

## **I Love my Job, but... Job Satisfaction and Burnout among Forensic Interviewers**

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While studied extensively among child welfare workers and other professionals, there is a paucity of research about burnout and job satisfaction among forensic interviewers. Forensic interviewers are specially trained professionals who conduct structured interviews with children who have made allegations of abuse (Cross, Jones, Walsh, Simone, & Kolko, 2007). Forensic interviewers may be particularly vulnerable to burnout as a result of their work in which they are required to listen to, report on, and in many instances testify on behalf of children who have made allegations of serious abuse. The current research examines the prevalence of burnout and job satisfaction among forensic interviewers and organizational factors that may mitigate or exacerbate burnout.

## Problem Statement

- Burnout impacts quality of client care
- Burnout has interpersonal consequences
- Organizational factors influence burnout
  - Demands diminish worker's energy and effort
- Lack of research on burnout among forensic interviewers
  - Atkinson-Tovar (2002) suggested organizational factors contribute to the development of vicarious trauma and secondary traumatic stress
  - Perron & Hiltz (2006) found higher organizational satisfaction, lower burnout
  - Bonach & Heckert (2012) found organizational factors affect work-related stress



Burnout is a concept associated with job-related stress experienced by social workers and others who work in the child welfare field. Exhaustion, depersonalization, and a reduced sense of effectiveness are key indicators of burnout (Brenninkmeijer & VanYperen, 2003; Bush, 2009; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Research has shown burnout impacts the quality of client care and has health and interpersonal consequences for the worker and agency (Beaton & Murphy, 1995; Maslach, 1976). Organizational factors have been found to influence the development of burnout (Freudenberger, 1975; Maslach et al., 2001). The limited research on what organizational factors affect burnout suggests excessive organizational demands can diminish energy and effort by the worker resulting in a general lack of care in work performance (Bush, 2009).

There is a lack of research about work-related stress among forensic interviewers as only two studies were identified in the literature. Atkinson-Tovar (2002) found vicarious trauma and secondary traumatic stress present among sample and suggested organizational factors contribute to the development of work-related stress. Perron and Hiltz (2006) found that higher organizational satisfaction was found to be significantly associated with less burnout among forensic interviewers. Forensic interviewers in a study by Bonach and Heckert (2012) suggested a number of organizational factors affect work-related stress, including holding dual roles within the organization, unsatisfactory supervision or leadership, insufficient teamwork, insufficient time for debriefing, and education on stress and self-care. Both studies stress the need for further research on the relationship between organizational factors and burnout among forensic interviewers.

## Literature Review

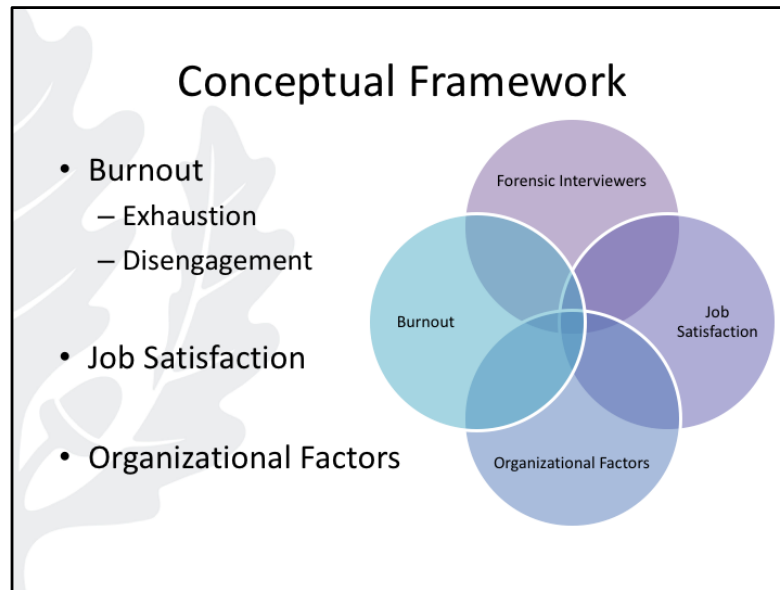
- Forensic Interviewers
  - Multidisciplinary professionals responsible for obtaining children's statements regarding allegations of abuse through one-on-one interviews
- Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC)
  - A model designed to enhance the response to suspected child abuse cases by combining the wisdom and professional knowledge of various investigative agencies and other professionals
- Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT)
  - Forensic interviewers work in conjunction with MDTs made up of representatives from prosecution, law enforcement, child welfare, medical, mental health, and victim advocacy

Forensic interviewers are responsible for obtaining a child's statement regarding allegations of abuse through a one-on-one interview.

