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Stress, Burnout, Job Satisfaction, and Intent to Leave Among Collegiate Forensic Educators

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The purpose of this study is to explore how burnout, stress, and job satisfaction impact coaches' intention to leave forensics. Some 111 collegiate forensics educators completed a survey examining workplace stress, burnout, job satisfaction, and perceived intent to leave forensics. Coaches who had thought about leaving forensics reported being more emotionally exhausted than coaches who had not thought about leaving. Female coaches also reported more stress than male coaches. Although many educators feel stressed, burned out, and have thought about leaving, they were still satisfied with their jobs as educators. The article concludes with a discussion of the findings and implications of the research.

The health of forensics is dependent on the physical, emotional, and psychological health of its coaches. Leland (2004) characterized how absurd the job of Director of Forensics sounds when he explained it to his doctor: seven-day work weeks, 16-hour days, 40 to 60 days or more on the road staying in cheap hotels, eating fast food, driving hundreds of miles late at night, all in addition to the teaching, research, and service expectations of a full-time faculty member. It is a hard lifestyle, but for many, an extremely rewarding life. Some coaches manage to live that life for 20 or 30 years, a few even more. But for many, the rigors of the job have them pursuing other career options within just a few years. Human resources are one of the most important commodities in the forensic community, and it is important that we understand the issue of forensics educator burnout, its contributing factors, and the factors that mitigate the threat of burnout that would ultimately increase career longevity, stability in the forensic community, and work toward a higher quality of life for forensics coaches at all levels.

As communication scholars continue to explore the nuances of workplace stressors, burnout, and job satisfaction, we must consider the unique job elements of forensic educators. Although researchers have explored these workplace issues in a variety of teaching and coaching experiences (Dale & Weinberg, 1989; Kertz-Welzel, 2009; Leland, 2004; Nikolaos, 2012; Raedeke, Granzkyk, & Warren, 2000; Richardson, 2005; Tashman, Tenenbaum, & Eklund, 2010), we have remained relatively silent about the issues impacting forensic educators (Gill, 1990; Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992; Preston, 1995), nor have we attempted to explore the interrelationships between stress, burnout, satisfaction, and intent to leave. The purpose of this study is to explore whether burnout,

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stress, and job satisfaction impact coaches' intention to leave forensics. We begin by first laying out a more thorough overview of workplace stressors, workplace burnout, and job satisfaction, highlighting the unique role that coaching forensics and teaching may have on how coaches experience these issues. After explaining our methodology, we report on a study of the interrelationship of, and differences among, these factors. We conclude with a discussion of the findings and recommendations for future research.

Workplace Stress, Burnout, and Job Satisfaction

Workplace Stress

Forensic educators are often presented with a variety of stressors that impact their ability to provide quality coaching to team members as well as a meaningful educational experience for their classroom students. Although not all coaches also have teaching responsibilities, forensic educators at most institutions are required to coach and teach. Workplace stress is the presence of strain on the physical, mental, or emotional wellbeing of workers (Miller, Zook, & Ellis, 1989). Workplace stress is the result of excess—too much work, too much pressure to perform, too many commitments (Vorell, Carmack, & Scarduzio, in press).

Forensic educators must deal with stresses found in the work environment, including behavioral, attitudinal, emotional, interpersonal, and physical stresses (Kahill, 1988). The first stress, behavioral stress, includes increased absenteeism, high turnover rates, and excessive and unhealthy consumption behaviors, such as drug and alcohol abuse (Baker, O'Brien, & Salahuddin, 2007; Kovoacs, Kovoacs, & Hegedus, 2010; Lemaire & Wallace, 2010). The second stress, attitudinal, manifests in negative thoughts and hostility towards others (Marshall & Kasman, 1980). Emotional stress is the third type of workplace stress. Here, workers experience frustration, irritability, anxiety, depression, and a sense of helplessness (Quattrin, Zanini, Nascig, Annunziata, Calligaris, & Brusaferrò, 2006; Schneider, 1997). The fourth stress is interpersonal stress, which occurs when workers have to have difficult conversations with others. This is an extremely important workplace stressor for forensic educators because difficult conversations are an everyday part of forensics. Educators must help students make sense of ballots, performances, and the difficulties associated with finding and writing scripts. They also work extended hours in close proximity with a small group, opening up space for an increase in interpersonal interactions and stress. The final stress is physical stress, where workers corporeally experience stress. These physical ailments can be as mundane as a headache, stomach aches, and sweaty palms, or as serious as elevated blood pressure, chest pain, and chronic migraines (Chipas & McKenna, 2011). If left untreated, these physical stresses can lead back to the other stresses, underscoring the interconnectedness of workplace stress.

