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Minnesota State University, Mankato

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“Whose Team Is It Anyway?”:

Exploring the Impact of Coaching Changes on Forensics Team Culture

By

Brenton Lynn Mitchell

A Thesis Submitted in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Fine Arts in

Forensics & Communication

Minnesota State University, Mankato

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“Whose Team Is It Anyway?”: Exploring the Impact of Coaching Changes on Forensics Team Culture.

Brent Mitchell

This thesis has been examined and approved by the following members of the student’s committee.

Dr. Justin J. Rudnick, Advisor

Prof. Katie Brunner, Committee Member

Dr. Kiersten Hensley, Committee Member

Abstract

“Whose Team Is It Anyway?”: Exploring the Impact of Coaching Changes on Forensics Team Culture

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Previous research in the field has documented the many aspects of coaching difficulties faced by forensic teams (Chouinard & Kuyper, 2010; Louis, 2011; Outzen, 2016; White, 2005 & 2010). While research in this area is necessary to understand the struggles associated with a coaching change and the impact it has on team culture, little research has been done to analyze how the students are affected by the shift in coaches and the changing culture of the team. This thesis examines how collegiate forensics competitors navigate these difficult transitions in an activity that heavily influences the creation of close relationships between competitors and coaches. A mixed-methods approach was utilized including quantitative surveys ($n = 19$) and qualitative interviews ($n = 11$) with participants who competed in collegiate forensics within the past four years. Participants indicated varying experiences in the aftermath of a coaching change. While many noted feeling happy with the team under their new coach, lingering feelings of abandonment and a lack of understanding revealed the need to address the topic further in the field of forensics research.

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educator, and coach during my three years in the M.F.A. program. The energy this faculty gives off helps create the unique environment cultivated by the department which is reflected in the students who come out of the program. I will always look back on my time at Mankato as inspiring and full of discovery.

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Chapter One: Introduction

I started my coaching journey in Fall 2016 when I became a graduate assistant at my alma mater the University of Central Missouri. Having just finished competing, I did not have to consider what students may be feeling in the aftermath of a coaching change. While two graduate assistants had left, I had experienced coaching changes as a competitor when my own graduate assistants left after my second year competing. Although it was tough, I found comfort in knowing the graduate assistants who would be replacing the coaches I had grown close to. The experience was somber but not one I stewed on. Two years later, my time with UCM was over. Tears were shed and competitors expressed mixed emotions ranging from being excited about my new journey at Minnesota State University, Mankato to individuals telling me they were planning on quitting the team when I left.

Once I was in Mankato, I noticed the impact my departure had on the UCM team. Competitors messaged me asking for event help which I could no longer provide, students were more hesitant with disclosing information despite expressing feelings of frustration with how things were going, and other students messaged or called to cry and ask for advice on subjects I had helped with in the past. While I was no longer in the corner office in the Martin building, the competitors still referred to it as my office to myself and others who were still associated with the UCM team. The experience left a significant impact on me. While I knew I was leaving due to my two-year term as a graduate assistant ending, I thought I had prepared the students for my departure. Little did I know that while I tried to make myself more accessible to them as they experienced their coaching transition, I had not allowed them ample opportunities to engage with their own concerns in an open environment. This experience stuck with me for the next three years while I worked on my M.F.A. at MNSU, Mankato. With the activity of collegiate forensics

constantly referring to teams as ‘families’, it is necessary for coaches and competitors to understand how we can navigate these relationships during a transitional period between programs. By doing so, the community can begin to improve communication efforts between parties and allow competitors and coaches leaving a program a chance to grieve and reach a point of acceptance regarding the departure.

Coaches on teams across the country are faced with various struggles once they decide to leave the program they coach. Jackson (2012) noted how intercultural shifts disrupt essential elements of a culture due to the discourse within that culture changing. While these changes in dynamic lead to expected shifts in how competitors and coaches navigate their relationships after the coach has left, the student struggle isn’t accounted for in existing research. Outzen (2016) expressed how he experienced difficulties transitioning from one culture to the next, but that struggle is very different than the one felt by students in a similar situation. I believe a better understanding of how a coaching change impacts team culture and individual competitors will allow those within collegiate forensics a better opportunity to connect in a more open and honest fashion.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to explore how the departure of a collegiate forensics coach, and / or the arrival of a new coach, impacts team culture and competitors still on the team. With this project I aim to see how students navigate the experience of losing a coach while simultaneously coming to terms with a new coach taking over the direction of the team. Through this work I hope to discover how students feel about these shifts, what was done to help ease the transition, how the transition impacted them and others on the team, and why the lingering effects of their coach leaving impacts the state of the relationship between coach and competitor.

Although the discussions outlined in this project detail only a minute population of student voices who ought to be heard regarding this topic, they serve as a critical starting point to begin to re-evaluate how we engage with these conversations within the activity. The stories gathered by current and former competitors in this research reflect a desire and a need for change with how we navigate shifting relationships in an activity which allows individuals to construct and maintain their identities and encourages uniqueness and honesty from those who participate in the activity. I want to explore how these coaching transitions impact multiple elements of a collegiate forensics team.

This project is meant to contribute to the body of knowledge within the field of forensics research. I hope this study can help coaches recognize factors that influence their communication with competitors regarding tough conversations about leaving a program and exploring how the students feel about the change. Specifically, this research seeks to encourage current and future coaches to reflect on their approaches as they depart and take over new teams to ensure a smooth and effective transition for both programs.

I believe approaching this topic from the perspective of the competitors is critical to how coaches can begin to spearhead change within the forensics community. Much of the research done thus far within the field has utilized autoethnographic work to address the struggles a coach experiences regarding team culture and transitions between programs (Chouinard & Kuyper, 2010; Louis, 2011; Outzen, 2016; White, 2005 & 2010), but little research exists that explores student experiences. Furthermore, the mixed methods approach I use in this thesis provides a robust approach to collecting and analyzing data related to this project that effectively explores the thoughts and feelings of students with similar experiences with a breadth and depth that

autoethnography alone cannot provide. Therefore, this study places primary focus on how coaching changes impact team culture and individual competitors within collegiate forensics.

Research Questions

The primary goal of this study is to examine how coaching changes impact individuals on forensics teams along with how it impacts the culture of the team they are joining. Therefore, this mixed-methods study will address two research questions which seek to explore the impact coaching changes have on forensics teams. I began by posing the first research question:

RQ1: How does a coaching change impact members of collegiate forensics teams?

This question serves to place the primary focus of the research on the thoughts and feelings of the students who have experienced coaching changes. While all competitors experience something different when a coach leaves their program, the data indicates the need to reform how coaches address departures when interacting with their team. The change can be daunting for coaches, but students often struggle with emotions they feel unsure of bringing to the coach who often serve as the biggest advisers and confidants in their lives. To understand the layers of complexity associated with coaching changes, I posed a second question:

RQ2: How does the coaching change impact the culture of the team they are joining?

While the conversations regarding team culture after a coaching change have been discussed in previous research, gaining insight from current and former competitors allows for a unique perspective which seeks to discover how they feel the culture is impacted rather than emphasizing the coach and their struggle to maintain or shift team culture.

Preview of Chapters

Now that the rationale for the study has been determined and the research questions have been posed, Chapter Two consists of a review of literature which informed my understanding of the study. Specifically, the literature review includes topics such as team cohesion and culture, storytelling, shifting team cultures, coaching turnover, and changing team culture and identity. The review also highlights the theoretical framework of coordinated management of meaning which provides the base for the study.

Chapter Three analyzes the research methods chosen for this study while providing theoretical justification for use of a mixed-methods approach composed of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews. Notably, I examine the data collection process, my means of locating and recruiting research participants, and my methods of gathering those experiences. Additionally, I discuss the process of analyzing interview transcripts and survey data to identify emergent themes connected to the research questions along with other themes which organically developed through the interview process.

Chapter Four discusses the results of the analysis of the study. Within this chapter, I present the findings gathered from my analysis. Specifically, I provide detailed answers to the research questions while explaining themes which were discovered during the analysis process. Through direct quotations along with my interpretation of the transcript data, I seek to capture the experiences of my research participants.

Finally, Chapter Five provides a discussion of the results while highlighting implications for those in the field who experience a coaching change or change positions themselves. Additionally, I bring up limitations of the study while presenting opportunities for future

research regarding the topic based on the discoveries made throughout my study. The shortcomings of the study are addressed in this chapter with reflections of the process.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

I began my research by seeking to understand the importance that a change of coach has on a collegiate forensics team. This exploration is necessary to analyze the influence that a coaching change has on all aspects of a team. In this section, I will discuss the influence a new coach is able to bring to a team's culture, including cohesion, practices, group identity, and legacy. After discussing the aforementioned elements and the impact a coaching change has on each, the reader ought to have a better understanding of the role a coaching change has on the team and the way that team functions on a day-to-day basis.

Constructing Culture in Communication

The process of constructing and maintaining culture is a critical component of this research project due to the unique culture of forensics and the extent to which that culture permeates every relationship between its members, especially between coaches and students. With cultures often being established and preserved for long periods of time, a shift in that culture in terms of leadership is necessary when discussing coach turnover and the impact it has on students and team culture.

When attempting to define what culture is, communication scholars have offered differing definitions. Collier (2009) posited that cultures are defined by their communication. They felt that the differences between low context and high context communication is what allowed cultures to distinguish themselves from one another and allow them to possess unique features while also creating distinction between cultures. Collier furthered this idea by explaining the differences between the two cultures. In high-context cultures, the significance intended by a message is located largely in the situation, the relationship of the communicators, and their

beliefs, values, and cultural norms (Collier, 2009). High-context cultures emphasize politeness, nonverbal communication, and indirect phrasings, rather than a direct approach (Collier, 2009). This form of culture focuses on the group over the individual, and because of this, cultures which utilize a high-context approach often have strong group reliance. Because of this structure within high-context communication forms, the context of the message far outweighs the meaning when interpreting the messages of others. While high-context communication emphasizes the situation surrounding messages, low-context cultures believe that meanings intended by a message are located in the interpretations of the words and their arrangement (Collier, 2009). This allows for low dependency on surrounding context when interpreting low-context communication with most of the value being placed on the individual. Because little context is needed to interpret and understand the message, deeper understanding of the situation and context is needed beyond the message itself. Collier (2009) noted how both high and low-context situations serve as points on a communication spectrum rather than serving as an either/or position. This allows us the opportunity to understand how characteristics of both contexts contribute to culture and possess elements necessary to gaining a better understanding of what culture is and how it functions within society.

To further develop the idea of levels within culture, Hofstede (1991) contended there were three levels of uniqueness regarding human mental programming as it related to cultural levels: human nature, culture, and personality. Personality served as the top of Hofstede's levels as it focused on the unique set of programs of each individual. It is based upon traits which are inherited and learned. Culture referred to specific qualities of the group or category while being based upon learned traits rather than a combination of inherited and learned. Finally, human nature encompassed the universal traits humans possess along with the inherited traits or genes

we have as humans (Hofstede, 1991). Hofstede felt that the core of culture was formed by the values upheld by the group along with levels necessary for determining pivotal relationships in a culture such as evil vs. good, ugly vs. beautiful, and irrational vs. rational (Hofstede, 1991). These levels were used to depict how values are represented within cultures while also recognizing the layers that exist in each group or category of people. Race, ethnicity, region, religion, gender, social class, or employment status are merely a few examples of cultural levels which can define and establish a cultural group. Characteristics such as these allow for a variety of levels within cultural groups and even lead to sub-cultures to be established when groups possess multiple characteristics within a larger group. Hofstede noted how the levels and layers of cultural group composition significantly impact not only the communication within cultures, but also how we define them based upon various levels which we observe as outsiders (Hofstede, 1991).

Perhaps the best explanation of the relationship between communication and culture is analyzed by Hall (1992) who stated that through the influence of culture, people learn how to communicate. Furthermore, because culture is collectively created and maintained by communication it is comprised of every motion that we engage in that can be interpreted within our system of meaning (Hall, 1992). Because of this, communication and culture exist as two distinct but interdependent phenomena that interact with each other on differing levels. Hall argued that the relationship between culture and communication is “a reciprocal, causal relationship between human actions (communication) and social reality (culture),” reiterating the idea that culture and communication are situated in a collaborative relationship that yields unique results for forms of communication and cultural creation (Hall 1992, p. 57).

Culture and Identity

With the development of culture, individuals within the group construct identities for the individual members as well as the group. These identities are crucial to forming internal bonds and developing sets of beliefs the community can connect through and abide by. Mendoza, Halualani, & Drzewiecka (2002) discussed the creation of cultures, specifically, the structure of cultures and the connection to intercultural communication. While identity is the primary focus of the research surrounding the creation and formation of cultures, Mendoza et al (2002) note that the concept of identity must be engaged properly to allow for the creation and formation of cultures. Identity is essential to developing comfort and a feeling of belonging among group members, and shared identities provide the ability to create context surrounding members of the developing culture (Mendoza et al. 2002). These characteristics help with cultural creation on a deeper level, as it connects to the symbols and shared connection of the group.

Collier (2009) discussed the formation of cultural groups, she also noted how cultural identities change as identities of members within the group begin to overlap and change discourse within the group, noting “individuals enact multiple cultural identities that overlap and are sometimes contradictory and that there is a diversity of voices within discourses from those aligning with the same national or ethnic group” (Collier, 2009, p. 281). Collier’s analysis begins the exploratory process of how cultures interact with change inside their group. The idea of how cultures interact with change begins the discussion of how group members begin to shift their own beliefs of culture once they begin to adapt new concepts and represent multiple cultures when interacting with others.

The changing nature of team cultures often leads to tensions as individuals within the environment navigate moving from a pre-existing identity in their team culture to a shifting culture under the new coach. Outzen (2016) provided an auto ethnographic experience of being a new coach entering into an already established program to replace coach who had significantly impacted the team culture by setting up many of the norms and behaviors. Outzen noted how understanding day-to-day operations helped with the preparation work, but nonetheless he entered inherited a program from another (Outzen, 2016). Outzen furthered this idea noting how he was forced to win over students and faculty who already shared a group identity by proving that he was not a fraud entering into the culture. This feeling of entering into a space and feeling like an outsider is natural due to the established group identity which exists at any institution.

Kuyper (2016) acknowledged the struggle for newcomer integration into the culture of forensics. Kuyper discussed different cultural approaches and connected them to the creation of group identity. The primary analysis of group dynamics centered on leadership strategy and how in forensics, the amount of power distance requires consideration when evaluating forensics culture (Kuyper, 2016). Group identity is further shaped by the role of mentorship from the new coach. While mentorship is expected in the forensics community, mentorship significantly impacts identity as coaches become more involved in the lives of their students. White (2005) addresses the juggling of roles that occurs with coaches as they acclimate to the group identity of a team. Serving as coach, mentor, advisor, friend, and for many, a parental figure they feel comfortable disclosing information to. Louis (2011) discussed potential struggles associated with a new coach assimilating into an existing group identity by noting how interactions with students can negatively impact coaches due to issues arising when students begin to see the coach as a friend who they can share all life details with. Louis (2011) specifically points to an experience

with students asking for Louis, a new coach at the time, to stop at a liquor store for the students to stock up before returning home. Experiences such as these not only impact the new coach subscribing to the established group identity, but it can also lead to tensions in new coaches who are forced to establish a persona early that places barriers between them and the students. Louis noted how his coaching identity as the “cool guy” was under threat and while a humorous response deflected the tension at the time, it still called for an evaluation of the coaching persona and how it fit in with the dynamic which had clearly been established within the group’s identity. The identities created within team culture are constructed within the unique social world of collegiate forensics. To understand the basis for this cultural creation, I turn next to the theoretical framework I embraced to explain how cultures function and change.