Forensic interviewers conduct interviews in Children's Advocacy Centers (CAC), a **model designed to enhance the response to suspected child abuse cases by combining the wisdom and professional knowledge of various investigative agencies and other professionals.**

The National Children's Alliance (NCA, 2009), a membership organization, reports there are over 750 CACs across the United States.

In accordance with the CAC model, forensic interviewers work in conjunction with MDTs made up of representatives from prosecution, law enforcement, child welfare, medical, mental health, and victim advocacy.



Burnout is characterized by disengagement and exhaustion. Disengagement is described as an expression of a pessimistic attitude toward work, often displayed through the withdrawal of interpersonal interactions as a way to cope with work-related demands. Exhaustion, the prominent symptom of burnout, is described as feeling as if the individual has nothing left to give emotionally and physically (Demerouti, Bakker, Vardakou, & Kantas, 2003).

Job satisfaction is the attitude employees have about their jobs and related facets (Spector, 1997). In addition to feeling satisfied the conceptualization also includes the degree to which employees like their job (Bowling & Hammond, 2008; Landsman, 2001). Job satisfaction is often studied in conjunction with burnout

Various organizational factors, not just personal factors, affect both burnout and job satisfaction. Maslach (1982) suggests factors related to organizational demands, such as caseload size, instruction from supervisors, rigid policies and procedures, and lack of breaks, especially when a person holds a specialized job, are influential in the development of burnout. Relationships with co-workers, supervisors, and administrators are factors in job satisfaction and burnout.

## Theoretical Framework

- Job demands-control (support) model
  - Demands
  - Control
  - Support
  - High demands and a lack of resources can result in burnout
  - Control and support can reduce burnout



The research was theoretically driven the job demands-control (support) model

The job demand-control (support) model posits that demands placed on an employee and how much control is given to meet such demands have an effect on the individual. Decision latitude is defined by the control an employee has over job-related tasks. Demand is characterized as stress related to managing work load responsibilities (Karasek, 1979). The social dimension of support was added in the 1980s (Johnson & Hall, 1988).

The model posits that job strain is a consequence of high demands exceeding limited decision latitude resulting in a lack of energy and resources (Karasek, 1979). Exhaustion is a consequence of high demands and a lack of resources result in disengagement. When both high demands and a lack of resources are present the outcome is burnout (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). The JDC(S) model implies that control and support in the workplace can reduce work-related stress regardless of the job demands.

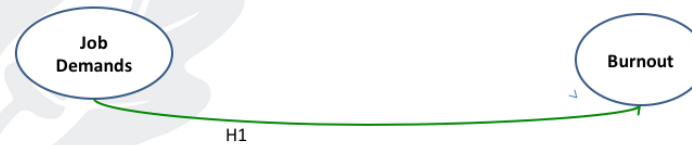
## Research Question

What organizational factors are associated with burnout among forensic interviewers?



## Hypotheses

- H1: Forensic interviewers who report higher job demands will report higher levels of burnout.



Positive relationship

## Hypotheses

- H2: Forensic interviewers who report higher job demands will report higher job satisfaction.



Positive relationship



## Hypotheses

- H3: Forensic interviewers who report higher job satisfaction will report lower levels of burnout.