Burnout

Constantly dealing with workplace stressors can lead to burnout. Burnout is the physical and emotional reaction resulting from prolonged exposure to stress at work (Isaksson Ro, Tyssen, Hoffart, Sæton, Aasland, & Gude, 2010). Individuals who experience burnout often lack creativity and imagination in the ways in which they approach work (Marshall & Kasman, 1980). Burnout is comprised of four dimensions: depersonalization,

emotional exhaustion, loss of personal accomplishment, and cynicism (Williams, 1989). Prolonged exposure to any of these elements can result in burnout.

Emotional exhaustion occurs when workers feel worn out, fatigued, and have a loss of energy and empathy (Evans, Bryant, Owens, & Koukos, 2004). In this element of burnout, workers often experience feelings of depression, anger, frustration, and general dissatisfaction with work (Zhang & Zhu, 2007, 2008). Emotional exhaustion may be the result of role overload and uncertainty in work responsibilities (Wu, Zhu, Wang, Wang, & Lan 2007), both of which are likely major stressors for forensic educators.

Depersonalization involves the dehumanization of individuals (Zhang & Zhu, 2007, 2008). Workers who experience depersonalization may feel emotionally distant from the people with whom they work (Baker et al., 2007) and treat those people like objects.

Another element of burnout is the loss of personal accomplishment. Loss of personal accomplishment is accompanied by feelings of failure and work inadequacy. The make-up of work, such as not having enough time to complete work or having too much work to do, also contributes to feelings of failure, as workers are not able to complete their goals (Baker et al., 2007). This further reinforces the loss of personal accomplishment and ability to successfully work. This may be especially problematic for forensic educators as they may begin to question their ability to successfully coach and teach students. Depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and loss of personal accomplishment lead to the final element of burnout: cynicism. Workers who are burnt out often have a negative, cold, and unsympathetic view of the job and the people at the organization (Maslach, 2003). As Maslach (2003) pointed out, cynicism is often left out of the burnout equation: however, it represents a “basic hallmark of the burnout experience” (p. 190). This element of burnout is important when talking about burnout among forensic educators, because students may expect coaches to be warm, caring, and able to empathize with their struggles with writing speeches, finding outstanding scripts, memorizing, performing, and balancing school and competition. Forensic educators who are cynical about their work may not be able to meet those student expectations.

Educators are especially vulnerable to burnout (Farber, 1991), often a result of dealing with stress caused by a number of interpersonal and organizational factors, such as interactions with students, parents, and administration and trying to meet the demands of learning outcomes. Most communication research focusing on burnout and education focuses on K-12 teachers because of the intense levels of burnout and turnover reported by teachers (Tevan, 2007). Educators report a number of reasons they experience burnout, most of their responses are focused on two specific issues: work overload (too many work responsibilities) and role stress (incompatibility between an individual’s and organization’s job expectations) (Dillon & Tanner, 1995). Teachers also report that their burnout is caused by role conflict (problems caused by competing roles) and role ambiguity (lack of clarity about expectations), especially when they take on activities outside the classroom (Zhang & Zhu, 2007). These are coupled with an emphasis on the “caring teacher temperament” students, parents, and the general public expect of teachers, which created an added emotional burden for educators (Avgtis & Rancer, 2008; Tevan, 2007). Although most communication research focuses on K-12 teachers, it is reasonable to assume that forensic educators would also experience similar issues.

Stress, Burnout, and Gender

The socially constructed nature of gender roles may have an impact on how men and women perceive, process, and endure work related stressors and burnout. Unfortunately, results from studies exploring stress, burnout, and gender have produced inconsistent, and sometimes contradictory, results. Across a variety of occupations, researchers have found that women report significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion (Caccese & Mayerberg, 1984; Innstrand, Langballe, Falkum, & Aasland, 2011; Pastore & Judd, 1993; Purvanova & Muros, 2010). A number of reasons have been posited for why women report higher levels of emotional exhaustion, including responding differently to emotionally charged work events and level of engagement required for their professions, many of which are “caring professions,” the double workload of work and home, and gender inequality at work (Innstrand et al., 2011; McCarthy, Zhao, & Garland, 2007). Conversely, men report significantly higher levels of depersonalization (Innstrand et al., 2011), potentially a result of compartmentalizing emotions, which can cause men to look at others as objects (Houkes, Winants, Twellaar, & Verdonk, 2011).