Coordinated Management of Meaning

To understand how culture functions, the theory of coordinated management of meaning will be utilized as a theoretical framework. The theory serves as an optimal framework for this thesis because it attempts to explain the mechanisms by which the individual experiences and narratives of cultural members congeal into some semblance of a cohesive and coherent culture, and how that culture adapts and changes over time due to changes within that culture.

Coordinated Management of Meaning, or CMM theory, was introduced by Pearce and Cronen in the 1970s and published in *Communication, Action, and Meaning: The Creation of Social Realities* in 1980. Cronen and Pearce posit the theory to explore how individuals create and coordinate meaning within their communicative processes. According to CMM, various activities such as conversations, arguing, peacemaking, or meetings allow us to engage with others and work together to construct a collaborative reality (Cronen & Pearce, 1980). Such interactions allow for numerous effects which are often unnoticed by those of us engaging in the

behaviors due to our inability to perceive meaning from within a group's communicative process, but still serve to create meaning and significance between messages.

In their work, Cronen and Pearce (1980) address how communication is fundamentally relational, representative, and constitutive. This multi-layered approach allows for communication avenues to travel on various levels in order to connect with the recipients of the messages. This means communication relies upon interdependency to complete the communication process. While one may communicate and provide meaning, the message is incomplete until it has been responded to via gesture or verbal behavior (Cronen & Pearce, 1980). Thus, it can be noted that creative energy exists in the communication process and the process of CMM allows us to define and respond to messages in a collaborative way.

Further, Cronen and Pearce's (1980) work addresses how communication is consequential. Cronen and Pearce (1980) noted how social domains, which serve as communication structures influenced by social or institutional contexts, are a creative force that motivates things to happen and allows for consequences to impact human affairs. Social domains provide structural context for the communication forms within CMM and allow us to better understand how such structures are formed by individuals or groups. The social domains and possible consequences through social structures serve as an active communication process which we can derive meaning from. Exploring these patterns and seeking to develop the ideas of the research through this model allow for a more complete understanding of how the mechanisms of culture function and adapt as cultures shift.

When exploring what composes various cultures, one must look at the traditions and norms which allow for cultures to preserve themselves. Stories and narratives passed between

members allow for a process of growth and development while strengthening the bonds of these groups. Pearce (1989) addressed another concept critical to the existence of culture by discussing coherence as a universal human characteristic. According to Pearce, “Coherence refers to all those processes by which persons invest, test, and tell themselves and others stories that make intelligible the world around them (Pearce, 1989)”. This process allows for accounts to be shared, histories to be created between individuals, and subsequently shared with and among groups. Furthermore, it provides the ability to make unknowns familiar to others and use stories as a way of discovering communication between groups. While Pearce’s notions do not ever explicitly claim the sharing of stories as the definition of culture, the storytelling process is utilized as a defining trait that helps compose cultures and allow communication to flourish within these groups. In this sense, stories serve as a vehicle for coherence that establishes meaning and understanding for the group while allowing for relationships to form and develop within said groups.

Stories allow for the creation of tradition, norms, rituals, and standards which a group may use to create their culture and assign meaning to themselves as a group. Due to this, coordinated management of meaning serves as a critical theoretical lens which we can use to explore shared experiences, stories, and the creation of norms within a forensics team to adequately understand how a new coach is able to adjust to a team which has already been established with their own traditions. Stories serve as a conduit which coaches can use to not only bond with their team but begin the process of changing previous traditions by implementing new ones. Spaces of shared stories allow for a comfortable environment for the students to feel connected in various ways and thus, provides an opportunity to create new comfort within

relationships built upon methods of engagement associated with coordinated management of meaning.

CMM theory serves as the ideal framework for this research project as it encompasses the individual elements of how cultures are created and develop which allows for the identification and understanding of meaning of cultural patterns. Furthermore, CMM is a suitable theory to use for evaluation as it allows the opportunity to understand the significance of communication within forensics teams by analyzing the response of those who are impacted by a coaching change on their forensics team. When attempting to understand the everchanging culture of forensics teams, it is necessary for researchers to break down each aspect to better ascertain how the culture is structured and able to function. CMM theory provides a useful framework to examine how students are impacted on multiple levels when engaging with a new coach who attempts to make changes to their pre-existing cultural practices by either introducing new practices or adjusting previous norms or traditions held in high regard by the team. As coaches navigate how they communicate with their new teams, it is necessary for all parties to understand how they can engage with the communication process to extract meaning from their interactions. Due to the unique nature of forensics and the coach/competitor relationship, an incoming coach must understand the environment they are entering due to a risk of tension or challenge from competitors who feel the need to respond when the culture they had grown accustomed to is under threat of being altered. With a better understanding of how CMM theory enhances the project, it is necessary to move to how changes with team culture and identity impact members of the groups who experience the change.

Changing Team Culture and Identity

White (2010) furthered the ideas of Pearce by relating coherence within culture to the activity of forensics by focusing on cohesion between coaches and their teams. She noted how the cohesion of the team was impacted in significant ways due to the numerous roles that coaches are forced to balance. Forensics coaches serve as mentors, and because of this, coaches naturally develop a level of cohesion with the team and each competitor has a unique relationship with the coach. Furthermore, the more time that is invested by coaches into the team, the more cohesive the unit becomes due to more traditions and customs becoming synonymous with the culture of the team. Forensics coaches spend large amounts of time with the competitors on their team coaching their performances and simultaneously building interpersonal relationships (Walker, 2011). With coaches spending significant amounts of time with their students they build a bond which not only helps shape individual student identity but helps structure culture through the intricate relationships which are created.

White (2010) noted how forensics teams experience a unique dynamic with the team since membership on forensics teams regularly changes, and thus, the cultural dynamics of a team are nearly in constant flux. The level of cohesion is constantly changing as senior members graduate and move out of the activity or into coaching roles and novice competitors become more senior competitors while passing on cultural traditions they have learned to help build cohesion based upon their previous experiences with the team cultures that have been ingrained into them (White, 2010). White furthered this idea by addressing key aspects necessary to allow a team to function at its highest level of effectiveness. She notes that a desire for individual excellence, a willingness to embrace the joy of competition, and a shared respectful cohesion are

the three elements necessary to ensure that level of effectiveness when developing team cohesion and building culture (White, 2010).

Croucher, Thornton, & Eckstein (2006) contended the organizational culture and identity of a team comes to represent the glue that holds an organization/team together because it provides a sense of perspective and direction for the collective group. Furthermore, importance is heavily placed on the development of organizational knowledge, which contributes to culture through the creation and sharing of myths, stories, and rumors (Eisenberg & Riley, 2001). The stories add to group identity and impact culture because they often talk about past tournaments, coaches, competitors, and experiences which allows current competitors to bond with the identity created by the previous competitors. The sharing of these stories serves two purposes, to establish a tool for assimilation into the team culture and to allow the team to centralize the team and connect them through stories to build camaraderie.

Furthermore, Hall (1992) provided an example as to how communication can impact cultural change by referencing the power of myth and story to a culture and how new forms of communication can disrupt an existing culture by replacing myth of the members of the group and forcing them to re-establish a belief system impacted by multiple cultures. In this instance, communication can facilitate cultural change in a way which erases key communicative elements of a pre-existing group, while attempting to establish new forms of communication as a norm. Delia (2018) argued team identification and cultural change is typically associated with positive outcomes. Although this is true, she noted how team identification can also be associated with negative outcomes such as identity threats whenever the norms are threatened (Delia, 2018). Teams that experience an identity threat often respond by attempting to preserve the established

identity while creating their own reality to shield themselves from the outside threat (Delia, 2018).

The final area of influence regarding new coaches and the impact they have on team dynamics relates to the impact on legacy. The idea of legacy is one which is used to bond teams and connect ideas of cohesion and group identity. The legacy of a team often includes stories and myths used to establish legacy and utilize storytelling as a way to inform younger members of the team while utilizing history as a code of conduct which provides members with a set of guidelines or expectations to adhere to. By understanding the impact legacy has on a team and how a new coach influences the formation or shift of a team's legacy, we can gain a deeper understanding of how new coaches impact aspects of a team's culture which they were not initially present for.

Storytelling

While connecting with the past legacy of a team is a good opportunity to learn of stories and traditions that current and former student's value, it is important for new coaches to understand the role they play in the development of legacy. Louis (2011) noted how building rapport with new students is essential to them buying into the created culture of the forensics team, but he also noted how the behavior of the instructor shapes rapport of the students. Coaches must be developing a level of comfort to where they feel capable of contributing to the changing culture of the team following their arrival as the new coach. It is understandable that coaches may feel uneasy with attempting to change a team's culture when a new coach is entering the university. A new coach must consider the atmosphere they are entering and how the history of the team is spoken of by the current competitors and even administrators. If a program

is labeled as having a rich history, it can be more difficult to implement changes which may upset the balance that has led to the creation of the legacy of the team. That being said, teams with a history of a toxic culture or one with a legacy which has been forgotten can often have a positive impact due to a new coach's ability to bring new concepts to reinvigorate the legacy a team is associated with.

Orne (2012) noted how forensics programs utilize storytelling as a method to promote team legacy. Due to the unique organizational construct, storytelling is essential to ensuring that a historical legacy survives despite the constant changes to the makeup of the team over the years (Orne, 2012). In her work, Orne discovered common archetypes utilized by teams included "the creation of a champion", "the underdog," and "a family affair (Orne, 2012)." These archetypes depict the type of story that is shared to new members and new coaches who take over the team and are expected to uphold the legacy. The stories and myths utilized by these teams attempt to illustrate a narrative that the team is able to overcome obstacles, handle adversity, and push through any challenge they may encounter as long as they work together. Carmack & Holm (2005) explained that subscribing to the legacy and following the codes set forth reflect the act of adjusting to cultural norms in an effort to feel invested in the group. By creating a continuous narrative of "we" in statements focusing on shared interests by the group, the group is able to influence direction and actions of others by noting how "that isn't how we do things (Carmack & Holm, 2005)." When a new coach enters into this legacy, they are forced into a bind where they either adhere to the norms associated with the legacy or attempt to change the legacy by beginning new traditions and forming new stories.

Legacy and tradition are often passed down to their teams through stories which not only serve as historical accounts of the past but also allow members to see how the team reached the

current point in their competitive and cultural standing. Previous literature has documented the power of shared storytelling when it comes to creating cultures and allowing them to develop and flourish (see Christensen et al. 2018; Louis 2011; Outzen 2016; and Walker 2011). Shared stories allow for deeper levels of connection while serving as a form of bonding and shared experience which connects the participants in multiple ways. The power of stories serves different functions within CMM as they allow for communal bonding while creating a sense of stability for relationship/cultural development of the group. The stories told and the storied experienced are vastly different and thus, must be treated different when discussing shared experiences. Stories serve as an important element of CMM because they allow for communal bonding and create a bedrock for structures to be based on.

The concept of storytelling connects to forensics and the creation of culture as it establishes how values, beliefs, and rituals all influence our sense of self and allows us to connect to one another. Storytelling is imperative to research in the field regarding the creation and formation of team cultures in forensics as new coaches often influence beliefs and values of team members. While the transition between coaches impacts the team in numerous ways, the values of a team often shift with this transition and allows for the creation of new relationships between coach and competitors.

Stories allow for the creation of tradition, norms, rituals, and standards which a group may use to create their culture and assign meaning to themselves as a group. Due to this, coordinated management of meaning serves as a critical theoretical lens which we can use to explore shared experiences, stories, and the creation of norms within a forensics team to adequately understand how a new coach is able to adjust to a team which has already been established with their own traditions. Stories serve as a conduit which coaches can use to not

only bond with their team but begin the process of changing previous traditions by implementing new ones. Spaces of shared stories allow for a comfortable environment for the students to feel connected in various ways and thus, provides an opportunity to create new comfort within relationships built upon methods of engagement associated with coordinated management of meaning. While storytelling is an important factor in the development of team culture and preserving history of forensics squads, the shift in coaches often impacts the discussions of legacy as teams worry about the impact the new coach may have on their team identity and culture.

Coaching Turnover

As is clear through existing research, team identity is impacted by the arrival of a new coach. Group identities in forensics are often formed in a way that allows teammates to feel connected quickly while developing comfort in the coaching staff soon after. The evolution of the relationship between coaches and competitors is one that often takes years to fully develop, but the group identity of a team allows every member to bond over a collected identity forged by members of the team who have acclimated to the culture and bought in to the shared group identity.

Gilson et al (2013) noted the importance that sports coaches played in the development of students when helping improve performance and behaviors. Methods of culture creation in sports closely resemble how culture is created in forensics through the coach-competitor relationship. Sports coaches serve as a guiding force while playing a central role in influencing moral terrain within experiences of the team (Gilson et al, 2013). Gilson et al (2013) noted the impact coaching turnover has on practice protocol and developing team culture, explaining:

In collegiate sports, there are no records that accurately depict the turnover rate for all coaches due to a lack of reporting by the NCAA, however, in 2012 out of 124 teams, a total of 27 head coaches left their respective institutions for a turnover rate of 21.8%. (p. 165)

The amount of coaching turnover in collegiate sports, much like the turnover in coaches via collegiate forensics, means new cultures must undergo development and change because of the roles and responsibilities new coaches must adjust to. The large turnover in coaches leads to new methods being utilized to connect with players and improve performance on the field. Hanin (2007) argued that while a change of coach may provide a team a brief boost, these organizational decisions generally result in difficulty on the part of the player to adapt over the long-term (Gilson et al 2013). This shows that an initial change is to be expected when a new coach takes over a team, but the competitors often struggle to cope with the adaptation process as changes in the team increase in frequency.

This concept of different leadership styles impacting how competitors connect with the coach both short and long term help us understand why different emotions exist during a coaching change. While immediate excitement may follow a coaching change due to fresh perspectives, the departure of the previous coach provides the mixed emotions competitors often must navigate in the turnover process. The transition from one coach to another is not only frustrating but filled with uncertainty as prior commitments from coaches are expected to be fulfilled. Walker & Walker (2013) contended that past scholarly work in forensics has focused on leadership and team culture, but the analysis surrounding student-competitor turnover warranted additional research. It is necessary to explore how each student responds to different tactics related to coaching and education. With new coaches joining, the influence of leadership

tactics and cultural tools brought from their previous institutions affect the culture surrounding their new team while also impacting the relationship building process they have with both previous and new coaches.