Positive relationship  
Inverse relationship

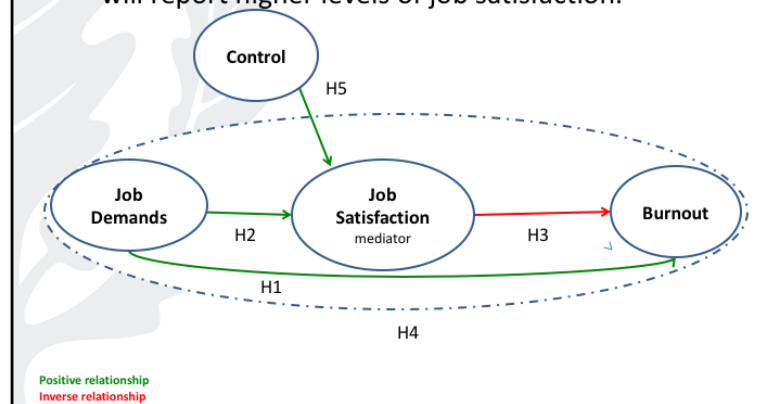
## Hypotheses

- H4: The relationship between job demands and burnout is mediated by job satisfaction.



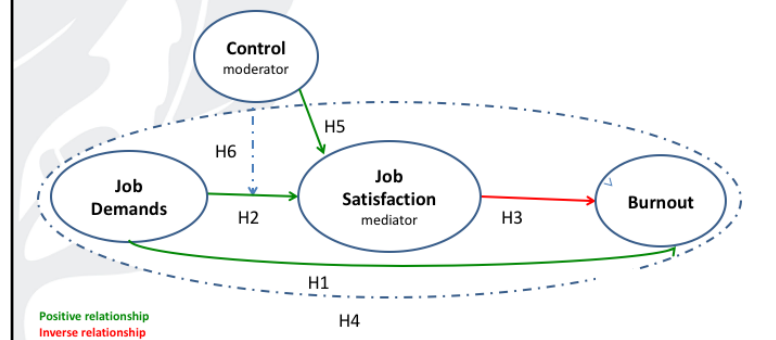
## Hypotheses

- H5: Forensic interviewers who report more control will report higher levels of job satisfaction.



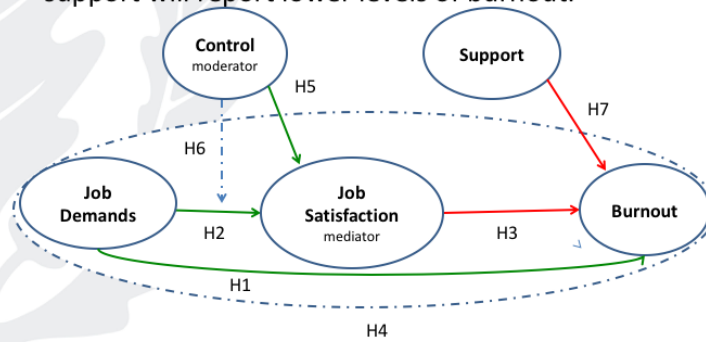
## Hypotheses

- H6: The relationship between job demands and job satisfaction is moderated by control.



## Hypotheses

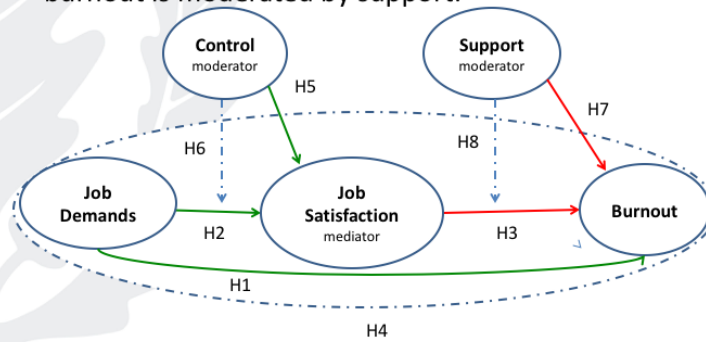
- H7: Forensic interviewers who report higher levels of support will report lower levels of burnout.



Positive relationship  
Inverse relationship

## Hypotheses

- H8: The relationship between job satisfaction and burnout is moderated by support.