The inconsistency for gender and burnout arises from the few studies specific to the study of higher education and academics. This line of research focuses either on academics in “traditional” academic roles (research and teaching) or on individuals in administrative roles. Researchers studying academics and individuals working at universities have found there are no significant differences between men and women when it comes to any elements of emotional exhaustion (Adekola, 2012; Doyle & Hind, 1998; McCann & Holt, 2009). Adekola (2012) did find that male university workers did report significantly higher levels of depersonalization than female workers. Gender is clearly an important factor in burnout, but it is unclear what role it plays for forensic educators. As individuals who are often participating in both academic and administrative roles, the inconsistency between research on gender, stress, and burnout among forensic coaches is cause for study.

Job Satisfaction and Intent to Leave

Job satisfaction is directly affected by job stress and burnout (Brown & Peterson, 1993). From an organizational standpoint, job satisfaction is the extent to which a worker has positive or negative feelings about his/her job (Hunt, Chonko, & Wood, 1985). Specific to working at a university, a variety of issues impact a worker’s level of job satisfaction, including working conditions (Bellamy, Morley, & Watty, 2003), salary and benefits (Terpstra & Honoree, 2004), and promotions (Witt & Nye, 1992). Communication scholars have identified specific communication elements affecting job satisfaction, including the workplace’s communication climate (Brief, Butcher, & Roberson, 1995; Trombetta & Rogers, 1988) and supervisory leadership (Madlock, 2008; Richmond, McCroskey, & Davis, 1982; Wheelless et al., 1984).

An unfortunate outcome of burnout, stress, and low job satisfaction is the intention to leave the job. Although intention to leave does not mean that workers *will* leave, researchers consider workers’ intention to leave as an incredibly strong predictor of actual turnover (Brown & Peterson, 1993; Liou, 2009; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979; Randall, 1990; Shore, Newton, & Thornton, 1990). Burnout is directly

related to intention to leave a position; workers who report experiencing extremely high levels of burnout also report considering leaving their current positions, stating that this may be the only way to truly alleviate their burnout (Moore, 2000). In particular, Moore (2000) found that emotional exhaustion played a critical role in perceived intent to leave.

Communication plays a pivotal role in workers' intentions to leave their current jobs (Apker, Propp, & Zabava Ford, 2009; Scott et al. 1999). Positive communication climates, especially climates where workers feel they can communicate problems with their supervisors, contribute to workers' desire to stay. Conversely, employees working in aggressive or negative communication climates where they feel they cannot talk about job stress or problems are more likely to leave (Richmond & McCroskey, 2008). Rather than simply focusing on intention to leave, it is extremely important for organizations to identify why workers would want to stay with an organization in the face of stress and burnout. Not surprisingly, workers who are committed to either their work or the organization are more likely to stay with an organization (Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell, & Black, 1990).

Stress and Burnout in Forensics

Whether through anecdotal accounts during off rounds at a tournament, conference papers, or published research studies, stress, burnout, and organizational exit from forensics have been topics of concern for the forensics community (Richardson, 2005). A small number of empirical studies have attempted to piece together the complex puzzle of forensic coach stress and burnout (Gill, 1990; Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992; Preston, 1995), focusing primarily on causes or factors which contribute to coach stress and burnout. Gill (1990) found that as time commitments, travel demands, and the activity's competitive standards increased, coaches reported lower satisfaction with their participation in forensics. Whereas Gill identified specific stressors for participants to rate, Littlefield and Sellnow (1992) asked coaches to identify what they felt were stressors contributing to burnout and the poor health of coaches. Participants in Littlefield and Sellnow's study found that tournament scheduling (hosting and traveling) contributed the most to stress and burnout; more importantly, scheduling often leads to other stressors, such as poor eating habits/options and lack of sleep. The length of the competitive season was also found to be a major source of burnout for participants in Preston's (1995) study of coach burnout.