The transition a new coach experiences moving from one program to another can be daunting, but the influence these coaches have on the culture of a program has the ability to positively or negatively impact the direction of a team moving forward. Teams utilize shared cultural ideas such as group identity, cohesion, practice sessions, and team legacy to create a culture which can be shared with all members, and it is imperative that researchers understand the role a new coach plays in how each aspect is developed and navigated when a coach is tasked with taking over a new team.

New coaches are consistently in positions where they are looking to connect with their new team on multiple levels. Team cohesion is a critical aspect of ensuring retention and recruitment efforts are successful while establishing meaningful relationships with students who are seeking guidance in their collegiate careers. Through techniques which allow for open communication and bring the team together in a way that does not diminish efforts of the old coach while adding new cultural artifacts brought forth by the new coach, teams can quickly become places where team cohesion is fostered and flourishes.

The adjustment period for new coaches taking over existing programs can vary when questioning development of comfort with the new program. Coaches may feel conflicted between utilizing previous approaches and coaching methods familiar to the team and the desire to implement new strategies the coach may be familiar with. It is important for coaches to realize one of the earliest moments to become familiar and comfortable with comes through practice

sessions with the competitors. Whether practice sessions involve a large team practice of individual practices, sessions between coaches and students provide competitors with opportunities to gain familiarity with the coach and establish a working relationship.

Problem Statement and Research Questions

Holm (2015) argued that the way to define a program is to start with a blank slate, but as a new director, it is impossible to rebuild in a way that attempts to re-write a culture in its entirety. Holm noted how the process of either building or re-building a program involves a cultural change that involves creating groundwork which sets up the core values the team will abide by. Furthermore, Holm addressed the importance of new coaches discussing changes they plan on implementing. By being open with the team regarding potential changes to traditions and cultures in an effort to implement new policies or ideas which can help create new cohesion in the face of a significant shift in team dynamics (Holm, 2015).

Similarly, Christensen et al. (2018) noted how storytelling allow cultures to convey meaning from one tradition to another. The process allows for learning modes which allow for alternate forms of engagement between group members. This approach not only preserves culture but allows it to transform and adapt due to community influences (Christensen et al, 2018). Storytelling embraces different aspects which combine emotion with art and history to share knowledge and build relationships. When a culture is threatened by excessive outside influence, it risks losing elements of knowledge production and dissemination (Christensen et al, 2018). Hall (1992) explains how communication can facilitate cultural change by referring to the acculturation process as a sort of death and rebirth of a person. Through this image, Hall (1992)

contends how the differing perspective of another culture facilitates cultural change by altering how group members conceptualize themselves and their role within the group.

Cultural and individual changes are expected when a coaching change occurs, and the activity of forensics allows for a unique setting which can be explored thoroughly using the CMM framework. Although the impact these changes have on students has not been adequately explored through forensics research, past research indicates the need to continue re-shaping how we engage with coaching turnover and the process of moving between coaches. By exploring the narratives of those who have experienced coaching changes and hearing their stories, valuable insight can be gained regarding how coaches and competitors navigate the unique and unusual changes to their cultures and relationships within collegiate forensics. I present the following research questions to help explore these concepts:

RQ1. How does a coaching change impact members of collegiate forensics teams?

RQ2. How does the coaching change impact the culture of the team they are joining?

These research questions not only served to guide me as the researcher, but to provide the backbone for the methodology. This literature review encompassed a plethora of forensics research to help illustrate the past opportunities within forensics research while helping provide the support necessary for the framework. With the literature review serving as the platform for progress, we can look to the methodology to examine how the design of the project was optimal for retrieving rich data from the narratives of the research participants.

Chapter Three: Methods

When reflecting on the methods used in this project, it is important to note the necessity of mixed methods for the data collection. While a quantitative or qualitative approach alone could have achieved sufficient results regarding my research questions, the mixed-methods approach allowed me to combine the quantitative process of gathering as much data as possible while using the qualitative process to go further in-depth and really seek out rich information regarding how team culture in collegiate forensics is impacted by coaching changes. In this chapter, I will review the decision to utilize a mixed methods approach in the work, discuss the qualitative approach, discuss the quantitative approach, and bring it all together to reflect on the design of the research.

Mixed Methods Design

The use of a mixed methods approach was vital to this project. Mixed methods were a primary choice for the data collection process due to how I felt information could best be obtained in the collegiate forensics environment. Before discussing why mixed methods were used, it is important to better define what a mixed methods approach looks like. Cresswell & Plano Clark (2018) explained mixed methods approaches as “multiple ways of seeing and hearing” (p. 20). The approach is heavily favored because it provides a rigorous response to research questions and hypotheses for research situations that could not be properly answered with a qualitative or quantitative methodological approach. Not all situations justify the use of mixed methods. Essentially, mixed methods approaches use both qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a more robust base of data from participants. While quantitative methods help researchers understand the views of participants across a population, qualitative methods best help with understanding how a culture-sharing group works (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

One strength of a mixed methods approach is its ability to generate a larger array of feedback regarding research while allowing participants options with how they may choose to engage with the research project. This approach is ideal because it allowed me to combine more intimate interviews to gain depth on the topic while pairing it with surveys which could be made more accessible and account for those who may not have time for a lengthier interview process. Interviews and surveys combined are ideal for the collection of research because they can both be used as exploratory and explanatory tools for gathering data (Shorten & Smith, 2017). Both surveys and interviews served as vital tools for collecting data while allowing necessary overlap to piece everything together for analysis and discussion.

Creamer (2018) explained the reasoning behind selecting a mixed-methods approach to research by noting how it allows for key core elements of multiple methodologies to be implemented in a way that provides a more thorough understanding of the research ideas. When researching the impact of a coach change in the activity of forensics, a mixed methods approach utilizing surveys and interviews allowed me the opportunity to gather data in numerous ways to ensure maximum participation from a wide variety of participants. Furthermore, a mixed methods approach also provides better opportunities for participants to have their voices heard by sharing their experiences across the more complex research process (Shorten & Smith, 2017). This idea is reflected by Tracy (2010) who noted how mixed methods research provides more sincerity in research as it allows for participants to have a more self-reflective process while being able to comfortably express vulnerability, honesty, and transparency when engaging with the research and data collection process. This allows for a form of honesty which is not offered in a solely qualitative or quantitative approach.

Because of this, I engaged in a mixed method design known as the parallel method. This design allows for qualitative and quantitative data to be collected and analyzed concurrently (Shorten & Smith, 2017). Schoonenboom & Johnson (2017) explained the parallel method by noting how the utilization of design typology serves as a guiding point for the research while providing legitimacy to the research, all while generating new possibilities based upon the findings and how the structure contributed to those findings. This means the design structure for this research project served as the form of legitimacy which was essential for gathering the data. This allowed the methodology to guide the analysis allowing for a more complete data collection process.

In an online world, an approach allowing for greater participant flexibility and a wider array of engagement opportunities was necessary for the success of the research project. From the initial planning stages of this project, mixed methods research appeared to be the best fit for the questions I was seeking to answer. It allowed for a variety of responses which could give a wider scope for programs experiencing coaching change while allowing me the opportunity to explore questions in greater depth using interviews in order to delve deeper into the answers participants may provide. The activity of forensics often sees former competitors leave the activity after their competition eligibility is completed.

To engage with those students and hear their perspectives, I needed to use a methodological approach that allowed for more opportunities for engagement. A mixed methods approach offered this area of engagement and provided opportunities for multiple levels of engagement via surveys and interviews. Analyzing the impact of a new coach joining a forensics team required a mixed-methods approach because although we can gather the opinions of

students who experienced cultures from a previous coach and the new coach, the way in which we ask those questions span more than merely examining a shift in culture.

The mixed methods approach I used in this thesis allowed me to gather data that addressed the entire team and its culture rather than solely placing focus on a single student. Furthermore, this strategy provides additional insight regarding the impact coaches have on different teams. Utilizing only one method of data collection could have lead to insufficient results; Cresswell & Plano Clark (2018) explained that the risk of insufficient results related to the research question is a primary reason for utilizing a mixed-methods approach during the data collection process. The final reason behind my decision to pursue a mixed methods approach is that the approach allows for more robust results while qualitative research provides a detailed understanding of a problem and quantitative provides a more general understanding, mixed methods research allows provided a balance of breadth and depth in the study without the struggles associated with research that only uses qualitative or quantitative methodologies (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The use of mixed methods in forensics research is not a completely unfamiliar idea, but past research has opted to focus on one method as a way of exploring problems within the activity of forensics without extensive contributions from students and alumni (see Chouinard & Kuyper, 2010; Louis, 2011; Outzen, 2016; White, 2005 and 2010) My hope was that the use of a mixed methods approach would allow for students to have more input regarding how a new director taking over a forensics program impacts the culture and the traditions which have been put in place by past coaches and competitors. This approach should offer a more in-depth perspective regarding the role coaches play in team culture than previous research while emphasizing student voices and perspectives.

For these reasons, a mixed methods approach seemed like the best fit for the project and proved to be adequate in gathering ample information through all tools used in the project. Forensics research can often be limited due to researchers relying solely on quantitative or qualitative work to gather information regarding topics within the field. It is my hope that mixed methods approaches are used more often moving forward as they can help piece more information within the field together while allowing multiple approaches to work together to create work unique to forensics research.

Cross-Sectional Surveys in the Mixed Methods Design

Cross-sectional surveys are a widely used research tool in quantitative studies (Reinard 2008, p. 346). A cross-sectional survey is a tool which pulls data from a specific population in order to examine possible relationships differences between variables of interest. Cross-sectional surveys fulfill the needs of this research project better than other instruments such as experiments because they describe the data and what it represents rather than seeking to control specific variables. This allows for a richer understanding of the gathered data while pairing with the qualitative interviews to provide the best scope for analyzing collected data without controlled variables. The survey contributes to the mixed methods research process by providing a larger number of respondents and allowing the researcher to ask more questions to gather information from a vast pool of participants.

Of course, the key to a successful cross-sectional survey is the set of items used in that survey. Edmonds & Kennedy (2017) addressed the importance of developing survey questions by noting how good and appropriate questions added to the validity and credibility of both the researcher and the research/data collection process. For this research project, it was important to establish both credibility and validity as a researcher while creating questions that are best

tailored to gather rich, in-depth information from participants. The added difficulty with surveys being used in this project was that the questions had to be carefully crafted to avoid ambiguity or potential double-barreled questions. With forensics topics such as team culture, it is easy to create questions which are too vague or point the participants toward answers and creating a sense of bias from the researcher. Reinard (2008) contends that consistent wording and consistent scales within surveys are two of the most important factors that ought to be considered when preparing questions for surveys. Consistent scales involve having rating scales mimic the first scale used. If scales are not consistent, it can confuse respondents and make them question previous scales or begin to question the credibility and validity of the researcher along with the study (Reinard, 2008, p. 354). To ensure I was successful in writing appropriate and consistent survey questions, I relied on pre-existing scales that had been tested in communication research. A more detailed discussion of the scales I used will come later in this chapter.

Qualitative Interviews in the Mixed Methods Design

The second methodological approach utilized in the project was a qualitative interview approach. Tracy (2010 p. 132-133) discussed the value of interviews for their ability to combine mutual discovery, understanding, reflection, and explanation through an organic and collaborative process to gain perspective about the participants and their experiences regarding a specific instance of interest. The interviews I engaged in provided value and moved beyond merely serving as a tool for gathering data. The interviews served as a way for me to better understand the impact students felt from a coaching transition and connect it to my own experiences with changing teams. I believe these interviews served as a critical tool for future coaches seeking to understand the thoughts and feelings their students may experience after they have announced an impending change for the team. For this reason, the interviews in this project

expand beyond this work and are able to suggest effective change within the activity of collegiate forensics, which will be presented in Chapter 5.

When conducting interviews, it is necessary to make sure the questions offer the opportunity to obtain unique information while gaining the desired input. The protocol I implemented came from a variety of questions that allowed the current and former competitors to engage with the research while focusing on their input more than the details the question may look for. With this project, I wanted to create an environment where participants could have a moment of catharsis and cope with a departure of a coach. I also wanted the interviews to create an educational environment where the insights participants provided could help future readers understand the impact these transitions have on the students themselves. This mindset was critical during my interview process as it guided how I structured questions and approached the interviews beforehand. Although interviews ought to be organic in how they develop, the initial approach should be well constructed and allow for a sense of direction regarding where the interview goes and the goal of the interview.

The structure of my interviews followed what Tracy (2013) would consider a semi-structured interview with an interview guide. This means while questions were prepared for the interview, I entered each interview allowing the participants more flexibility regarding the questions so our conversations were more organic in nature. Furthermore, the interview guide allowed the experience to serve as a form of discussion rather than a standard dictated interview (Tracy, 2013, p. 139). The semi-structured nature of the interview ensured participants had a loose structure to help navigate through the interview without forcing them into questions which may disrupt the flow of the experience for the participant or cause the interview to feel more simulated rather than natural.

Research Procedures

When it came to recruiting my participants, I relied on the Individual Events email Listserv (IE-L) for collegiate forensics, social media posts, and personal emails to directors of collegiate forensics teams who I was familiar with and who I knew had undergone a coaching change in the timeframe I was interested in researching. The recruiting message called for current or recently graduated collegiate forensics competitors who experienced a coaching change during their time competing and called for them to participate in the research process, whether it be through the quantitative survey, qualitative interview, or both. The recruitment message can be found in Appendix A. This approach to recruitment allowed for participants to decide how they would like to engage in the project without suggesting one method over the other. My initial recruitment email provided links to the consent forms for both the surveys and interviews, and upon clicking the link participants were directed to the appropriate form where they were given the option to give consent for the survey and / or the interview. Participants had the option to fill out one or both consent forms.

For survey participation, participants were given access to the survey after reading through the consent form and indicating their consent to complete the survey. The survey consisted of three scales, two of which were replicated to account for the thoughts on the old coach and the new coach; details about the contents of the surveys are provided later in this chapter. Upon completion of the survey, participants were given the opportunity to indicate their interest in also completing an interview, and if interested they were linked to the interview consent form.

Procedures for the interviews were followed per IRB protocols dictated in the approved IRB project form. Because interviews were taking place during nationals season for collegiate

speech and debate, scheduling them remained one of the most difficult tasks when it came to organizing participants. With the interview recruitment, after participants completed the consent form, I contacted them by email in order to set up an interview via Zoom. In the email participants were told they had been contacted because they filled out the consent form, and I indicated whether they consented to be recorded via audio only, audio and visual, or both. This allowed participants to schedule interviews based on their schedule and confirm they had filled out the appropriate consent forms to be able to participate in the interview process.

Interview Protocols

Interview research is often conducted in-person but conducting interviews during a pandemic required me to offer a virtual option that proved to be beneficial to my goals. Using an in-depth interview process through online synchronous interviews allowed me to fill in a research gap within the field of forensics research. Interviews provided me with a wider array of material to analyze while allowing for the rich depth of information to serve as a base for honest thoughts and feelings, and conducting those interviews online allowed me to expand my recruitment range and reach a wider population.