Positive relationship  
Inverse relationship

## Research Design

- Cross sectional
- Electronic survey design
- Qualtrics Survey Software



The current research utilized a cross-sectional electronic survey design to gather information on organizational factors, burnout, and job satisfaction from forensic interviewers. A survey is an appropriate method for collecting data from this population as they are professionals who are accustomed to job-related paperwork and are assumed to have limited time to participate in more time intensive data collection methods. An electronic survey was chosen over a traditional paper survey due to forensic interviewers being technology-savvy professionals who are accustomed to using computer-based systems as part of their job-related responsibilities. Previous research conducted on forensic interviewers has used similar data collection methods (Bonach & Heckert, 2012; Perron & Hiltz, 2006).

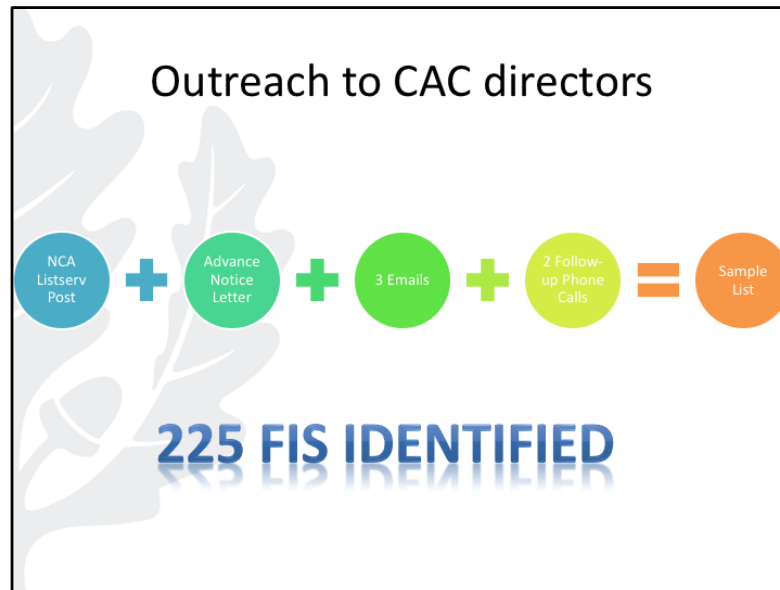
## Sampling

- Employees, contractors, or other affiliated personnel authorized to conduct forensic interviews
- Northeast region of US
  - 9 states
  - 114 CACs
  - National Children's Alliance



The criterion for selection in this study was any individuals identified as employees, contractors, or other affiliated personnel authorized to conduct forensic interviews with National Children's Alliance (NCA)-member CACs (accredited and associate/developing) in the Northeast region as defined by the NCA. NCA designates the Northeast region as Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, and Vermont.





As neither a list nor database of all the forensic interviewers in the Northeast region exists, one was developed for this study. Forensic interviewers were identified via CAC directors/coordinators through two methods, a NCA listserv request and direct outreach to directors/coordinators.

The NCA provided an endorsement of the study as a way of conveying a sense of trust.

The outreach to the CAC directors/coordinators included seven different attempts via a posting on the NCA listserv, a letter sent through the mail, three emails, and two phone calls. Using these methods, 90% of the CAC directors/coordinators responded in some way. Of the 114 CACs, 87 directors/coordinators (76%) provided contact information for forensic interviewers; 16 responded but did not provide the requested information (14%). Eleven CAC directors/coordinators (10%) did not respond in any way. Directors/coordinators not providing contact information most often stated that law enforcement and child protective service workers conduct their own interviews suggesting they were not at liberty to provide the requested information.

The information collected from the CAC directors/coordinators is the first known comprehensive list of forensic interviewers in the Northeast region. By developing the sample list, coverage error was managed by knowing exactly how the list was compiled (Dillman et al, 2009). While by no means a definitive list of the population, the methods used ensure that as many potential members of the sampling frame as possible were included.

Using the methods described above, a total of 225 individuals were identified as a forensic interviewer as defined in this study.

# Instrumentation

- 108 questions
- 20-30 minutes
- Independent variables
  - Job Content Questionnaire (17 items; .69 to .85)
  - External Job Support (5 items; .77)
  - Job demands (22 items; .60 to .87)
  - Indirect support (6 items; .60)
- Dependent variable
  - Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (16 items; .74 to .87)
- Mediating variable
  - Job Satisfaction Subscale (3 items; .84)
- Other variables
  - Organizational factors (22 items)
  - Demographics (14 items)
  - Final comment



The survey consisted of 108 questions used to measure the variables. The survey is estimated to have taken approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. Preexisting and validated measurements as well as ones developed for this study were used.