These studies provide glimpses into stress and burnout among forensic educators; however, they are mostly limited to identifying stressors, descriptive statistics, or the use of author-created measures with low reliability. As Preston (1995) and, later Richardson (2005) in his theoretical discussion of burnout, argued, forensic researchers need to turn to validated measures, such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory, in order to more thoroughly investigate these issues and assess coach burnout. This study does just that, turning to validated measures designed specifically to study workplace stress, burnout, and job satisfaction to evaluate forensic coaches' perceived levels of stress, burnout, job satisfaction, and intent to leave the activity. The lack of empirical research on forensics educator job stress, burnout, and job satisfaction serves as a beginning for a large scale study of identifying workplace stressors, burnout, and social support for forensic

educators. Based on the lack of research, coupled with the literature presented, we posit the following hypotheses:

H₁: There are significant differences in perceived levels of stress, burnout, and job satisfaction between educators who have thought about leaving forensics and educators who have not thought about leaving forensics.

H₂: There are significant differences in perceived levels of stress, burnout, and job satisfaction between female forensic educators and male forensic educators.

H₃: There is a significant negative relationship between burnout and job satisfaction for forensics educators.

H₄: There is a significant negative relationship between stress and job satisfaction for forensics educators.

H₅: There is a significant positive relationship between stress and burnout for forensics educators.

METHODS

Participants

This study is part of a larger mixed methods research project exploring the health and wellness of collegiate forensic coaches. After receiving university IRB approval, collegiate forensic educators were contacted via blinded mass e-mail, postings on social media sites, and forensics and communication list-servs. The blinded mass e-mail list was compiled in October 2012 by using the list of college programs on the Council of Forensic Organizations website. This website lists colleges and universities with competitive programs in individual events, policy debate, International Parliamentary Debate Association (IPDA), American Parliamentary Debate Association (APDA), National Parliamentary Debate Association (NPDA), World's Style parliamentary debate, Lincoln-Douglas debate, National Education Debate Association (NEDA), and Readers' Theater. As of October 2012, the list contained 450 programs. Some 103 programs were removed because of the lack of a website or coach contact information, leaving a mass e-mail list of 347. Coaches interested in participating were directed to a Qualtrics link to the survey. Participants did not need to indicate how they heard about the survey.

A total of 111 collegiate forensic educators completed the online survey. Participants represented a representative convenience sample; the study targeted collegiate forensics coaches, which all participants were, and participants randomly self-selected to participate in the study. Of the educators who participated, 65 were male (58.5%) and 46 were female (41.4%). Ages ranged from 20 to 64 years, with a majority of participants' ages between 25 and 34 ($n = 39$, 35%) and 35 to 44 ($n = 40$, 36%). Participants were predominantly Caucasian ($n = 105$, 94.5%), with one person identifying as Hispanic, and five participants identifying as African American. A majority of participants had earned a Master's degree ($n = 64$) or doctoral degree ($n = 40$); five participants had completed a Bachelor's degree and two participants had completed a professional degree (JD, MD). A majority of participants were married with children ($n = 49$); others were married without children ($n = 26$), or were single, never married ($n = 22$). Nine participants were living with a partner, four were divorced, and one participant was widowed.

Participants held a number of ranks in the academy with a majority identifying as instructors ($n = 52$). Seventeen participants were tenure-track assistant professors, 15 were associate professors, and 12 were full professors. Six educators identified themselves as adjunct instructors and eight participants were graduate students (one participant chose not to answer). Participants' teaching obligations widely varied, with most teaching three to four classes a semester ($n = 50$), followed by educators who taught one to two classes a semester ($n = 47$); A smaller minority ($n = 12$) taught five or more classes a semester and two coaches indicated they did not teach classes at all. Seventy-five coaches received one or more course releases; thirty-six participants said they did not receive a course release.

Participants represented a variety of forensic jobs, with 66 participants indicating they were the Director of Forensics, followed by 15 who were the Assistant Directors of Forensics. Several participants had even more specific titles, including Director of Debate ($n = 4$), Director of Individual Events ($n = 6$), Assistant Director of Debate ($n = 2$), and Assistant Director of Individual Events ($n = 2$). Two participants held the title of Graduate Coaching Assistant. Fourteen participants identified other titles, including Forensics Coordinator, Volunteer Assistant, and Convener of Debates. Participants had been coaching for a number of years, with most coaching between four and six years ($n = 24$), seven and nine years ($n = 22$), and 10 and 15 years ($n = 22$).