When it came time for interviews to occur, I made sure to check for consent with the participants again before beginning the interview. Upon meeting with each interview participant, I reviewed the consent form and verified their comfort with having video and audio of the interview recorded for data purposes and destroyed at the conclusion of the research project. After I began recording, I engaged in some general questions with the participants before getting into questions more directly focused on the research questions. Some examples of questions included in the interview were:

“When did you experience a change in coaches?”

“How did the team atmosphere shift upon a change in coaches?”

“What feelings did you experience once your coach left?”

“When your coach left, how did it impact team culture?”

These questions allowed me the opportunity to gain a better understanding of how the students engaged with their coaches, which went beyond what the quantitative survey was capable of providing by itself. The full interview protocol is provided in Appendix B.

Survey Measures

Three scales were used for the quantitative portion of this project: the coach confirmation instrument, the organizational culture scale, and the organizational identification questionnaire. The coach confirmation instrument was developed by Cranmer, Brann, & Weber (2017) and focused on analyzing how supported sport competitors felt by their coaches. The scale asked participants to respond to 14 items, and questions included prompts such as “My coach told me they wanted me to succeed outside of the activity,” “my coach told me I performed up to their expectations,” and “my coach spent time trying to help me improve.” The survey asked the participants to answer the questions on a 1-5 scale with 1 being “*never true*” and 5 being “*always true*.” This scale was critical in the data collection process as it allowed me to take a scale connected to coach/competitor relationships and alter it to forensics coaches and their relationships to competitors. The scale was duplicated for the quantitative section of the thesis so I could analyze how interactions were utilized between the competitor and both the previous and current coaches they interacted with. The scale proved to be statistically reliable in each iteration: coach confirmation for the old coach produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .95 ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .83$). Coach confirmation for the new coach produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .87 ($M = 4.66$, $SD = .35$).

The organizational culture scale (Schein, 1985) sought to add further depth to the feelings of students and the culture or atmosphere created by coaches. Participants were asked about the social environment of their team and how positive and inclusive the team felt to them through 36 items. Questions included prompts such as “People on the team accepted criticism without becoming defensive,” “the team respected its competitors,” and “my opinions count in this team.” The survey asked the participants to respond to the instrument items on a 1-5 scale with 1 being “*strongly disagree*” and 5 being “*strongly agree*.” This scale was also duplicated, so participants completed the scale once to report on the team culture under their old coach, and again for the team culture under their new coach. The scale proved to be statistically reliable in each iteration: team culture under the old coach produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .97 ($M = 3.62$, $SD = .808$). Team culture under the new coach produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .94 ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .46$).

The organizational identification questionnaire (Potvin, 1992) was the final instrument used to obtain quantitative metrics for the project. This scale measures how strongly participants identify with the values and goals of the organization; in this project the scale was adapted to measure how strongly participant identified with the values and goals of their team. Questions included 24 prompts such as “In general, I view the team’s issues as my own,” “in general, the people on the team are working toward the same goals,” and “I have a lot in common with others on the team.” These questions asked the participants to answer the survey questions on a 1-5 Likert scale ranging from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*.” The scale proved to be statistically reliable in each iteration: team identification produced a Cronbach’s alpha of .93 ($M = 3.99$, $SD = .64$).

Participants

Overall, 11 participants were interviewed for the qualitative portion of the methodology. The participants ranged in age from 18-26 with an average age of 22.8 years old and were forensicators who were either current competitors or had graduated within the last four years. All participants interviewed were white with seven identifying as female, two as male, and two identifying as non-binary. Students interviewed all competed at midwestern universities.

Furthermore, 19 participants completed the survey for the quantitative portion of the methodology. The participants ranged in age from 18-52 ($M = 23.9$) and were forensicators who were either current competitors or had graduated within the last four years. 18 of 19 participants who completed the survey were white with one participant being black. 13 participants identified as female, four as non-binary, and two identified as male.

Data Analysis

For the analysis of the surveys, I imported the Qualtrics responses into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to run descriptive and inferential statistics on the data. This process, including the specific tests conducted and the results of those tests, is discussed in Chapter 4. The statistical analysis directly connected to the findings from the qualitative interviews and supported the narratives shared by the research participants. The quantitative surveys served as the structure for the interviews as they filled in the gaps and helped strengthen the qualitative portion of the data analysis.

The interviews were analyzed by going through the interview transcripts and connecting answers based on themes which emerged from the stories of the participants, following strategies suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). The initial coding step involved an inductive process which allowed me the opportunity to interpret the raw textual data to identify themes based on

commonalities and recurrences in wording and meaning. After the themes were identified, interview questions and answers were categorized with similar answers being placed together under the corresponding theme. This allowed for excerpts to be pulled from themes and provided a sense of organization for the transcripts. Finally, I engaged in a process of axial coding to condense the themes with the appropriate questions into smaller segments from the interviews and utilized within the research project (see Charmaz, 2006). The stories which shared similar feelings, experiences, or language were typically under the same themes which allowed them to fit well with each other during the analysis.

The methods utilized in this research project were intentionally constructed to allow for a wider range of responses while ensuring accessibility for participants. The mixed methods design allowed participants to select how they could contribute to the research while providing me ample opportunities to engage with the qualitative and quantitative components of the study. In the next chapter, I discuss the analysis of the data along with the results which I identified after coding the data.

Chapter 4: Analysis and Results

This chapter provides details regarding the findings of the study. After analyzing the quantitative surveys along with the interview transcripts, I was able to decipher responses to my research questions gathered from current and recent collegiate forensics competitors who agreed to participate in the project:

RQ1. How does a coaching change impact members of collegiate forensics teams?

RQ2. How does the coaching change impact the culture of the team they are joining?

This chapter provides my analysis of what research participants reported regarding the impact a coaching change had on their team culture and how it impacted them on an individual level. I start this chapter by discussing the statistics gathered from the quantitative surveys to create the framework for the analysis. Next, I review the interview responses gathered throughout the project while discussing emergent themes which were found during the interview transcript analysis. Finally, I connect the discovered themes to the initial research questions posed.

Quantitative Results

Coach Confirmation and Team Culture

RQ1 asked how a coaching change impacted the members of a collegiate forensics team. To help answer this, I conducted a paired-samples *t*-test to explore how coach confirmation toward the old and new coach impacted the team members and their ability to feel comfortable or accepted within the team. A paired-samples *t*-test determines whether one group of people reports differences in the same measure taken under two different circumstances. In other words, a paired-samples *t*-test shows whether one group experiences a change in some variable of

interest. I conducted a paired-samples t -test to see if there were differences in coach confirmation based on old coach vs. new coach. Because my sample size was so small, I followed the suggestion of Pallant (2010) and Stephens (1996) to adjust the alpha level to compensate. Based on their suggestion, I set my p -value to .15 for significance. The t -test indicated there was a significant difference in confirmation levels between the old coach ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .83$) and the new coach ($M = 4.66$, $SD = .35$), $t(10) = .133$, $p < .15$ (two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (.21) indicated a large effect size, suggesting that participants rated their new coaches as more confirming than their previous coaches. However, the power of the test was only .32, which is very small. These differences should be viewed with some hesitancy much like the t -test administered with questions regarding team culture.

RQ2 asked how a coaching change impacted the culture of the team they were joining. To help answer this, I conducted another paired-samples t -test to examine the differences in team culture between the old coach and the new coach. I again adjusted my alpha level for statistical significance based on my small sample size. The t -test indicated there was a significant difference in team culture between the old coach ($M = 3.94$, $SD = .61$) and new coach ($M = 4.22$, $SD = .46$); $t(10) = -1.782$, $p < .15$ (two-tailed). The eta squared statistic (.24) indicated a large effect size. These results illustrate that participants rated their team culture more positively or favorably under the new coach than they did under the old coach. However, the power of the test was only .36, which is not very strong, so those group differences should be viewed with some hesitancy. This shows that while differences in team culture might exist between the old and the new coach, the results cannot be accepted without caution.

While the t -tests provided information regarding both research questions, additional tests were required to test the link between competitors and their previous and new coaches in order to

determine whether the existing relationships showed a significant difference when compared to one another. Following the *t*-tests, an ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) was used to look for differences in confirming behaviors from the coach based on the old coach's position. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) determines whether there are differences in some continuous, interval or ratio-level variable based on some categorical variable with two or more levels. In other words, an ANOVA shows whether two or more groups are different on some non-categorical variable of interest. I conducted a one-way analysis of variance to explore the impact of confirming behaviors from the coach based on the old coach's position (i.e., director, assistant director, graduate student, etc.). Participants were divided into three groups: director level, assistant director level, and other. The ANOVA indicated there was a significant difference in confirming behaviors based on position between the groups: $F(2, 11) = 4.098, p < .05$. However, because the post-hoc tests could not distinguish them, some groups could not be deciphered based on open-ended responses (i.e., participants who selected "other" for the position of their old coach could not be categorized in a meaningful way). Thus, a *t*-test needed to be utilized to further inspect the remaining groups. To do so, I conducted an independent samples *t*-test to look for differences in old coach confirmation between directors and assistant directors. The *t*-test indicated there was not a significant difference in confirming behaviors from participants' old coaches based on whether they were directors ($M = 4.26, SD = .68$) or assistant directors ($M = 4.82, SD = .05$); $t(9) = -1.11, p > .15$.

To help distinguish whether the ANOVA was relevant in assisting us in answering RQ1 about whether the coaching change impacted the members of the team, an additional ANOVA was administered to examine if there were differences in coach confirming behaviors based on the *new* coach's position. Participants were divided into four groups: director level, graduate

student coach, volunteer coach, and other. The ANOVA indicated there was not a significant difference in coach confirming behaviors based on the new coach's position: $F(3, 7) = .07, p > .15$. However, the ANOVA proved inappropriate to assess this difference because some groups (volunteer coach and "other") only contained one data point each. Because ANOVA could not be effectively utilized due to multiple groups possessing one participant, a follow-up *t*-test was done with the director and graduate student coach groups in order to determine if a significant difference existed. The *t*-test indicated there was not a significant difference in confirmation levels between the old coach at the director level ($M = 4.26, SD = .41$) and the old coach at the graduate student coach level ($M = 4.74, SD = .39$) $t(7) = -.331, p > .15$. Considered together, these tests suggest there is no difference between confirming behaviors of coaches (old or new) based on the position of the coach.

Correlations

There were five correlations which were found during the data analysis process of the quantitative surveys. These correlations directly support the qualitative analysis which noted similar findings to the quantitative section when analyzing the interviews. Because the nature of these relationships between coaches and competitors are so complex, it is necessary to examine the variables within the relationship further to ensure we have a more complete understanding of how they function. Although the *t*-tests and ANOVA offered an idea of what differences might exist between groups, correlations serve a vital purpose in exploring the relationships that might exist between my variables of interest. The correlations which follow note the relationships between coaching changes and the impact they have on competitors and the team culture.

The first two correlations yielded identical results when exploring the relationship between team and confirming behaviors exhibited by the old and new coach which directly

connect to RQ1 looking for how a coaching change impacts members of the team. A correlation measures the relationship between two interval or ratio-level variables to see whether one variable produces a positive, negative, or no relationship on the second. In other words, a correlation determines whether changes in one variable are associated with changes in another, and how. I conducted a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient to determine if there was a relationship between identification with the team and confirming behaviors from the old coach. The correlation indicated there was not a significant relationship between identification with the team and old coach confirmation: $r = .17, n = 15, p > .15$. This result suggests no relationship between how strongly students identified with their team, and how confirming their *old* coach was.

The second correlation asked if a relationship existed between identification with the team and confirming behaviors of the *new* coach. The correlation indicated there was not a significant relationship between the two variables: $r = .44, n = 11, p > .15$. This result again suggests no relationship between how strongly students identified with their team, and how confirming their *new* coach was. Taken together, these two correlations indicate a lack of relationship between coach confirmation and team identification—the two variables appeared to be unrelated in this study.

A third correlation examined whether a relationship existed between identification with the team and the culture of the team under the *old* coach. After examining the data it was found that there was a statistically significant, strong, positive relationship present between the variables: $r = .53, n = 15, p < .05$. The more strongly a student identified with the team, the more positive they rated the culture under the *old* coach.

The fourth correlation explored if there was a relationship between identification with the team and the culture of the team under the *new* coach. Again, the test revealed a statistically significant, strong, positive relationship between the variables: $r = .78, n = 11, p < .01$. The more strongly a student identified with the team, the more positive they rated the culture under the *new* coach. It is worth noting that the magnitude of this relationship was stronger than the one measured for the old coach, suggesting the presence of some difference between old and new coaches and their impact on team culture.

The final correlation sought to answer if there was a relationship between overall coach confirming behaviors, which were not specific to the old or new coach, and the overall team culture. As expected, the test revealed a strong, positive, statistically significant relationship between the variables, $r = .908, n = 14, p < .001$. The more confirming the coach was, the more positive the culture was rated by the research participants.

Considered together, the results of the statistical analyses illustrate some interesting findings. The statistics show a relationship between students and the new coach with the students noting a positive impact on team culture and on them. While a negative relationship was not determined, the new coach having an impact on the culture in a positive way is a significant finding from the quantitative data. This quantitative data analysis served as a framing mechanism which would not only provide ample data regarding existing relationships and coach confirmation but support the qualitative analysis from the interviews. It is clear the relationships identified from the analysis of the quantitative surveys are reflected in the interviews and elaborated on to create additional rich data for the project. In the following section I will explain how the qualitative data not only reflects the quantitative findings, but directly answers the initial research questions posed in the project.

Understanding the Interview Responses

The nature of the interviews required current and recent collegiate forensics competitors to share their experiences with a coaching change they experienced during their time as a competitor. To engage with the questions completely, interview questions were asked regarding the experience with the previous coach and then the same questions were asked regarding the experience with the coach who replaced the previous coach. What follows is a thematic overview of responses gathered during interviews along with the themes which emerged regarding experiences with previous and new coaches in collegiate forensics.

Theme One: The Importance of Legacy

During the interviews, discussions regarding ideas of team legacy, team history, and tradition surfaced as an important topic which warranted analysis. I attempted to evaluate how the change in coaches not only impacted the discussions regarding the aforementioned concepts, but how the team felt about changes in these discussions. After reviewing their responses, it seemed as though my research participants viewed discussions regarding legacy and team history as an important conversation piece with their previous coach, but one that remained largely unaltered after the new coach took over. Team legacy may refer to the traditions of the team or a set of standards the team has upheld. While legacy, history, and tradition were utilized interchangeably by participants without a clear definition, it is largely used as a code of conduct which dictates how competitors from a program have traditionally performed, acted, or behaved when representing the university. This is important as it not only allowed students to discuss where they fit into the conversations regarding legacy, but how it impacted their ability to shape their own habits.