## **Independent variables.**

Decision latitude, supervisor support, and coworker support will be measured by subscales selected from the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ). Decision latitude is defined as the control a worker has in their job. Two subscales, skill discretion and decision authority, measure decision latitude. Supervisor support is defined as the impact support from a supervisor has on a worker. Coworker support is similarly defined as the impact support from coworkers has on a worker. The reliability for the Job Content Questionnaire is reported to be good with the Cronbach's alpha for each subscale ranges from .69 to .85 (Karasek et al., 1998).

External job support refers to support the worker receives from family, friends, the public, and other professionals (Horwitz, 2006). The reliability for the subscale is reported to be good with an alpha of .77 (Horwitz, 2006).

For the purposes of this study, 22 questions were included to measure organizational demands specific to CACs. Questions related to organizational demands include items such as number of forensic interviewers at the CACs, supervisory responsibilities, and average number of interviews conducted per week. The reliability for the 4 factors measuring organizational demands were acceptable with alpha levels ranging from .60 to .87.

6 questions measured indirect support including indirect benefits and supervision. The reliability for the factor measuring indirect support was acceptable with alpha of .60.

## **Dependent variables.**

The two components of burnout, disengagement and exhaustion, will be measured by the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory. Disengagement is defined as an expression of a pessimistic attitude toward work and exhaustion is feeling as if the individual has nothing left to give emotionally and physically (Demerouti et al., 2003). Reliability supports internal consistency with Cronbach alpha levels ranging from .74 to .87 for the exhaustion subscale and .76 to .83 for the disengagement subscale.

Two global items question were used to measure concurrent validity to check whether burnout and job satisfaction were the appropriate construct being measured. The use of this question will allow a direct comparison between the burnout measured through the OLBI and self-report of being burnt out.

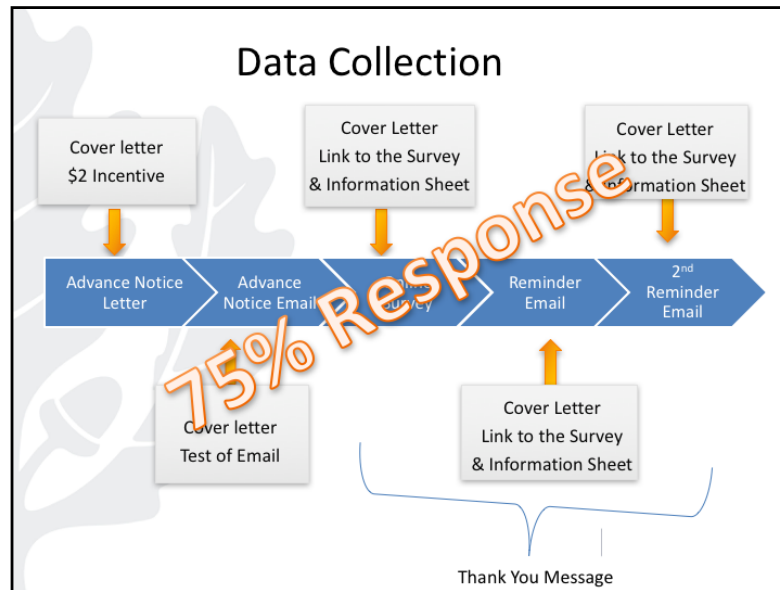
## **Mediating variable.**

Job satisfaction is measured by employees' thoughts and feelings about their job. The Job Satisfaction Subscale (JSS) has been shown to have better face validity than other scales measuring job satisfaction. A meta-analytic study found the reliability for the JSS is good with the coefficient alpha reported to be .84 (Bowling & Hammond, 2008).

## **Other variables.**

For the purposes of this study, additional questions gathered information on other aspects of the job, including additional roles held at the organization separate from forensic interviewing. There are also 14 demographic questions in the survey. Control variables included age, gender, children under the age of 18 years old, and tenure as forensic interviewer, at current CAC, and in child welfare field.