A large number of participants had also been coaching for between 16 and 20 years ($n = 11$) and more than 20 years ($n = 21$). The participants were also offering multiple range of coaching hours a week; 54 coaches were offering 11 or more coaching hours a week, followed by 3-4 hours a week ($n = 15$), 7-8 hours a week ($n = 15$), 5-6 hours a week ($n = 11$), and 9-10 hours a week ($n = 10$). Five coaches only offered 1-2 hours of coaching week, and one coach offered less than 1 hour a week. A small portion of coaches were at the beginning of their careers, either in their first year of coaching ($n = 6$) or coaching between one and three years ($n = 5$). Many coaches had help coaching from volunteer coaches, a paid staff, or graduate student assistants; 42 participants have one to two additional coaches on their team, 25 coaches have three or four additional coaches, and 22 coaches have 5 or more coaches. Twenty-two coaches were the only coaches for their teams.

Instrumentation

Perceived job stress: Forensics educators' perceived stress was assessed using the Global Measure of Perceived Stress (Cohen, Karmack, & Mermelstein, 1983). The 14-item measure uses a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from "never" to "very often" and asks participants to reflect on daily stressful events. Participants were asked questions such as "In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and stressed?" and "In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things?" Seven items were reverse coded before summation. Cronbach's alpha was high at .85 ($M = 2.84$, $SD = .51$). The Global Measure of Perceived Stress was recently used to assess job stress and communication for medical residents on late-night call (Passalacqua & Segrin, 2012).

Perceived job burnout: The Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996) was used to measure forensics coaches' perceived job burnout. The Burnout Inventory is a 22-item scale with three subscales (emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal achievement). The measure uses a 7-point scale ranging

from “never experienced” to “every day” and includes prompts such as “I feel like I’m at the end of my rope,” “I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally,” and “In my work, I deal with emotional problems very quickly.” Eight items were reverse coded before summation of the subscales and before calculating a composite score for burnout. Reliability for the subscales emotional exhaustion ($\alpha = .915$, $M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.29$), depersonalization ($\alpha = .789$, $M = 2.36$, $SD = 1.08$), and personal achievement ($\alpha = .834$, $M = 2.39$, $SD = .84$) were all moderate to high. The Maslach Burnout Inventory has recently been successfully used to study communication and burnout among domestic violence advocates (Babin, Palazzolo, & Rivera, 2012) and healthcare workers (Wright, Banas, Bessarabova, & Bernard, 2010).

Perceived job satisfaction: Coaches’ perceived job satisfaction was assessed using the Generalized Belief Model about Job Satisfaction (McCroskey & Richmond, 1996). This 5-item measure uses a 7-point bipolar-adjective response format. Participants were asked to rate the statement “I am satisfied with my job” using adjectives such as “Agree-Disagree” and “Incorrect-Correct.” Three items were recoded before scale summation. In this study, the achieved Cronbach’s alpha was high at .984 ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 1.66$). Porter, Wrench, and Hoskinson (2007) successfully used this scale in their study of supervisor-subordinate communication and job satisfaction among service industry workers.

Perceived intent to leave: To assess participants’ consideration of leaving forensics, participants were asked, “Have you thought about leaving forensics (e.g., not coaching)?” Coaches were not asked if they were planning to leave or if they were leaving forensics, only if they had thought about it. This question is based on the perceived intent to leave questions asked by Apker et al. (2009) and Scott et al. (1999) in their studies of intent to leave. Questions used to study perceived intent to leave often focus on consideration or thought participants have given to leaving their present organization or position or if participants would prefer a different job than their current position (Scott, et al., 1999).

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Independent samples t-tests were performed to determine differences between participants’ intent to leave and job satisfaction, burnout, and stress (H_1) and differences between sex and job satisfaction, burnout, and stress (H_2). Table 1 reports the means and standard deviations for participants’ intent to leave the job and satisfaction, burnout, and stress. Table 2 reports the means and standard deviations for sex and satisfaction, burnout, and stress. Pearson product-moment correlations were calculated to determine relationships between pairwise combinations of job satisfaction, stress, and burnout (H_3 , H_4 , and H_5).