“A torch was being passed to us”: Old Coaches Upholding Legacy. First, several of my research participants indicated the discussion of team legacy and history largely focused on their own place in team history and how their spot on the team served as an addition to the history rather than merely seeing it as something they could only reflect on. For example, Jordan, a white woman who is currently competing at a midwestern university, explained,

We were doing it, not only for ourselves, but for our alumni and we would go through scrapbooks from different years and hear stories of the past competitors. The history of the team played a very active role in how our team functioned and it was never lost on us. It felt like *a torch was being passed to us*. (Jordan, Interview, April 27, 2021)

Similarly, Chris, a non-binary student who recently graduated from a midwestern university, also stated:

The stories of this team’s legacy holds me up. Everyone who came before me made this program into what it is now. It’s very humbling. The traditions we had made everything feel like a family and like we were each contributing our own parts to help add our own chapters to the long textbook of those before us. (Chris, Interview, May 2, 2021)

These two narratives illustrate a common theme among interview responses. A number of participants explained how they felt their role on the team was molded by those who came before them, and the discussions of the legacy they were expected to fulfill based on the competitors who came before them. These two factors allow coaches to create an atmosphere regarding the team which can help create standards and expectations regarding conduct, performance, work ethic, and mindset regarding competitive forensics competition.

Furthermore, some participants built upon this idea by noting how discussions of legacy dictated how they ought to present themselves. As Amber, a white woman who recently competed and graduated from a midwestern university, explained,

The talks of how we act and what we do and say at tournaments was engrained into us as first year competitors. Everything had to be done a certain way in order to preserve the legacy of the team. We would talk about how the team had historically placed at a tournament, but the rules and traditions sort of dictated the legacy and history of the team. (Interview, May 3, 2021)

These ideas were echoed by Mary, a white woman competed and graduated from a midwestern university, who noted,

We were always told to be the nicest team. Our coach told us that is what we were known for and with the history of our team being so rich it was expected that we carry on the legacy of that atmosphere when we competed as well. We never really talked about the future of the program, like what we would like to see, but we would talk about how things have been done in the past and how we could replicate them. (Interview, May 5, 2021)

Amber and Mary both explained how the concept of legacy is not always one which is fondly looked back on, but one which a competitor is expected to uphold to maintain team standards and traditions. When discussing team legacy and how we connect the history of a team to the current squad, it is important to understand how the conversations can bond the team in order to create a culture which seeks to build onto a legacy and create new contributions or serve as a form of unwritten rules regarding conduct and performance style.

The concepts of team legacy and how it is preserved and carried on reflect a culture which is either established by or reflected by the current team. When a coach transitions from one program to another it is important to navigate the team legacy as they directly link to the creation of a culture and the ability to maintain it. This theme connected to both of the research questions which examined how a coaching change impacts team members along with how the transition impacts team culture. If a new coach enters a team and begins to re-shape discussions surrounding legacy and how it influences the current team they may be met with resistance due to the team feeling uncertain regarding the change in culture.

“We needed a fresh start”: New Coaches and Evolving Legacies. Aside from discussing the state of the legacy and history with their *previous* coaches, research participants noted how the *new* coach coming into the team impacted the discussions regarding culture and team legacy. While participants spoke fondly of team legacy and history in most instances, the change in coaches often led to a shift in those talks which helped re-energize the team. For example, Beth, a white woman who competed at and graduated from a midwestern university, explained,

The new coaches discussed team legacy in a positive light. For us, we mentioned some of the shady things in the past, but we primarily focused on the positives with our team. But with multiple new coaches coming in it felt like the best route was to have a fresh start where we could re-imagine our community. (Interview, May 5, 2021)

Beth’s ideas on a fresh start being necessary were reiterated by Kim, a white woman who currently competes at a midwestern university. Kim discussed how gaining a coach from another program helped with legacy and culture discussions by explaining:

A lot of times when we would talk about the history of the program, we would get to hear stories about how it connected to the history of our coach's old program. It led to a feeling of mutual respect and helped us re-think legacy and what it meant to us. They didn't try to just implement ideas from their old team, but they helped us restructure things that weren't working for us. (Interview, May 10, 2021)

When new coaches enter established teams, it can often lead to a significant shift in culture and traditions established by the previous directors of the program. Sam, a white man who competed for a midwestern university, spoke about this change while reiterating how it can often help the team in unexpected ways,

When our coach left it felt like we completely changed the environment. Our new coach was less structured and organized and we would see what other teams were doing to prepare during the season only to get nervous about what it meant for us. The looser strategy actually seemed to really help our newbies though as they were able to develop comfort and not feel some of the pressure that we had felt. (Interview, May 7, 2021)

While team legacy and culture often serves as a critical part of how a team functions and maintains identity through changes in team members or coaches, the interviews with my research participants helped illustrate how changing the talks surrounding legacy can actually help students re-evaluate their own positions within a team. A new coach highlighting key points of the team history yet asking students where they fit into the legacy or how they feel it can better impact the atmosphere of their community allows students to feel like their voices are heard and their input valued. While not all research participants answered questions regarding team legacy and talks of history in the same way, it is clear the discussions largely focus on the past and what it means for the current competitors on the team. The preservation of team legacy is one filled

with rich memories and storied traditions, but when a coaching change occurs it may be in the best interest of the team to re-evaluate how these conversations take place.

Theme Two: Feelings of Abandonment

Research participants all felt similarly when discussing the departure of a previous coach. All participants discussed feeling abandoned by their previous coaches either because of how they left or due to leaving after establishing close interpersonal relationships. As noted in the aforementioned theme regarding team legacy and culture, terms such as “family” and “community” are often associated with the activity of collegiate forensics, but a coach leaving often impacts competitors who feel conflicted after the move.

“We weren’t prepared for it”: The Effect of Abrupt Departures. While discussing the departure of a coach, research participants offered perspectives which showed the mixed feelings associated with a coaching change. In many instances, students felt as though it was unexpected or something that caught them off guard. Research participants provided numerous reasons for their feelings, with many noting abandonment as a recurring emotion throughout the process. Beth detailed her experience by noting,

I feel like I kinda knew because I had heard it may be something on the horizon due to other opportunities opening up for them, but once it happened it felt very sudden and I don’t think we were prepared for it. I felt disappointed, but for our team coaching turnover had become a normal occurrence. (Interview, May 5, 2021)

Beth’s feelings were echoed by other participants as well who thought the departure of their coach had ramifications that went further than a simple change in coaches. Cory, a white non-

binary student who competed and graduated from a midwestern university, feared for the future of their program, explaining,

I was pissed. They had been making cuts to our program for years and I was certain our coach leaving would be the nail in the coffin. We were told our funding had been cut and after our coach fought to get it back they immediately left. I was happy that they moved on to a better job, but I was pissed because I knew I had to be here for another two years and accept the fact that my mentor was gone and I was just left here. (Interview, May 1, 2021)

When a coach leaves for a job outside of the academic institution they were coaching at one can feel left behind, but these feelings are not exclusive to those who leave the space of forensics entirely. For Kim, the coach remained at the university and the departure of that coach was felt by more than just her. She explained,

I don't think we realized how much our coach was doing until they left and then it just felt like we were abandoned. When our coach left, we didn't see or hear from them again until multiple months later which was tough. I know they needed to get out of the activity, but it just felt so sudden and our team felt it as a whole for the first few weeks after they left. (Interview, May 10, 2021)

Jordan had similar feelings regarding the departure of their coach. They explained,

It was hard. I just remember everyone talking in the group chat and I wasn't in town. When I got back my coach apologized for not telling me because there had just been so much going on and we had a good cry session. After the season was when it was really hard. With the season ending because of the pandemic we just all got sent home. Then

there was nothing. No Nationals or last hurrah, but it was hard knowing our coach was gone but would still be around. (Interview, April 27, 2021)

Although dealing with the transition from one coach to another is never easy, feeling as though the coaching change developed out of nowhere can make the departure much more difficult. It makes sense for coaches to keep decisions regarding pursuing other coaching jobs or decisions to leave the activity in its entirety to themselves until something is known. However, by doing this, coaches inadvertently cause competitors to experience feelings of abandonment and hurt as they navigate the struggles associated with a coach leaving. In collegiate forensics, coaches often serve as mentors, confidants, educators, coaches, friends, and support systems. For competitors, these individuals often help provide a community and space where they have felt safe and welcome during their collegiate careers. A pivotal part of that community creation leaving the community can often feel numbing or leave one feeling as if the team cannot recover due to the presence their previous coach had. While many participants noted feeling a change was coming regarding coaches, or in some cases knowing before the rest of the team, the feelings associated with the departure of a coach are often tied to feelings of abandonment, vulnerability, rejection, and insecurity due to the unique connection that exists within the coach/competitor relationship.

“I was trying to understand why”: **Lingering Effects of Coach Departure.** When coaches leave programs, students often begin to question whether they could have prevented the change from taking place. For students like Kate, a white woman who recently competed for a midwestern university, the departure of a coach can create mixed feelings depending on the nature of the departure. She explained,

We could tell how hard it was for our coach when they announced it. They cried while telling us, but because it was out of love and it was finally our coach taking care of themselves over the team. The next step was beyond scary for them, but because we were so close as a team we helped them understand that we were in this together. (Interview, April 26, 2021)

Kate's perspective is similar to many competitors who must navigate the departure of a coach and prepare for the changes that will inevitably come with the arrival of the new coach. While competitors often struggle with feelings of frustration and anxiety regarding the departure of their coach, the feelings they experience which lead to self-doubt and struggle often continue on into the tenure of the next coach. This makes the feelings inherently unique to this theme despite similarities to the previous feelings discussed regarding coaches.

Similarly, Amber explained how events following the departure of a coach can often impact the students on the team and shift culture even before a new coach arrives on campus. According to Amber,

There was definitely a lot of pushback from upperclassmen in terms of what the vision of the team would be. It led to all of them leaving and it ended up just being me, two second year students, and all of the first years that we were able to recruit. I feel like the pushback was due to the idea of more concrete expectations moving forward and the shock of all our coaches leaving at once without us really understanding why. (Interview, May 3, 2021)

This idea was furthered by Kim, who explained the team's mindset after the departure of her coach:

After our coach left things just felt quieter. The graduate assistants stepped up to fill a void, but just having a space where our coach had been and no longer remained in any capacity just hurt. I think the team felt like they lost a piece of itself, they lost a piece of its core. (Interview, May 10, 2021)

Despite the numerous reasons surrounding why a coach may leave a university, be it by choice, end of a term, graduation of graduate assistants, or the end of a program, it is clear the students feel significant impacts as coaches transition and the identity of the team begins to fluctuate. As coaches begin to seek other opportunities, the interviews from the research participants highlights the critical need to not only engage with students as coaches consider leaving a team, but also discuss how they feel regarding the potential changes they face. While research has been done regarding the impact of coaching changes, the impact it has on students has been under covered. By ensuring students are understanding of the transition and allowing them to voice how it is affecting them, teams may be better equipped to navigate coaching changes for both the coaches and students who are impacted by them.

Theme Three: Easing the Transition

When discussing the transition of coaches, participants consistently noted the ability of easing into the transition. For the incoming coaches, easing the transition from the former director to their tenure as a new coach is often the biggest struggle they endure. The difficulty of this transition is no secret within the collegiate forensics community. As a new coach enters the space a team has established before their presence, they often take small steps initially to gauge how the team will respond to the change.

The research participants provided a variety of responses when discussing the impact a new coach made on the culture or how they were received by the squad, in all instances they discussed how the new coach did their best to create a seamless and smooth transition which helped the students adjust to the new leadership. Kim expressed how her coaches had to adapt to her style but were able to do so without sacrificing their pedagogical approaches. Kim noted,

I liked my new coach right away. I think they had to adapt to me a bit because my coaching style has always been very independent. My high school career was filled with frustration so I have always just pushed myself and been self-sufficient. While there was a learning curve when they entered, they were very kind and understanding in their approach to working with me. I never had to navigate any battles with them and they did a great job creating a spot for themselves. I think they acknowledged they could never fill the hole our previous coach left, but they knew they could create a new spot where they were able to ease in and succeed. (Interview, May 10, 2021)

Kim's experience of a coach understanding they must adjust to the competitors on the team while simultaneously adjusting to the culture is not unfamiliar to individuals familiar with forensics. Students are constantly discovering their own place within the culture and Kim's narrative illustrates the balancing act any coach moving to a new program must endure. However, it is critical for the coach to understand the adjustment the students are making as well. For example, Sam expressed how their coach moved into a difficult position and was forced to fill large shoes left behind by the previous coach:

At first it was difficult for them to really get their hands on everything. All of us had an understanding of how we felt the team should function based on the year before, but our new coach didn't operate the same as our previous coach did. The leadership of the team

had a meeting with the coach and noted how so much wasn't being done that needed to be accomplished in order to succeed for the year. Then everything shifted. We started gaining momentum when we were able to incorporate some of the ideas from the previous year while also allowing for a structure that allowed our new coach to follow their vision for the team. It may be less structured, but it has gone a lot better than I predicted. We have a kind of excitement we haven't been able to see in a while and a positive culture to support it. (Interview, May 7, 2021)

Sam's experience shows how students face the same adjustment struggles as coaches face when entering a new team or organizational structure. Students may have the ability to feel more comfortable in the environment due to time spent in the space, but uncertainty regarding new traditions, protocols, rules, or coaching norms often plague students before having the chance to truly engage with the coach in the forensics environment. Kate noted how both her and the new coach connected quickly but eased into the coach/competitor relationship in a slow process that allowed them to establish a relationship built on trust and mutual understanding of one another. Kate stated,

After initially connecting we gained trust slowly through team meetings. Our new coach was very professional with their interactions and at first, we would finish a coaching session only for them to tell me they needed to move to the next one. It caught me off guard because I was used to just sitting and talking with my old coach after our meetings. I would see this even more when they would edit my speeches and I thought they hated my writing but that is just the type of coach they are. My coach reiterated that they believed in me and that they were simply trying to get their feet planted in their first semester as coach. Our coach is big on giving us grace and being understanding of the

performance choices we make while challenging us to do better. If they hadn't eased into their approach, I think it would have been a rough beginning to the year. (Interview, April 27, 2021)

Kate's experiences with her new coach highlight the need to adapt and adjust to students in order to create an effective space of comfort and positivity. The transition is much more effective when the director and students can get on the same page from an early moment in the year. Amber elaborated,

When we first met our director there were some things that surprised me based on my knowledge of speech. Our coach would tell us to try something a different way and at first I was very hesitant, but they were really good about getting me thoughts and feelings so we could set goals together. Our coach was incredibly open about what the expectations were for the team and wanted the team to work together to help decide what those expectations should be. Our coach has always been great at giving us her full attention and would make sure we felt valued and our thoughts were heard in each practice session and in each discussion regarding the team. It created such a good space after having a previous environment with toxicity. (Interview, May 3, 2021)

For many competitors, a change in coaches provides an opportunity to explore new competitive speech events or reveal more about themselves which they felt unable to do with a previous coach. Beth furthered Amber's ideas about a creation of comfortable spaces by explaining how her coaches pushed her to step outside of her comfort zone. Beth explained,

It was really different at first because our coaching staff had been all women the year before, and then suddenly it changed. The coaching styles we gained with our new

coaches were so different that I felt I had the opportunity to step outside of my comfort zone and really discover new passions in my coaching sessions. I let them know how I wanted to be coached and they would always cater to my style but consistently challenge me to explore my topics more, broaden my performance choices, or ask questions to help me remember why I loved my topics to begin with. My new coaches just made a world of difference. They wouldn't always tell us what we wanted to hear, but they told us what needed to hear and I think it helped me improve and grow while seeing this as more than an activity. (Interview, May 5, 2021)

The above excerpts provide a clear line of analysis regarding the necessity of easing into a transition for the sake of both students and coaches. While all transitions may have growing pains or moments of tension where both parties haven't reached a point of understanding, the transition process is one which significantly impacts the students and their ability to connect with and find comfort with new coaches for their team. In all of my interviews, the research participants provided detailed accounts of the transition they experienced and in each one unique stories were mentioned along with overarching themes connected to the coach allowing the students to be themselves and not force change on the squad when they weren't unaccepting. By creating a collaborative environment early on, coaches provide opportunities to grow together rather than attempting to meet the students at a compromise point which may create tension within the group.