All questions, except three, were closed-ended with all possible response choices provided. The open-ended questions asked about supervisor's degree, languages in which interviews are conducted, and final comments on their work as a forensic interviewer.



Recruitment included six potential points of contact with respondents. Contact included an advance notice letter with incentive, advance notice e-mail, the on-line survey packet, a reminder e-mail for those who did not respond, a second reminder e-mail, and a thank you message to those who responded.

To serve as a token of appreciation for participating in the survey, the advance notice letter included an incentive, a two dollar bill. Four letters with varying amounts of \$2 bills were received from individuals and groups of forensic interviewers for a total of \$30 returned. The money returned will be used to make a donation to the NCA at the conclusion of the study.


Data collection took place between August 19 and October 3, 2013. Data collection ended once a week passed without any responses. The final sample size was 222 forensic interviewers, after removing one forensic interviewer who contacted me to let me know she left her job and two potential participants who informed me that they did not feel it was appropriate to complete the survey since they had just completed training and had not yet conducted any interviews.

The total number of respondents was 167, resulting in a 75% response rate.

## Data Management

- Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22
- Missing data

**67%  
Usable  
Data**



Qualtrics Survey Software was used to distribute the survey and manage the database. The data were then cleaned to adjust for data found to be unusable before uploading into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22.

A two-way imputation was used to adjust for missing data on five of the scales.

Of the 167 participants who began the survey, 19 were eliminated due to insufficient data. Eight participants did not answer any questions. Two surveys were eliminated after entering zero percent on the contingency question. Four were removed because only the first question was completed. Four were removed due to only completing the first six to nine questions. One respondent worked at a CAC that was not currently a member of NCA. The usable data produced a 67% response rate.

## Internal Validity

Variable	n	M (SD)	$\alpha$	Range	
				Potential	Actual
Decision Latitude (Control)	148	69.82 (3.47)	.80	22-88	38-88
Social Support	146	25.44 (3.78)	.85	8-32	12-32
External Job Support	148	23.90 (4.42)	.84	5-30	11-30
Job Satisfaction	148	17.91 (3.49)	.86	3-21	3-21
Burnout	148	36.00 (6.45)	.89	16-64	20-57

*Psychometric Properties of Major Study Variables Measured by Preexisting Scales*

*Note.* Differences in sample size are due to missing data.

The internal reliability for all of the subscales was calculated and found to be consistent with previous research. In some instances the alpha levels were found to be higher in the current research.

## Internal Validity

Question	<i>n</i>	Yes (%)	No (%)
I am satisfied with my work as a forensic interviewer	148	130 (88%)	14 (12%)
As a result of my work as a forensic interviewer, I am experiencing burnout	148	43 (29%)	101 (71%)

### *Response to Global Items*

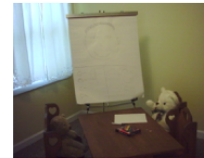
- Qualitative findings support quantitative findings

Two global item questions were used in this study as validity checks to assess whether the correct constructs were being assessed. A majority (88%) of respondents indicated they are satisfied with their work as a forensic interviewer. A third (29%) of respondents indicated they are experiencing burnout as a result of their work as a forensic interviewer. See Table 3.6 for responses to global items.

Internal validity was also supported by qualitative findings supporting quantitative findings in a number of areas.

## External Validity

- High response rate
  - Multiple points of contact and modes of contact
  - Incentive
  - Shared group membership
  - Dissertation research
  - Limited research on forensic interviewers
- Generalizability