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Coaches' Responses to Stress, Burnout, and Job Satisfaction

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i> of coaches who thought about leaving forensics	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i> of coaches who have not thought about leaving forensics	<i>SD</i>
Stress	58	2.88	.573	2.58	.438
Burnout-Emotional Exhaustion	60	3.98	1.30	3.02	1.39
Burnout-Depersonalization	60	2.64	1.05	2.20	1.22
Burnout-Personal Accomplishment	60	2.47	.719	2.09	1.06
Job Satisfaction	57	5.13	1.61	5.95	1.39

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations for Male and Female Responses to Stress, Burnout, and Job Satisfaction

	<i>N</i>	Male <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Female <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Stress	107	2.76	.544	2.99	.451
Burnout-Emotional Exhaustion	111	3.60	1.37	3.84	1.24
Burnout-Depersonalization	111	2.41	1.08	2.35	1.13
Burnout-Personal Accomplishment	111	2.48	.759	2.29	.952
Job Satisfaction	107	5.34	1.67	4.96	1.63

RESULTS

The first hypothesis posited that there would be significant differences of perceived stress, burnout, and job satisfaction between coaches who had thought about leaving forensics and coaches who had not thought about leaving forensics. Independent sample

t-tests revealed that coaches who had thought about leaving forensics did report significantly higher feelings of emotional exhaustion ($t(58) = -2.464$; $p < .01$) than coaches who had not thought about leaving. However, coaches who had thought about leaving forensics did not report significantly higher levels of stress ($t(56) = -1.890$; $p > .05$), feelings of depersonalization ($t(58) = -1.360$; $p > .05$) and loss of personal accomplishment ($t(58) = -1.600$; $p > .05$). Those who thought about leaving also did not report significantly less job satisfaction ($t(55) = 1.793$; $p > .05$). This hypothesis was mostly not supported.

We were also interested in sex differences and stress, burnout, and job satisfaction. The second hypothesis stated that there would be significant differences in perceived stress, burnout, and job satisfaction between female coaches and male coaches. Independent sample t-tests revealed that female educators were significantly more stressed ($t(107) = -2.329$; $p < .05$) than male educators. Female coaches were also less satisfied ($t(105) = 1.186$; $p > .05$) and more emotionally exhausted ($t(109) = -.961$; $p > .05$) than male coaches, while male coaches reported experiencing higher levels of depersonalization ($t(109) = .254$; $p > .05$) and loss of personal accomplishments ($t(109) = .414$; $p > .05$). However, these differences were not statistically significant. This hypothesis was also mostly not supported.

Hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 proposed that there are negative relationships between burnout and job satisfaction (H_3), stress and job satisfaction (H_4), and a positive relationship between stress and burnout (H_5). As indicated by Table 3, significant negative correlations were observed between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction ($r[109] = -.662$, $p < .00$), depersonalization and job satisfaction ($r[109] = -.423$, $p < .00$), loss of personal accomplishment and job satisfaction ($r[109] = -.273$, $p < .00$), and stress and job satisfaction ($r[107] = -.522$, $p < .00$). A significant positive correlation was observed between stress and emotional exhaustion ($r[111] = .623$, $p < .00$), personal accomplishment ($r[111] = .411$, $p < .00$), and depersonalization ($r[111] = .376$, $p < .00$). All of these hypotheses were supported. It is interesting to note that emotional exhaustion was the most significantly correlated with both job satisfaction and stress, followed by personal accomplishment, and finally depersonalization.

Table 3
Correlations Coefficients for Stress, Burnout, and Job Satisfaction

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Stress	---	-.522**	.623**	.376**	.411**
2. Job Satisfaction		---	-.662**	-.423**	-.273**
3. Burnout- Emotional Exhaustion			---	.474**	.280**
4. Burnout- Depersonalization				---	.349**
5. Burnout- Personal Accomplishment					---

