Brand and Mesiter (2001) The underlying challenge in Burnett et. al. (2001), is that the change has to come from the community. DOFs as community members need to speak up about changes that need to be made in order for their lives to benefit from being a part of the forensics community. Just as much as DOFs should challenge students to be responsible and motivated, so too must the DOFs with each other.

### **Allocating Administrative Duties to Students**

The second grouping of questions dealt mainly with the structural blueprint of the participant's team. The goal was to investigate the ways, in which DOFs locate support for their team, motivate their students, and how they came to their current philosophy for coaching. These questions were important insofar as they allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of the environment the participant was functioning in. DOFs reporting that they had little or no support (assistant coaches, alumni coaches, grad students) tended to have a more loosely based team structure than those that had more support. The researcher was investigating how the

delegation of roles to students affected levels of motivation and responsibility within the team. The initial thought was that DOFs who reported having a more student-structured team would experience lower levels of burnout. The participants noted that while it was difficult at first, that ultimately the delegation had produced positive results by way of students who were peer coaching, helping with managerial duties, acting as communication liaisons etc. This was a positive finding insofar as it shows a change in mindset by the DOFs that not only lowered their levels of burnout from micromanaging a team, but also helped teach their students some valuable life lessons about group communication, public speaking, and administrative tasks.

Participants revealed that during their career as DOF that they have delegated the following duties to students: keeping track of important personal events (i.e. birthday, anniversaries) and making sure proper notification was sent out for said events, team meeting recorder, keeping track of contact information, recruiting new team members, peer coaching etc. Many participants also noted that they had set the expectation of a required rehearsal time during the week (generally midweek). During these times students were able to research, practice, get new ideas for pieces, and often times share a meal. DOFs who reported having a more administrative role via delegating and setting expectations of for team members within their team, seemed to have a more healthy relationship with their students, family, and colleagues.

#### **Personal Health and Well-being of the DOF and his or her support system**

The final grouping of questions that participants responded to centered around their personal life. These questions focused on how emotional exhaustion, lack of personal fulfillment, and depersonalization affected the participant outside of their academic and forensic life. Participants reported that their health had suffered during the season, marriages or other relationships had failed, and family life became strained from moving around the country in search of a forensics position, leaving family members or significant others each weekend, or trying to find consistent childcare on the weekends.

There was also a deficiency in the quality of personal life due to the length of the season. Many participants equated a successful team with traveling to national tournaments, which meant that often times their team would be traveling every weekend during the season. One participant noticed that they had roughly 22 swing tournaments during the school year, which means that the team attended roughly 44 tournaments including AFA nationals and Novice Nationals. Coaches responded that they did not always travel with their teams, but did try to travel to a majority of the tournaments. In every interview the topic of reevaluating the demands of AFA and NFA qualifications was discussed. While some participants supported the current qualification mandates, others reported that they wished something would change at a national level to encourage a healthier traveling schedule throughout the school year.

It appears from the research presented that when one is feeling burned out; he or she must make the personal decision to change their course. This decision ultimately reflects their level of personal responsibility. The community has to ask itself as a whole, when will enough be enough in regards to keeping an unhealthy lifestyle? White (2005) argues that the coach is a role model. Is it appropriate that members of the community are perpetuating this unhealthy lifestyle by modeling it to their students? It seems as though there is a lot of discussion to make changes, but there is a considerable lack of motivation and energy to do so. While there is no golden answer to how to overcome these challenges, it became evident through the interview process that there are some individuals have taken the responsibility to initiate changes that may ultimately lead to less burnout, and more positive feelings of accomplishment over time.

As previously discussed, motivation and cohesion evolve from our need for competence, relatedness and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Some of the sub themes that came out of the interview process was that of how to mold a team's philosophy. This of course was also depended upon the coaching style of coach, and the design of the team-all sub themes discussed in the interviews. Cayanus & Martin (2008) found that students had a willingness to be a part of a group if they were able to derive some sort of meaningfulness from the group. To that end, as a DOF, how are we making our teams meaningful for the students? If we can assume that what Brophy (1987) wrote about student motivation was true, then the more meaningful we are able to make the forensics team for the students, then the motivated the students will be to take responsibility and ownership of the team. Derryberry discussed this idea in his 1995 article by highlighting the importance of the team for students as place for cooperative learning. Just as a coach has needs for competence, autonomy, and relatedness in their life, so too do the students who participate on the forensics team. Johnson and Johnson (1994) write that, "a vital application of positive interdependence is that "students must believe that they sink or swim together" (p. 22). This supports the findings that students use each other to motivate themselves. Once more, "positive interdependence occurs when students compete on the team with the perspective that they need each other to complete the group's goals" (Capstick, 1994, p. 7). In sum, the more responsibility we are able to give students, the more they will be motivated to learn and have a higher percentage of derived autonomy, relatedness, and sense of competence.