Revisiting the Research Questions

Initially, RQ1 asked: "How does a coaching change impact members of collegiate forensics teams?" During my interviews, discussions of the impact of coaching changes on forensics teams ranged from "a breath of fresh air" to "it was tough to adjust," with my research

participants discussing their experiences through a wide variety of perspectives. Oddly enough, the feelings associated with a new coach entering the team tended to highlight more positive than negative impacts on members of the collegiate forensics teams. Due to the wide variety of responses, the feedback provided can be sorted into three categories; the coach negatively impacted the team, the coach positively impacted the team, or due to the pandemic it was tough to determine the impact the coach had thus far.

First, few participants described the impact of their new coach as entirely negative. When I asked Chris to explain how the coaching change impacted them, they responded,

It was difficult. I felt like the position I had under the previous coach had changed significantly and it was something I had figured out. The internal shift of the team caused an external shift where two students left the team, but it is hard to determine if that was because we had a new coach or if it was due to the departure of the old coach. (Interview, May 2, 2021)

Sam supported this feeling when they explained, “I felt like I had control over everything when it came to speech. When the coaching change occurred and the structure changed, it just felt like I didn’t have any at all” (Interview, May 7, 2021). For competitors such as Chris and Sam, the acceptance of the changes on the team were not immediate and the initial impact of the coaching change hurt them in multiple ways. For these participants, the negative impact of the coaching change was not directly tied to the arrival of the new coach, but feelings associated with departure and change within the team.

Other research participants had not determined whether there had been a significant impact on them due to circumstances associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. With the 2020-

2021 season shifting entirely online due to the pandemic, many research participants expressed uncertainty about any impact due to the year not feeling like a “regular” competition season.

Jordan noted,

A lot of the change with the feelings of the team can be attributed to COVID and everything. I don't think our team has changed tremendously, but without traveling and feeling the impact of our new coach at tournaments it is honestly hard to say. (Interview, April 27, 2021)

In Jordan's interview, ideas such as any new traditions or ideas implemented by the new coach were not able to reach a point where team members were able to see the completed image due to the online year. With COVID-19, teams who experienced a change in coaching leadership were unable to understand what activities such as travel, warmups, and rules may look like in a year not restricted to online tournaments. Taylor, a white woman who recently graduated from a midwestern university, provided details which supported Jordan's feelings when she explained,

I am never sure what was a team choice and what was a pandemic choice. With everything being online it felt like more needed to be happening but we were also restricted in what could happen. It just sucked because I always connected to events such as the retreat and hanging out with the team, but with the pandemic that all changed. It became us logging into zoom and logging out once the event had ended. It all just really sucked. (Interview, May 10, 2021)

Research participants who felt they were unable to consider the impact of the new coach due to the nature of the pandemic noted how next year in collegiate forensics will serve as a better atmosphere to understand the impact of the new coach on the dynamic of the team. While

this allows for the team to compare the impact of the new coach to the environment under the old coach, it also provides a flawed perspective as the new coach will no longer be in their transition year and have more comfort established with the team.

Finally, the majority of forensics competitors who participated in the study felt as though their new coach had a positive impact on the members of the team. Cory furthered this idea when they stated, “It was good because the incoming coaches were young and had the energy to try new ideas which excited the team” (Interview, May 1, 2021). The concept of coaches providing a fresh energy was consistent among research participants who noted a positive impact on team members due to the coaching change. Kate furthered this idea, noting how the team felt a sense of renewal with the coaching change as the new coach allowed for concepts to change and provide more freedom within the team:

We have had more celebrations for members of the team such as birthday, new pronouns and name changes, and just had more acceptance for each other as we continue navigating a year under the pandemic. The leadership our coach has shows has fostered a supportive space where we not only feel like a family, but one which emphasizes competitive success as well as personal successes. (Interview, April 26, 2021)

The positive impacts new coaches can create on a team may manifest in a variety of ways, from allowing individual students to feel more comfortable in their interactions and within the team spaces to helping the team come together for celebratory events and to create an environment for healthy competition. These responses suggest that a coaching change will have numerous impacts on students within the team on a positive or negative level. Although these impacts serve as the dominant opinions when discussing coaching changes, the pandemic added a layer where students felt uncertain regarding the impact of the new coach thus far. My research

participants suggest that coaching changes primarily impact the members of the team in positive ways, yet we must understand that this changes on a student-to-student basis. Many negative emotions associated with the coaching change were often prefaced by noting the desire to return to nostalgic traditions or coaching strategies implemented by the previous coach. While a variety of factors must be considered with every student who experiences a coaching change during their competitive careers, interpersonal interactions with the previous coach, a sense of normalcy related to traditions and customs, and a fear of a changing environment must be factored in to understand the impact a coaching change has on a collegiate forensics team.

RQ2 addressed how a team's culture is impacted by the coaching change, asking "How does the coaching change impact the culture of the team they are joining?" With this research question, there was a unanimous response of the coaching change resulting in a positive change regarding team culture. While the research participants unanimously felt the coaching change was positive, the reasoning behind the feelings varied between participants.

First, some of my research participants noted how their team got closer after the new coach transitioned to their team. Taylor explained,

I definitely think our team got a lot closer. It was harder to get away with ignoring somebody we weren't close to when we had the shared experience of a significant team change. A lot of our returners stepped up to mentor the first years because we felt a sense of responsibility with the team changing. We wanted to make everything as smooth as possible to try to ensure the transition went well for everyone. For me, one of the biggest changes was being okay with allowing the culture to change. With our previous coach, warmups were led by a captain. I always liked warmups, but the one time I tried to lead one it didn't go well and I felt completely shut down. With our new coach, warmup

leaders were rotated and it felt like everyone had the opportunity to step up and lead to everyone growing and learning more after the coaching change. (Interview, May 10, 2021)

Taylor's thoughts were echoed by Beth who added that for her team, the coaching change led to a safe space that placed priority on competitor health first and foremost. Beth stated,

While everything felt a little jarring at first, and we definitely had to find our groove, the transition was immediately a positive one. It felt safe for people at all times and it has been a culture built on support and student health. I honestly don't think my attitudes toward speech would have remained the same had it not been for the shift in the team's culture. (Interview, May 5, 2021)

Both Taylor and Beth addressed the importance of having a welcoming culture which was structured on a fun and healthy environment where everyone felt included and had their voices heard by the coaching staff. For them, the ways in which their new coaches shifted the team to a student-centered approach which focused on health and inclusivity directly impacted team attitude and culture.

Although this is one approach to entering into a team, it is not the only reason participants indicated a positive impact on the culture. Cory noted,

The student culture became more competitive and shifted the culture to one where we consistently built each other up as a unit. We struggled with funding during my time as a competitor, but we never wanted that to be a reason we could use for why we would not do well. Our new coach supported our perspective and worked tooth and nail to get us to

where we wanted to be while consistently reminding us how proud they were. They just accepted our team for what we were and worked with it. (Interview, May 1, 2021)

Mary provided similar feelings reflecting on how she felt the transition allowed her to be herself and contribute to the culture rather than preserve the culture. Mary elaborated,

With our previous coaches it felt like we were preserving traditions that none of us understood the history of. We were doing what we'd always done, but it never felt like it was something for us once I was in my junior year. When we had the coaching change I felt like we finally got to start from scratch. Rather than bringing back traditions we didn't connect with our new coaches allowed us to connect with different traditions and norms and develop an identity for the team which actually fit us. (Interview, May 5, 2021)

Mary's feelings provided a clear line of analysis that for her team, the change in coaches was necessary to reset the culture and tailor it to the current makeup of the team. In many instances, traditions upheld and preserved by coaches reflect the history of the team and serve as an act or story to bond and connect over. However, for many, including Mary, these practices can alienate or isolate competitors who feel as though they are disconnected from that part of the team.

In contrast, Kate provided details which explained how a coaching change can impact the culture, but not completely shift it. She explained,

I think for our team, and the younger competitors especially, the coaching transition was impactful, but it didn't fully change the culture. Until our other coach is gone it feels like the mindset remains with our team because the coach that stayed has the same

perspective as the coach that left. The team is excited for our new coach and what they can do based on what has happened thus far, but until our other coach leaves it feels like we are stuck with the mindset of our old coach. (Interview, April 26, 2021).

According to my participants, the positive impact of new coaches on their teams composed most of the interviews I administered. While negative impacts were present within the interviews, the focus remained on the positive experiences which occurred when a new coach entered into the team culture. While the reasoning differs based on the participant, it is clear different approaches exist which can allow coaches a variety of opportunities to connect with their new teams.

This chapter has identified and analyzed themes as well as address the research questions stated within my research project. I have attempted to listen to a select number of forensics competitors and allow their voices to be heard regarding how coaching changes impact them and how they believe those changes have impacted the culture of their teams. The following chapter will provide further elaboration on the analysis in this section, where I will address the implications and limitations of this study while providing possible avenues for further research which can continue following the completion of this project.

Chapter Five: Discussion

It has been difficult to work through this project while navigating my own struggles as a coach. I have spent countless hours working through my past experiences leaving and transitioning to a new program while preparing to transition once again after leaving graduate school. The research participants in this project consistently discussed the predicament of “how do we move forward when we feel left behind,” and despite capturing so many interviews and surveys which seek to answer this question I still feel there is no concrete answer which satisfies the question students continue to ask when a coaching change occurs at their institution. Whether the change is positive or negative for the team, a coaching change is a significant event in the lives of competitors who establish close relationships with coaches and are forced to navigate a plethora of emotions once they learn a coach is moving on from their team. Through this entire process, current and former competitors sharing their stories that were both familiar and unfamiliar to me, we have arrived at the discussion. I have explained the purpose behind this project, why it is necessary, how it is structured, what I discovered, and now we can better understand what it may mean moving forward.

In this chapter, I discuss the implications of this project, examine the limitations of the study, and provide avenues for future research which I hope to see myself and others continue moving toward. Finally, I provide a conclusion where I revisit the initial purpose behind this research which has connected with me ever since leaving the University of Central Missouri to attend Minnesota State University, Mankato. The following sections seek to provide a sense of closure to the project.

Implications

The analysis presented in Chapter 4 yields implications regarding the study of coaching changes in forensics and how a coaching change impacts the students and culture of a collegiate forensics team. Specifically, the experiences shared by my research participants have helped me understand what this study suggests regarding how the impact of a coaching change can alter the culture of the team a coach is joining. The activity of collegiate forensics is one which offers a safe and supportive space to so many, to the point where many students who competed in the activity refer to their team as a family. However, how is the family impacted when one of the members of the family is no longer around? The responses gathered from my participants suggest coaches ought to carefully consider the role they play as they transition to a new team along with the potential implications which can be drawn regarding how students may feel uncomfortable with change. With these implications, I hope to illustrate the needs students have along with how coaches can help navigate their needs in a way that allows for both parties to move on while being able to ensure a successful shift between teams.

Understanding the Impact on Students

Initially, the responses from my research participants suggest coaching changes are often well received, but the lack of discussion regarding the previous coach leaving may lead to lingering feelings of abandonment or confusion. According to White (2010), forensics teams experience a unique dynamic with the team since membership on forensics teams regularly changes, leaving the cultural dynamics of a team in nearly constant flux. Considering this ever-changing dynamic, it is imperative that coaches understand that the expectation of eventual turnover does not serve as an excuse for a lack of clear communication regarding a coaching change. Research participants noted in numerous instances how even though they understood a

coach was leaving it took a significant toll on them when it occurred. Whether it was because of their connection with the coach or a fear of what a coaching change may do to the team, competitors made it clear that despite understanding their coaches were leaving the feelings surrounding the departure negatively harmed participants and their teammates. Fear of the future and a sense of being left behind often led to struggles with nostalgia and a lack of closure for competitors. While the virtual year had a significant impact on coaching changes due to the lack of in-person communication typically associated with collegiate speech and debate, the sudden change which accompanies a coach leaving left a significant impact on many participants.

I believe coaches often engage the process of leaving as a professional duty. There is a moment where they inform the team they are leaving, there is an expected response of grieving and mixed emotion, and what follows is a coach typically assuring students they will always be there to contact if they need anything. While this is true for many coaches, we often overlook the fact that the competitors often are not sure what to say or ask of us as we are transitioning out of a program. Students may approach us with their initial emotions, and we may follow up to check in on them, but competitors are often placed in a position of conflict. They want to reach out to the previous coach for advice, guidance, or reassurance, but they also do not want the previous coach to feel bad about their decision to leave. Taylor noted in her interview that she felt the need to remain positive and happy when engaging with her former coach. While she was sad about her coach moving on from her program, she wanted them to be happy despite struggling with what she felt was acceptable to disclose with them.

Taylor's experience is unique to her, but it is not unheard of for many competitors forced to navigate similar situations. Many competitors who have explored similar situations must come to terms with the new nature of the relationship with their former coach. In this relationship,

competitors wish to continue confiding in their former coach to seek out advice yet feel conflicted due to the coach being removed from the role as their immediate director. This leaves a lingering feeling of doubt in competitors which may prevent them reaching out to previous coaches to fear of disrupting the new status quo of their former coach. The stories of Taylor and her peers forced me to consider how coaches can help alleviate this feeling of fear or emotional masking felt by their former competitors. It feels odd that a group of communicators who are often considered to be masters of their craft must reimagine how we engage with each other in order to ensure our relationships remain strong in the aftermath of a coaching change. While the student-coach relationship will change due to proximity, new duties, or merely the passage of time, it is necessary for us to grapple with how we connect with our competitors after leaving previous teams.