** Correlation significant at .01 and .00 level (1-tailed)

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationships between forensic educator stress, burnout, job satisfaction, and intent to leave forensics. The results of this study were mixed. Although some significant differences were found (female coaches are more stressed than male coaches and coaches who have thought about leaving forensics report more emotional exhaustion than those that have not considered leaving), the majority of results suggest there are no significant differences of perceived stress, burnout, and job satisfaction between educators who had thought about leaving forensics and those who had not thought about leaving forensics. Likewise, male and female educators did not report significant differences between perceived burnout and job satisfaction, but female coaches were significantly more stressed. All of the correlations were significant. The results show that coaches who report higher levels of stress also feel more burnt out and less satisfied than those who report lower levels of stress. Support for these hypotheses is consistent with previous research looking at the relationships between stress, burnout, and job satisfaction in other fields. The lack of significant findings between male and female educators, and those who had thought about leaving forensics and those that had not considered leaving forensics is interesting; these non-significant findings offer insight as well as opportunities for recommendations to help alleviate stress and burnout.

Of the educators who responded, 73% ($n = 44$) said they had thought about leaving forensics. For those educators, emotional exhaustion was reported as a major element of burnout and the only statistically significant difference between those who thought about leaving and those who did not. One explanation for this finding could be that individuals who are more attuned to their emotional states would more likely notice emotional exhaustion, and think about leaving forensics in order to preserve their emotional state. Individuals with high emotional IQs are able to relieve stress, communicate effectively, and be more productive workers (Snyder, 2012). Snyder (2012), in his exploration of empathic communication, burnout, and healthcare workers, identified emotional intelligence as an important factor for successful communication responsiveness. Workers who are more communicatively responsive are usually more positive about their work and experience less emotional exhaustion.

Another reason for this significant finding could be because of workload, which is also tied directly to emotional exhaustion. Gill's (1990) study of coaches found that the time commitments required for forensics was a leading cause of exit from coaching. Many of the elements of emotional exhaustion can be tied directly to time commitments, and the results of spending too much time on coaching. Although educators may not experience uncertainty in their work responsibilities (most coaches are aware of the coaching and logistical requirements of the job), coaching and teaching can lead to role overload. As we have argued since the opening of this article, many forensic educators are required to complete the requirements of a full-time faculty member (instructor and tenure-track/tenured) *and* run a team, which may include coaching, handling administrative duties, and coordinating with assistant coaches and graduate assistants. Essentially, some forensics educators find themselves holding down two full-time jobs: one as college instructor, one as forensics coach/administrator. Finding the time to do all the activities required of both jobs can lead to feelings of fatigue and a loss of energy.

Although there were limited significant differences between the identified groups, it is important to note that, in general, forensic educators report moderate to high levels of stress and burnout, but also high levels of job satisfaction. The high stress job filled with bad food and bad wellness options described by Leland (2004) is apparently also a very satisfying job. The question that follows, then, is if forensic educators report being stressed and burnt out, why are they also extremely satisfied with their jobs? The limited research directly exploring stress, burnout, and job satisfaction report that feelings of stress and burnout often result in lower job satisfaction, especially for individuals in caring professions (Apker et al., 2009). There are a number of possible reasons for this, including the nature of competitive forensics. Coaches in forensics, much like coaches in competitive sports, experience success through the accomplishments their students and their team as a whole. Here, personal accomplishment is conceptualized differently because, for forensic educators, personal achievement comes from their students succeeding (Richardson, 2005). It is important to note that success does not always mean winning; as an educational activity, success could also mean learning and improving. Although coaches may experience feelings of failure and work inadequacy when their students do not break into outrounds or struggle with events, coaches may still experience feelings of personal achievement because their students are learning and growing. Unfortunately, forensic scholars have not yet explored these issues as potential explanations for high job satisfaction in the face of stress and burnout. These findings, however, open the door for future research to explore not only why forensic educators leave but also what educators like about forensics and why they stay.

The lack of differences between male and female coaches was also a striking finding. Past research on workplace stress and burnout suggests there are differences between male and female organizational members (Hill et al., 2008; Innstrand, et al., 2011). The only difference identified in this analysis was that female coaches report significantly higher levels of workplace stress than male coaches. For the female participants in this study, feeling overwhelmed, experiencing a lack of control, and not being able to cope with workplace stress were the highest rated questions. However, our male and female participants did not report significant differences in burnout or job satisfaction. This is complicated by the fact that the results of the correlation analysis found that participants who reported higher levels of stress also reported higher levels of burnout. These findings are similar to Doyle and Hind's (1998) study of male and female academics; in their study, female academics reported higher levels of job stress and strain, but not different levels of burnout. Doyle and Hind's study focused on faculty who only had teaching and research requirements, not on faculty who also had administrative responsibilities. The findings from this study further complicate the idea of stress and burnout by adding the administrative component. Additionally, the female coaches in this study reported significantly higher levels of emotional exhaustion, which contrasts with Doyle and Hind's study of academics.