Some suggestions for doing this include setting goals to reach every few weeks and months. Derryberry (1995) provides some excellent team building and maintenance strategies that include recognizing everyone's achievements, working as team to build out entries for overall awards, encouraging students to try new events, and making sure that the team prepares for each tournament by taking time to help each other. These strategies keep members responsible for their own pieces, responsible for the maintenance of the team, and furthermore intrinsically motivate students to

consistently return to learning so that they can be better competitors.

The implications and solutions discussed thus far in this study affect the DOF at a personal level. Finding ways to challenge students in a team via delegating responsibility has the potential to impact the amount of time spent micromanaging every aspect of the team. Furthermore, making the choice to re-evaluate ones role within an institution has the benefit of giving an individual the opportunity to grow as a teacher, coach and individual, not to mention find ways to make themselves appear more valuable to their school. Finally, creating definite boundaries between school, forensics and personal life allows for a more healthy existence for everyone involved with an individual. These are all great benefits from an individual standpoint, however there are still more things that can be done as a community. Imagine the forensics community would be like if one weekend a month there were no tournaments, finding food in close proximity to the school was not an issue, there was a child care option for DOFs with children, if new DOFs were able to partner with senior members of the community in a mentor relationship, or even if the concept of a swing tournament became a thing of the past due to changes at the national level. These are things that the community are talking about, and that the members of the forensics community have the power to change if they are motivated enough to do so. As stated in Workman (2004), the decision to be healthier ultimately falls upon the coach. DOFs need to set the standard for wellness for their team, and allow that push for a healthier competition environment to permeate the community. At this point in time, "the task before debate coaches at the turn of the 21st century is large, but vitally important. Coaches and programs need to strike a balance between personal and professional commitments so the life of the students and directors can be educational, healthy, and satisfying" (McDonald, 2001, p. 117).

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**Appendices**

**Interview Questionnaire**

Thirty years of research has shown that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal achievement

are the cornerstones to burnout (Maslach, et. al., 2001). Several gifted former coaches and directors of debate cite personal and professional burnout as the reason that they have retired from their position (Leland, 2004; Dickmeyer, 2002). The director of forensics has many roles that they must take into consideration prior to taking the position (White, 2005; Short & Short, 2005). The questions posited in the following interview will hopefully reveal ways in which administration, and directors of forensics can support each other through providing a more mentally and physically healthy environment for the director to work in.

**I. Demographic Questions:**

- a. What institution do you work for?
- b. Is your institution considered a college, university, or jr. college?
- c. What is your official title at your institution?
- d. What is your official title in relation to the forensics team?
- e. How many years have you been at your institution?
- f. How many years have you been a forensics coach for your institution?
- g. How long have you been in the forensics community in a coaching capacity?
- h. Were you ever a coach for at another institution? If so, how long were you a coach for that institution?
- i. Have you ever taken time off from coaching?
- j. Why did you come back to coaching after taking time off?

Bowman (2007) suggests that self-motivation in the key to cohesion within the classroom. A high level of motivation by a coach or teacher encourages responsibility within the students. Furthermore, the need for autonomy, encouragement, and recognition is a human drive that helps a person obtain their basic needs of social identity, and personal achievement. Ryan and Deci (2000) contend that encouraging a student to be responsible creates intrinsic motivation, which in turn encourages a higher level of responsibility within the student. The following questions will ask you about the structural blueprint of your team.

**II. Team Structure**

- a. How big is your team right now?
- b. What is the largest your team has been while you have been a coach?
- c. What does the leadership structure of your team look like? Do you have assistant coaches, graduate student help, team president, and undergraduate teaching assistants to help you in the coaching process?
- d. How has the team leadership structure changed since you started?
- e. How involved you were in the change?
- f. What is the biggest team you have been a part of in a coaching capacity?

- g. Do you work with students who have to participate in forensics for their major or other university requirements?
- h. What sort of responsibility do you give to your students on the team?