Based on my analysis, I argue coaches need to have more open and direct conversations with competitors during the transition process as they leave an institution. Although these conversations are tough and often navigate uncomfortable ground for both parties, they are necessary to achieve a true sense of closure. Departure conversations may entail discussing the feelings of both parties, the coach explaining how they understand the relationship dynamic will change, how the culture will likely shift and develop after they leave the team, and how to set new boundaries, parameters, or expectations for the relationship moving forward—all in the interest of promoting transparency in communication. Doing this while also allowing students to be aware of potential negative effects they may feel after the coach has left may ease the transition for all involved and promote more effective communication patterns between coaches and competitors. Although it makes sense to distance oneself as the new coach takes over and begins to shape the team in their image, coaches cannot let that distance between the team impact

the relationships with students and leave them wondering where their place is within the activity and questioning if the relationship with their coach was authentic. We must construct our conversations in ways that serve as avenues for change while also remaining accessible to students we have connected with. By doing this, we can begin to create more open discourse which allows for productive dialogue to discuss grief, mourning, change, struggle, and acceptance regarding coaching changes and what it means for the relationship between competitors and former coaches.

How New Coaches Adjust

During the analysis process it became clear that the narratives which had been constructed surrounding the adjustment period of new coaches seemed to discount their ability to connect with the students. The narratives seemed to focus more on the transition into a leadership role where the connection to the students became a secondary goal after focusing on the leadership aspects. Furthermore, additional talks regarding the impact of shifting cultures is necessary to not only help navigate the transitions of coaches, but to help students better understand that transitional process for their incoming coaches. Miller (2005) explained how forensics norms and culture vary depending on the region. As coaches shift from one culture to the next it is unsurprising that they will experience a sense of culture shock when they enter a new program. Outzen (2016) explored his own struggles moving from a graduate coaching role to a director role at another university and noted the struggle coaches may face when it comes to connecting with new team cultures while trying to implement strategies of past team cultures. Outzen stated,

Acculturation does not happen overnight, and young directors must learn to trust that it will happen; the feelings of being an outsider are temporary. If new directors actually

engage with the existing culture, as I did not, there may be greater potential for team social and competitive success. (Outzen, 2016, p. 22-23)

This idea not only reiterates the struggle coaches feel when adjusting to a new culture, but it also notes the feelings associated with being an outsider to a new team. Although these feelings may be initially uncomfortable to discuss with students, it may actually assist with the process of a coach moving from one team to another. My participants noted while they didn't talk much before the coach left, the conversations quickly became focused on the grieving period and how the departure of the coach led to the students feeling hurt and unsure of what the next steps were. Conversations regarding coaching changes need to be more open for all parties. While outgoing coaches likely limit communication in order to focus on their own affairs, doing so leads to mixed feelings for the students which can be tough to repair. White (2010) noted how the adjustments of both coaches and competitors may often lead to conflict when change is pushed rather than allowed to mature naturally, noting:

I attempted to nurture team leaders within the program to spearhead the change, but was baffled by the inability, or perhaps unwillingness, of any of them to take charge of the organizational culture shift. Although some individuals embraced my vision, they never chose to pull other team members along with them. (White, 2010, p. 45)

This explanation from White demonstrates how adjustment periods can function between all parties involved with the team. While coaches may have a vision or idea they wish to be implemented in order to push the team toward various goals, the team must be on the same page. When a new coach enters the new team culture, they must be willing to adapt and shift while the competitors do the same. This may be exhibited by the new coach talking with all members and asking what they like most about the team culture, how they believe the team ought to function,

or what traditions they connect to the most. The coach can use this information to maintain part of the structure established under the former coach while also adding changes they believe align with the current makeup of the team. This allows the coach to ease their way into the culture of the new team while also helping shape it in a way that suits both the new coach and the current team members. The inherent structure of leadership within forensics teams already places the power into the hands of the directors. By showing a willingness to adapt and shift with the team, it may lead to the creation of a new team culture that benefits all parties. White (2010) noted how cohesion is impacted in numerous ways due to the roles coaches are forced to balance. However, Holm's (2015) notion that a blank slate is impossible to create for a team must always be considered when discussing policies and changes a coach wishes to implement within the new team they have taken over.

Although the adjustment for coaches moving to a new program has been detailed throughout the forensics field, it is important for the community to retrace the aforementioned research in order to create new lasting connections which assist with the current needs of students and coaches. While research has discovered pertinent information surrounding what coaches should do when transitioning between teams, the activity of forensics is everchanging. With how often the landscape of the activity shifts, it is critical for researchers to explore new avenues within the field which cater to the current needs of coaches and competitors. This implication does not call for coaches to completely change how they adjust to new positions or departures from previous programs, but it does suggest reflection along the journey while seeking the input of students who may see the team developing differently than the coach in charge. I believe coaches ought to solicit and consider student input more immediately following a leadership change so they can help create an environment that effectively accounts for the

needs of all associated with the team. Doing so would enable coaches to cater their approaches to a current landscape of the team to engage with the students and their needs rather than catering the team structure to an older framework they may find no longer fits. By engaging with this topic consistently I believe coaches and students can have more effective conversations regarding significant shifts of programs while knowing their voices and perspectives are being valued by those helping shape the program.

Rethinking Team Legacy and Tradition

Finally, coaches and team members must rethink how they structure teams around legacy and tradition. It is important to note that team legacy and tradition have significant value when discussing team stories, building culture, and creating a sense of community and team. However, when teams focus too much of their identity on the history of the team, it can become easy to forget the current state of the team and what they need—or where the team wants to go in the future. Walker (2011) explained that being open with the team is important because it increases the cohesion within the group and allows for the development of interpersonal relationships. With new coaches already moving into a position where they are attempting to connect with the team on multiple levels, trying to build and adjust the team to what fits the current dynamic is already a monumental task. All of this must be done in the midst of feeling potential pressure to conform to a style that supports the history of the team and models the current team in that image. This is difficult for new coaches entering into an established culture who feel the additional weight of legacy and tradition looming over how they maneuver elements within the team.

Kate and Mary, for example, shared stories which not only establish the importance of legacy and history but note how we must always look to adjust the team based on the current

makeup of competitors. When reflecting on the struggles of adhering to a team's history when modeling the structure of the current team, Mary and Kate noted how this led to conflicts and tension due to differing thoughts on how the team ought to be structured. Although the new coach understood the importance of that legacy, they also pushed Mary and Kate's team to form the team in a way that catered to them, rather than follow the structure they had become used to. Talks of legacy, such as these, can often feel daunting if students feel they must measure up to the competitive legacy of previous team members.

It is clear through previous literature within the field that scholars understand the importance team legacy and tradition hold in the creation of a team culture and the ability to maintain camaraderie. However, as research participants noted, team history cannot be the primary factor in creating a team identity. Coaches must help create an environment which fosters an identity the students help create while also incorporating the team legacy to create an atmosphere which is tailored to the group of students at the time and can continue to grow and develop as the team dynamic changes.

Despite these implications suggested by my research, the project is not without its limitations. The limitations discovered within my project highlight the need to adjust how we approach projects scholarship such as this one while also seeking more participation within forensics research. Although this research has provided me with numerous benefits which I believe will benefit the forensics research field and the activity of forensics as a whole, I believe these limitations must be discussed in order to gain a better understanding of how this research can impact others moving forward.

Limitations

First, while a mixed methods approach allowed for a wide variety of responses it also led to issues regarding usable participants. Although 38 participants began the quantitative survey, only 19 completed the entire survey and ended up usable. Despite the information being shared on social media and the Individual Events e-mail listserv, participants remained tough to recruit. Furthermore, although 16 agreed to be interviewed for the project, only 11 participants responded to an email correspondence attempting to setup an interview time. Many participants were more comfortable responding to the survey than agreeing to an interview via Zoom, and a majority of participants in the surveys did not fully complete the survey. Because of the comparisons I hoped to make in this project, it was necessary to create a longer survey which gathered data about the old coach and new coach in order to look for accurate comparisons between experiences. This repeated-measures design resulted in a large number of survey items, and many individuals who began filling out the survey did not end up completing everything needed to ensure the survey would be considered valid.

The quantitative data gathered from the surveys still served a critical role in establishing a framework for the project and getting responses from those who may not have felt comfortable being interviewed and recorded for the project. However, survey fatigue may have factored into the lack of completed surveys, and the limits of the survey participants who were unable to be used in the data collection and analysis process made the quantitative portion of the research limited in terms of scope and power in some disappointing ways. The potential survey fatigue or survey pitfalls should have been given more thought before the beginning of the data collection to better prepare. Looking back at the process, I believe I would have prepared the survey sooner so I could push it out at synchronous tournaments via online chat rooms to ensure more programs

had better access to the research project. I also believe some sort of incentive such as a gift card raffle may have connected with some students who were giving up time to participate in my research. I believe two raffles could have been utilized, one for survey participants and one for interview participants. This would have allowed for two possible raffle entries per person if they opted to participate in both elements of the research. Both of these methods may have yielded better recruitment results for my research project.

Next, although it was my goal to gain responses from a variety of current competitors and recent alumni from across the country who could share a plethora of stories each having unique elements which could be added to the analysis, a lack of diversity is present in my participant sample. In the surveys, 18 of the 19 participants were White or Caucasian, and all interview participants identifying as White or Caucasian as well. This is perhaps consistent with current demographics in collegiate forensics, which is largely populated by white individuals. As a result, minorities often face difficulties in finding or creating safe spaces in the activity to advocate for what they care about. With such a large base of white students engaging with the surveys, I question how accessible research feels to minority competitors.

If students feel unsafe or threatened engaging with work we feel is good for the community, maybe it is time to re-evaluate how we present research to the students—and to consider what would help them feel more comfortable with the process. I believe research could be pushed through student pages for forensics research with some sort of notice regarding transparency regarding the study for those who feel nervous or scared about participating. While this is not a perfect solution, it allows for a starting point which can help encourage minority competitors to engage in the research process without feeling like they are being used or manipulated by the goals of the research.

Furthermore, the lack of institutional diversity is something I was not anticipating before beginning the recruiting calls for the project. Because of the investment I have in this research project, I assumed others would jump at the opportunity to discuss experiences regarding coaching changes and team culture. I am unsure if the issues with gathering more unique responses came from the outreach of the recruiting calls or students not knowing about the research at all, but with the lack of diversity in the surveys and interviews it is clear more methods of outreach aside from social media and the forensics email listserv are needed to gather ample responses from a wide variety of students. I propose research opportunities be added as a separate link which could be included in tournament invitations or promoted in chatrooms used at online forensics tournaments. While these methods may be different when the activity returns to a primarily in-person environment, they might help gain participants and attempt to connect with students from a wider range of programs through as many mediums as possible.

Finally, the communication medium may have been a barrier some could not overcome to participate in the research study. Although students became accustomed to using the Zoom platform for online meetings throughout the pandemic, it is difficult to know if students simply experienced Zoom fatigue and wanted to avoid more screen time after going through classes and tournaments via the platform. Wiederhold (2020) noted how constant use of the Zoom platform leaves many users tired, irritable, and ready to escape the internet after their required meetings are done for the day. Because of the nature of the project, I cannot help but wonder if more survey responses would have been completed or if more interviews could have been set up had this competition year been in person rather than online only.

Future Research

Reflecting on the analysis conducted for this study, I believe two clear avenues exist for future research. First, due to discussions regarding team legacy and culture I believe researchers should look into how coaches are enabled and/or constrained by the team legacy of the program they direct. While competitors discussed the concept of team history and legacy in length, coaches often must navigate added pressures from other faculty members and alumni who may have ties to the program. It is not uncommon for former directors to step down and continue to serve as professors in the department they once directed. In this case, I cannot help but wonder if this has a significant impact on how coaches engage with the team and their creation of culture. Croucher, Thornton, & Eckstein (2006) noted the importance of organizational culture and identity when it comes to team structure. Serving as the glue for a team, legacy can influence many traditions and customs as we have seen through the research into the perspectives of students.

Next, while this project placed focus on how students are impacted by a coach leaving, I believe this project could be replicated to determine why coaches leave programs. Students often understand part of why their coaches may leave their programs, but there are reasons for leaving which are often only shared between coaches and remain unknown to students. The burnout rate for coaches within the activity of forensics is high due to increased pressure from administration and due to coaches consistently balancing more than they should. Reproducing this study can gain further insight into the coach perspective behind a team change while adding valuable research to an area which deserves further navigation.

Understanding how coaches are impacted by these ideas serve as a clear area for future research within the field moving forward. Team legacy has been explored in research by

analyzing the role it plays in team identity, but the significance it possesses for those moving into a historically significant program needs to be discussed because of the unique experience they move into. Coaches moving into a program that prides itself on team legacy must grapple with learning the history of the team while understanding why certain customs are valued by the team. By investigating this idea, a researcher could explore an area within the topic of team legacy that has largely gone ignored within the field of forensics yet remains pressing for coaches in the activity as they move between programs.

Second, with a large population of vulnerable students in the activity I feel addressing how these students are impacted by coaching changes is critical for the activity of collegiate forensics. As I noted earlier, collegiate forensics serves as a safe space for so many students who are coming to terms with their identities or do not feel safe advocating for issues which impact those identities in other university settings. The community allows students to find themselves, advocate for issues that are often personal to their own identities and perform their own experiences—which are often very sensitive issues. With the nature of a coach/competitor relationship, many coaches, myself included, have served as the first individual a competitor comes out to or feels comfortable explaining marginalizing experiences in society which have impacted them in profound ways.

When a coach leaves a team, the once safe space may feel compromised, or the student may feel vulnerable due to someone they disclosed their identity to leaving. It is critical that we begin to explore research avenues which directly impact the vulnerable student populations within our community. By attempting to understand how coaching changes impact students who identify as; gender minorities, sexual minorities, racial minorities, undocumented students, or disabled students, coaches can gain a better understanding of practices and communication

methods which not only ensure better experiences for the students, but better communities within their own academic institutions.

Conclusion

When I first left the University of Central Missouri for Minnesota State University, Mankato in Fall 2018 I struggled due to feeling like I had left behind students who needed me and counted on me. Now in 2021 as I prepare to leave another academic institution, I again fear how my departure will impact the competitors on the team I coach. As an educator and coach, I have grown immensely during my time in forensics, but there is still so much that needs to be done to ensure students are able to navigate their feelings of grief regarding a coach leaving their program.

I wish I had all of the answers for both coaches and students regarding how they can navigate such a tough situation, but at the conclusion of this project I hope this work has at least allowed coaches and students to reconsider how we approach the topic. We ought to be more open with our communication as coaches when we transition between programs so students at both institutions are able to experience the plethora of emotions associated with such a monumental change. Coaches are constantly exhausted, overworked, underpaid, misunderstood, and yet we continue to give back into this activity in hopes of helping our students find a place they can call home. By opening up the conversations about tough topics like coaching changes, we can ensure these spaces feel like home for coaches and students alike moving forward.

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Appendix A

Recruitment Script

Hello friends!

I hope this message finds you well and persevering! I'm writing because I'm collecting data for my master's thesis and I'm looking for participants!

I'm investigating how coaching changes impact team culture and the relationships between coaches and competitors. This research is being conducted for my thesis project for the MFA in Forensics and Communication supervised by Dr. Justin Rudnick at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

There are two ways you can participate!