One explanation for female coaches reporting higher levels of stress could be the gender differences associated with forensics. Differences in gender experiences in forensics is well-documented (Greenstreet & Fredrick, 2000; Greenstreet, Joeckel, Martin, & Piercy, 1998; Pettus & Danielson, 1994), with forensic researchers highlighting issues of sexual harassment, balancing motherhood and coaching, and a lack of support from colleagues as major points of concern for female educators. Even

encouraging women in forensics to participate in studies about forensics can be challenging. Greenstreet and Fredrick (2000) said, in explaining the low return rate for surveys exploring issues of gender in forensics, “many women are so conditioned socially to accepting patriarchy as a normal part of their every day [sic] lives, they do not recognize it as such, but part of normal social interaction” (p. 30). Many of these elements could cause stress, but it is possible that female educators are so accustomed to these issues that they do not see it contributing to burnout. Doyle and Hind (1998) also posit that more stress may come from the “feminine” expectations associated with university teaching: female academics are expected to be more caring and emotionally invested in their students than male academics, which could contribute to more stress. The same conclusion could be the case for female forensic educators if there are different expectations of caring held by their team, their classroom students, and their administration.

Limitation and Areas for Future Research

There are several limitations with the current study. First, the data collected were all self-report data, meaning there is room for human bias. This limitation is tempered because the study’s purpose is to explore forensic educators’ perceptions of their stress, burnout, and intent to leave, so self-report is appropriate in this instance. However, we do not report other stakeholders’ perceptions of coach stress and burnout, including team members, students in educators’ courses, other faculty, and administrators. Second, the sample size (111 participants) is a somewhat medium-sized sample given there are approximately 300 active collegiate forensic programs in the country. Finally, although we are able to identify that coaches report high levels of stress and what kind of burnout they experience (emotional exhaustion being the leader), we are not able to explain why this is the case or how coaches make sense of these stressors and burnout.

These limitations lend themselves to a number of future studies. Given the findings of this exploratory study, researchers need to examine the “why” questions associated with stress and burnout, specifically what educators see as the major stressors of coaching and teaching and how they cope with these stressors. Previous research did identify some stressors, such as time (Gill, 1990; Littlefield & Sellnow, 1992; Preston, 1995); however, it would be interesting to see how stressors have changed or not changed in the approximately twenty years since these research studies were conducted.

Researchers can also move beyond a focus on collegiate forensic educators. Issues of stress, burnout, and intent to leave are also important issues for high school forensic educators and should be explored. More research is also needed on the two groups who rest at the ends of the continuum: graduate forensic assistants and retired forensic educators. Although we did not limit our study to directors, assistant directors, and coaches, we only had a small number of participants who identified as graduate assistants. Focusing specifically on graduate assistant experience, such as balancing coursework, coaching, and travel would provide insight for the community as to why some graduate assistants stay with forensics and why others leave. Additionally, we also need to study the experiences of retired forensic educators. Here, retired could include educators who spent their entire careers as forensic educators until they retired from teaching and coaching as well as educators who exit the activity early. Important insight

about these critical issues can be gained from those who have left forensics. Asking those who left the activity about their reasons for leaving, the work they now chose to do, and their current levels of stress can inform the forensics community about effective and ineffective ways of dealing with stressors. Finally, forensic scholars need to explore the organizational and familial support systems set up to help forensic educators deal with the stresses of coaching and teaching.

Forensic educators are members of a caring community, emotionally tied to their work, their students, and their colleagues. Cultivating and grooming forensic educators is a significant investment on the part of the department, college, university, and the forensics community. When we create systems that are not sustainable or viable for healthy long-term professional participation, we need to consider not *what* we are doing, but the *way* in which we do it. The good news is that there are opportunities to create a lower stress, more rewarding job for coaches and teachers. Researching the stressors that lead to forensic educator burnout and using that information to create a work environment that allows for a long and healthy career can bring stability to communication departments, forensics programs, and to the forensics community.

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