Byrne (1994) writes that teachers, “who fall victim to burn-out are likely to be less sympathetic towards students, have a lower tolerance for classroom disruption, and be less apt to prepare adequately for class and feel less committed and dedicated to their work” (p. 646). Richardson (2005) notes that there is a significant lack of scholarly attention to burn-out, as often times the subject of forensics research is considered illegitimate (Burnett, 200) when it comes to coaches pursuing doctorate degrees etc. Burnett (2002) contends that since there is such a quick turnover in leadership within the forensics community that there is often no time to advocate for a change that will relieve some of the stressors of running a team. Billings (2002) cites coaching burnout as one of the top ten issues facing the forensics program as there needs to be a line between forensics responsibilities, personal life, and professional life is blurry. Billings (2002) suggests a coach’s level of burnout has a direct correlation with the stability of the team. The following questions will look at professional obligation that you have through your university in regards to non-forensics related activities.

### III. Professional Life

- a. What is your teaching load throughout the year?
- b. How many hours do you spend preparing for your classes each week?
- c. How many hours do you spend coaching (not traveling) your team?
- d. How many hours do you spend working with students who have to participate in forensics for major or university requirement?
- e. How many tournaments do you attend each year both locally and nationally?
- f. What other job related obligations do you have throughout the year?
- g. What are your professional goals?
- h. How often do you achieve your professional goals during the school year?
- i. How does forensics support/hinder your progress of achieving your professional goals?
- j. How often does the administration of your school support/hinder your progress of achieving your personal goals?
- k. Do you have a sense of accomplishment as a teacher? Are you eager to see students that are not involved with the forensics team?
- l. How many committees did you serve on last year for both forensics and work?
- m. How much of your time did serving on committees take?

The length, lack of personal fulfillment, and health demands upon the director of forensics of the forensics season is cited as having a negative impact upon the director of forensics in all areas of their life (Dickmeyer, 2002; Leland, 2005; Billings, 2002; Schoor, 2004). Dickmeyer (2002) admitted that not only was the forensics team limited his professional achievements, but also his personal life began to decrease in quality. In an attempt to remedy this problem Dickmeyer, like many coaches, quit his position as director of forensics in order to devote more time to his professional and family life. Maslach et. al. (2001) has found that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are two large factors in how positively a person views their personal life. The Encyclopedia of Mental Disorders notes that normal people who do not have a professional diagnosis of Depersonalization disorder can experience signs of depersonalization via sleep deprivation, emotionally exhausting situations such as academic endeavors or being in a automobile accident. Croucher et. al. (2009) writes that our, “social identity is the knowledge that an individual belongs to certain social groups together with the emotional value placed on his or her group membership...self-concept is a key part in each person’s social identity and intergroup behavior” (p. 75). Gill (1990) suggests that the forensics community ought to be, “more concerned the pragmatic practices of day-to-day living as a coach....such an investigation which focuses on ways by which this lifestyle can be more sustaining” (p.187). The following questions will ask you to comment on the state of your personal life.

### IV. Personal Life

- a. Think of your life as a series of percentages. Divide your life into the following categories:
  - i. Professional life (work, school)
  - ii. Forensics life (time spent coaching students, organizing tournaments either for housing or attending, traveling with students)
  - iii. Personal life (family activities, dating, religious activities, non-academic endeavors)
- b. What sorts of personal obligations do you have throughout the year?
- c. What are your personal goals?
- d. How often are you able to achieve your personal goals in a given year?
- e. How often does the forensics team hinder/support your progress?
- f. How often do your professional obligations hinder/support your progress?
- g. Have you ever denied yourself a personal achievement (completing schooling, working on a paper, doing something with your friends or family) because of your commitment to forensics?
- h. Do you ever get emotionally exhausted during your season?
  - i. What makes you emotionally exhausted?
  - ii. When does your exhaustion peak?
- i. Do you ever feel depersonalized?



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- j. How often do you feel depersonalized within the season? What percentage of your depersonalization can be attributed to the following:
    - i. Professional Life
    - ii. Forensics
    - iii. Personal Life
  - k. What is your strategy for psychological health during the year?

V. Miscellaneous and Concluding Questions

- a. What are some things your institution could do to help decrease your stress throughout the year?
- b. What times of team structures have you tried to model or admired over the years? What about these teams made them stand out?

Thank you for your time today. Your contribution to my research will hopefully reveal ways in which we can reduce director burnout within the forensics community.

**Endnote**

- <sup>1</sup> This paper is a small sampling of a much larger research project under the same title. Please contact Bethany Piety ([bethany.browne@me.com](mailto:bethany.browne@me.com)) if you have any questions about the project, or would like to see a full copy of the report.