1. Completing a short (20-minute) online survey here:

https://mnsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e1CnZoqkUgBI3Fb

2. Complete a short (30-45 minute) interview through Zoom with me! If you're interested in participating in an interview, please complete the consent form located here

https://mnsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_d0wqydzyrpvcpqC and email me at Brenton.mitchell@mnsu.edu.

This project was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Minnesota State University, Mankato on March 18, 2021, IRBNet # 1713837.

If you are interested in participating, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me by email at brenton.mitchell@mnsu.edu.

Thanks!

~Brent

Appendix B

Interview Consent Form

“Who’s Team Is It Anyway?”: Exploring the Impact of Coaching Changes on Forensic Team Culture

Description:

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Brenton Mitchell, supervised by Dr. Justin Rudnick from the Department of Communication Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato. The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of coaching changes within the activity of forensics along with how it impacts team culture and relationships with team member, and you will be asked to answer questions about that topic. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Brenton Mitchell at brenton.mitchell@mnsu.edu or Dr. Rudnick at (952) 358-9219 or justin.rudnick@mnsu.edu.

Research studies include only people who choose to participate. Please take your time to make your decision. Discuss your decision with your family or friends if you wish. If you have any questions about this project, you may ask either Brenton Mitchell or Dr. Rudnick.

You have a right to a copy of this consent form. You will be provided an electronic copy prior to beginning the research interview. If you would like a paper version, please contact the researchers.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked to complete an online interview (estimated time: (30-45 minutes) at a time of your choosing. The researcher will ask you to reflect on your experience with collegiate forensics after experiencing a coaching change. With your permission, the researcher will audio record your conversation. After the interview, the researcher will type a transcription of what was recorded and remove any mention of names. The recording file will then be destroyed, immediately following or after one year from the date of the interview, whichever comes sooner. If you do not wish to be recorded, you may still participate in the study. The researcher will take notes during the interview instead of recording.

Can I stop being in the study?

Participation in this research study is voluntary. The decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at (507) 389-1242.

You can decide to stop at any time. To withdraw from the study, simply inform the researcher of your desire to withdraw during the interview, or after the interview at the email address listed

above. Please note: because the researcher does not collect any identifying information from you, there is no way to withdraw from the research once the interview recording has been transcribed and deleted.

Will I be compensated for taking part in this study?

You will not be compensated for taking part in this study.

What risks can I expect from being in the study?

The anticipated risks for participating in this research are minimal, but may include some emotional discomfort for reflecting on personal experiences. These risks are anticipated to be no greater than what you would be exposed to in your everyday life.

Are there benefits to me or others by taking part in the study?

Participation in the study will provide you with an opportunity to share your experiences about the impact of coaching changes on a forensics team. These stories will also help the forensics community understand the impact a coaching change has on team culture and the students on the team.

Will information about me be kept private?

We will do our best to make sure that the personal information gathered for this study is kept private. However, we cannot guarantee total privacy. If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, your name and other personal information will not be used. Instead, a pseudonym will be assigned to you at the time of your interview and used in any reference to you in presentations or publications. Any identifying information will be removed from the data. Following that removal, the data we collect could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you. It should be noted for the interview process that wireless connections in public places may allow others access to the computer and everything on it.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

Taking part in this study is your choice. You may choose either to take part or not to take part in the study. If you decide to take part in this study, you may leave the study at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits.

Who I contact if I have questions about the study?

If you have any questions later, you are encouraged to contact Dr. Justin Rudnick either by email (Justin.rudnick@mnsu.edu) or phone (952-358-9219).

If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board at (507) 389-1242.

Consent to Participate in the Research Study

Participation in research is voluntary. You have the right to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Sign below to indicate your willingness to participate in this research study and to indicate that you are at least 18 years of age.

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded.

Signature

Your Name (printed)

Date

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. What race do you identify as?
2. What gender do you identify as?
3. What is your age?
4. What years were you competing in collegiate speech and debate?
5. When did you experience a change in coaches?
 1. Was the former coach a director or a grad student coach?
 2. What events did the coach mostly work with?
 3. Did other coaches remain on the team?
 4. What was your relationship like with the former coach?
 5. How would you describe the team culture under your previous coach?
 6. How did your old coach talk about “team legacy?”
 7. What were traditions or rules with your previous coaches?
 8. How were you impacted by the departure of your previous coach?
6. How did the team atmosphere shift upon a change in coaches?
 1. What feelings did you experience once your coach left?
 2. When your coach left, how did it impact team culture?
7. Were you briefed before the new coach took over your team?
8. When were you first introduced to your new coach?
 1. Did you have the opportunity to meet your coach before they were hired?
 2. How did you find out who the new coach was?
9. How did you adapt to the new coach?
10. How has the team changed since the coaching change?
 1. What kinds of new policies or traditions did they try to implement?
 2. How did the new coach talk about your team’s history or legacy?
11. How has your team discussed the impact of the coaching change?
12. How did you feel about the change in culture within your team?
13. Is there anything I should have asked about, but didn’t?
14. Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix D

Survey Consent and Instruments

Coach Turnover and Team Culture

Start of Block: Consent Form

Consent? You are requested to participate in research conducted by Brenton Mitchell, supervised by Dr. Justin Rudnick from the Department of Communication Studies at Minnesota State University, Mankato on the impact of coaching changes within the activity of forensics along with how it impacts team culture and relationships with team members. This survey should take about 20 minutes to complete. The goal of this survey is to understand how students who experienced a coaching change during their competitive forensics career felt about the coaching change and you will be asked to answer questions about that topic. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Brenton Mitchell at brenton.mitchell@mnsu.edu or Dr. Rudnick at (952) 358-9219 or justin.rudnick@mnsu.edu.

Participation is voluntary. You have the option not to respond to any of the questions. You may stop taking the survey at any time by closing your web browser. The decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. If you have any questions about participants' rights and for research-related injuries, please contact the Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at (507) 389-1242.

Responses will be anonymous. However, whenever one works with online technology there is always the risk of compromising privacy, confidentiality, and/or anonymity. Please be aware that use of internet service in a public area is not secure and others may gain access to the device you are using. It is best that you use a secure internet connection. If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by online surveys, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato IT Solutions Center (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

The risks of participating are no more than are experienced in daily life.

You will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

Society might benefit by the increased understanding of how coaching changes within the activity of forensics impacts team culture and student relationships.

Submitting the completed survey will indicate your informed consent to participate and indicate your assurance that you are at least 18 years of age.

Please print a copy of this page for your future reference. If you cannot print the consent form, take a

screen shot, paste it to a word document and print that.

Minnesota State University, Mankato IRBNet ID#: 1713837 Do you agree to participate?

- Yes
- No, I do NOT consent to participate

End of Block: Consent Form

Start of Block: Demographics

Gender Please specify your gender.

- Male
 - Female
 - Transgender
 - Non-binary
 - Agender
 - Gender-fluid
 - Prefer not to answer
-

Ethn Please specify your ethnicity.

- White-Caucasian
 - Hispanic-Latinx
 - Black or African-American
 - Native-American or American Indian
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - Other
-

Age How old are you?

4n6exp What is your speech & debate experience:

- Current 1st or 2nd year college competitor
- Current 3rd or 4th year college competitor
- Alumni (Graduated in the last 1-2 years)
- Alumni (Graduated in the last 3-4 years)
- Other _____

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: CoachChange

OldPos When your team changed coaches (an old coach left and a new coach joined), what position was the **OLD coach** in?

- Director level
 - Assistant Director level
 - Graduate student coach level
 - Volunteer coach
 - Other (please specify): _____
-

NewPos When your team changed coaches (an old coach left and a new coach joined), what position was the **NEW coach** in?

- Director level
 - Assistant Director level
 - Graduate student coach level
 - Volunteer coach
 - Other (please specify): _____
-

TimeGap How much time passed between the coach turnover?

- New coach started immediately after the old coach left
- Less than 1 year gap between turnover
- More than 1 year gap between turnover

End of Block: CoachChange

Start of Block: Team Identification



TeamID In this section, the questions focus on the identity of your team and how you connect to that identity. For this series of questions, please focus on interactions with the current culture of the team and the identity your team has created and upholds.

When responding to the prompts, the scale offers the ability to strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree with the prompts and their ability to relate to your experience with the team and its identity. Note that strongly disagree means you strongly disagree with

the statement as it relates to your experience and strongly agree notes you strongly agree with the statement being applicable to your relationship with the culture and identity of the team.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
In general, the people on my team are working toward the same goals.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am very proud to be a member of my team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My team's image in the community represents me as well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I often describe myself to others by saying, "I compete for the team"	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I try to make team-related decisions by considering the consequences of my actions for the team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My team is different from others in the activity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am glad I chose to compete for my team rather than another team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I talk up the team to my friends as a great team to compete for.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In general, I view the team's problems as my own.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help the team be successful.

I become irritated when I hear others outside the team criticize my team.

I have warm feelings toward my university as a place for my team.

I would be quite willing to spend the rest of my competitive career with my team.

I feel that my team cares about me.

The record of my team is an example of what dedicated people can achieve.

I have a lot in common with others on my team.

I find it difficult to agree with my team's policies on important matters relating to me.

My association with my team is only a small part of who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to tell others about projects that the team is working on.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find that my values and the values of the team are very similar.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel very little loyalty to my team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would describe my team as a large "family" in which most members feel a sense of belonging.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find it easy to identify with my team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I really care about the fate of my team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Team Identification

Start of Block: Old Coach Questions



Old Confirm In this section, the questions focus on communication patterns with coach and how certain statements may have impacted the relationship between you and your coach. For this series of questions, **please focus on interactions with your OLD coach** (the previous coach who left your program).

When responding to the prompt, the scale offers the ability to strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree

nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree with the prompts and their ability to relate to your experience with your previous coach. Note that strongly disagree means you strongly disagree with the statement

as it relates to your experience and strongly agree notes you strongly agree with the statement being applicable to your relationship with the previous coach.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My coach told me I was capable of performing up to their expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach told me I'd get better in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach told me they believed in me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach continually pushed me to get better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach spent time trying to help me improve.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach helped point out things I could work on to become better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach expressed that they believed I could improve.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach pointed out my mistakes to help me improve.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach pushed me to reach my full potential.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach recognized the competitor I could become.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My coach
acknowledged
when I
performed well.

My coach told
me "good job"
when I did well.

My coach
praised me
when I executed
our game plan.

My coach told
me when I was
performing up
to their
expectations.



Old Culture In this section, the questions focus on the culture of your team. For this series of questions, **please focus on the team culture under the direction of your OLD coach** (the previous coach who left your program).

When responding to the prompts, the scale offers the ability to strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree with the statements and how well they relate to your experiences. Note that strongly disagree means you strongly disagree with the statement as it relates to

your experience and strongly agree notes you strongly agree with the statement being applicable to your relationship with the team under your old coach.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
People on the team were direct and honest with each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team accepted criticism without becoming defensive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team resolved disagreements cooperatively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team functioned as a team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team were cooperative and considerate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team constructively confronted problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team were good listeners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team were concerned about each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaches and competitors had a productive working relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

The team motivated me to put out my best efforts.

The team respected its competitors.

The team treated people in a consistent and fair manner.

My team felt like being part of a family.

There was an atmosphere of trust in the team.

The team motivated people to be efficient and productive.

I got enough information to understand the big picture here.

When changes were made the reasons why were made clear.

I knew what was happening with the direction of the team.

I got the information I needed to do my tasks well.

I had a say in decisions that affected my work.

I was asked to make suggestions about how to improve the team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The team valued the ideas of competitors at every level.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My opinions counted in this team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expectations were made clear by my coach.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I did a good job my coach told me so.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach took criticism well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach delegated responsibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach was approachable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach gave me criticism in a positive manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach was a good listener.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach told me how I was doing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decisions made at meetings were put into action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Everyone took part in discussions at meetings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our discussions in meetings stayed on track.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Time in meetings was time well spent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meetings tapped the creative potential of the people present.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Old Coach Questions

Start of Block: New Coach Questions



New Culture In this section, the questions focus on the culture of your team. For this series of questions, **please focus on the team culture under the direction of your NEW coach** (the coach who replaced your previous coach).

When responding to the prompts, the scale offers the ability to strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree with the statements and how well they relate to your experiences. Note that strongly disagree means you strongly disagree with the statement as it relates to

your experience and strongly agree notes you strongly agree with the statement being applicable to your relationship with the team under your new coach.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
People on the team are direct and honest with each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team accept criticism without becoming defensive.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team resolve disagreements cooperatively.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team function as a team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team are cooperative and considerate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team constructively confront problems.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team are good listeners.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People on the team are concerned about each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coaches and competitors have a productive working relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

This team motivates me to put out my best efforts.

This team respects its competitors.

This team treats people in a consistent and fair manner.

My team feels like being part of a family.

There is an atmosphere of trust in this team.

This team motivates people to be efficient and productive.

I get enough information to understand the big picture here.

When changes are made the reasons why are made clear.

I know what's happening with the direction of the team.

I get the information I need to do my tasks well.

I have a say in decisions that affect my work.

I am asked to make suggestions about how to improve the team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This team values the ideas of competitors at every level.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My opinions count in this team.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expectations are made clear by my coach.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When I do a good job my coach tells me so.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach takes criticism well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach delegates responsibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach is approachable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach gives me criticism in a positive manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach is a good listener.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach tells me how I'm doing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decisions made at meetings get put into action.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Everyone takes part in discussions at meetings.

Our discussions in meetings stay on track.

Time in meetings is time well spent.

Meetings tap the creative potential of the people present.

Page Break



New Confirm In this section, the questions focus on communication patterns with your coach and how certain statements may have impacted the relationship between you and your coach. For this series of questions, **please focus on interactions with your NEW coach** (the coach who replaced your previous coach).

When responding to the prompt, the scale offers the ability to strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree with the prompts and their ability to relate to your experience with your more recent coach. Note that strongly disagree means you strongly disagree with the

statement as it relates to your experience and strongly agree notes you strongly agree with the statement being applicable to your relationship with the coach.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My coach tells me I am capable of performing up to their expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach tells me I'll get better in the future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach tells me they believe in me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach continually pushes me to get better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach spends time trying to help me improve.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach helps point out things I could work on to become better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach expresses that they believe I can improve.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach points out my mistakes to help me improve.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach pushes me to reach my full potential.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My coach recognizes the competitor I could become.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

My coach acknowledges when I perform well.

My coach tells me "good job" when I do well.

My coach praises me when I execute our game plan.

My coach tells me when I am performing up to their expectations.

End of Block: New Coach Questions

Start of Block: Interview?

Interview? Thank you for completing the survey!

Are you interested in also completing an interview with us about your experiences with coach turnover? If you answer "yes," you will be taken out of this survey to a new one where you will be given more information and asked to provide an email address so we may contact you to schedule an interview.

- Yes, I would like to be interviewed
- No, I would NOT like to be interviewed

End of Block: Interview?