The high response rate (75%; 67% usable data) in this study is impressive. There are several suggested reasons for such response. First, as advised by Dillman and associates (2009), multiple points of contact were utilized to develop the sample list and recruit participants. Second, both CAC directors/coordinators and forensic interviewers were contacted via postal mail and email, in addition to the directors/coordinators being contacted by phone. Third, the survey recruitment model was adapted for use in electronic recruitment. As such, the use of the \$2 bill was used as a physical incentive for participants. The directors/coordinators were also informed that they would receive a copy of the study results upon completion of the research. Fourth, the recruitment materials sent to CAC directors/coordinators and forensic interviewers emphasized shared group membership, as I am a former CAC program director and forensic interviewer. As the CAC model is a rather new approach and represents a small group of workers in the child welfare field, such shared membership may have been influential in encouraging individuals to participate. Fifth, all communication to CAC directors/coordinators and forensic interviewers stated that the research was for my doctoral dissertation. Providing such information may have appealed to a desire to help another person. Sixth, given the limited research on forensic interviewers, especially in the area of burnout and job satisfaction, the uniqueness of the request for participation may have also encouraged participation. Finally, when outreach was made to CAC directors/coordinators, I suggested they tell their forensic interviewers about the research and encourage their participation. Such a direct request may have also proven influential.

A high response rate, such as obtained in this research, allows for confidence in generalizing the findings to the general population of forensic interviewers in the Northeast region of the United States. Yet, there are two limitations in this generalization. First, the size and description of the entire population of forensic interviewers in the Northeast region is not known precisely. The sample studied here is the most comprehensive list of the group and largest number studied in the region. Yet, there are still an unknown number of forensic interviewers not included in this sampling frame as some CAC directors/coordinators would not provide the information or never responded to my outreach efforts. Second, little is known about the percentage of the sample who did not participate in the survey. Due to this lack of information, no conclusions can be made about similarities or differences between those who responded and those who did not.

## Data Analysis

- Descriptive statistics
- Preliminary analyses
  - Correlation
  - T-tests
  - ANOVA
- Multivariate analyses
- Thematic Analysis



Descriptive statistics and statistical analyses were computed utilizing SPSS. Correlation was used to assess significant relationships between study variables measured by preexisting scales. See Table 3.7 for correlation matrix. Independent-samples t-tests were used ex post facto to assess any significant differences in various dichotomous variables with respect to burnout and job satisfaction. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were used post hoc to assess significant differences between group means with respect to burnout and job satisfaction. Multivariate regression analyses allowed for exploration of the influence of and interaction among multiple correlates and highlighted the amount of variance attributed to selected variables. The SPSS macro PROCESS was used to test for the presence of moderated and mediated relationships (Hayes, 2013). Qualitative responses from the open-ended question at the end of the survey were analyzed for themes.



## Correlation

	Decision Latitude Subscale	Social Support Subscale	External Job Support Subscale	Burnout Inventory	Job Satisfaction Subscale
Decision Latitude Subscale	1				
Social Support Subscale	.298*	1			
External Job Support Subscale	.345*	.327*	1		
Burnout Inventory	-.397*	-.505*	-.414*	1	
Job Satisfaction Subscale	.437*	.557*	.424*	-.693*	1

*Correlation Matrix of Study Variables Measured By Preexisting Scales*

*Note.* \* Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Protection of Human Subjects

- Institutional Review Board
- Information sheet
- Potential risk
  - Recollection of client or personal abuse
  - Evaluation of burnout
- Password protection



A number of steps were taken to ensure the protection of human subjects. Approval from the University of Connecticut's IRB was obtained prior to initiating the research. An information sheet that explained the risks and benefits of the research was used as opposed to a signed consent form as a way to ensure the confidentiality of the participants as this is a rather small, specialized population with potential professional risk if participants are identified.

A potential risk associated with participation was identified as a participant recalling any incidents of a client's abuse or their own recollection of personal abuse. Participation may also have caused a respondent to think about and evaluate whether they are experiencing burnout. Although there was no anticipated serious or lasting harm as a result of participation, safeguards were put into place. Contact information for national hotlines, such as Mental Health America (MHA), and statewide mental health resources, such as MHA Connecticut, were included at the end of the survey and in the thank you message in case any participant experienced distress.

The confidentiality of participants was protected to encourage the participants to be as open and honest as possible. Participants' contact information was not associated with their survey answers within the database.

## Sample Description

- 78% female; 81% white; 40 years old, average
- 36% undergraduate degree; 53% graduate degree
  - Social work was the most common field of study (33%)
- 36% CAC Employees
- 151 hours of training, average
- 527 forensic interviews, average = 78,000 children interviewed

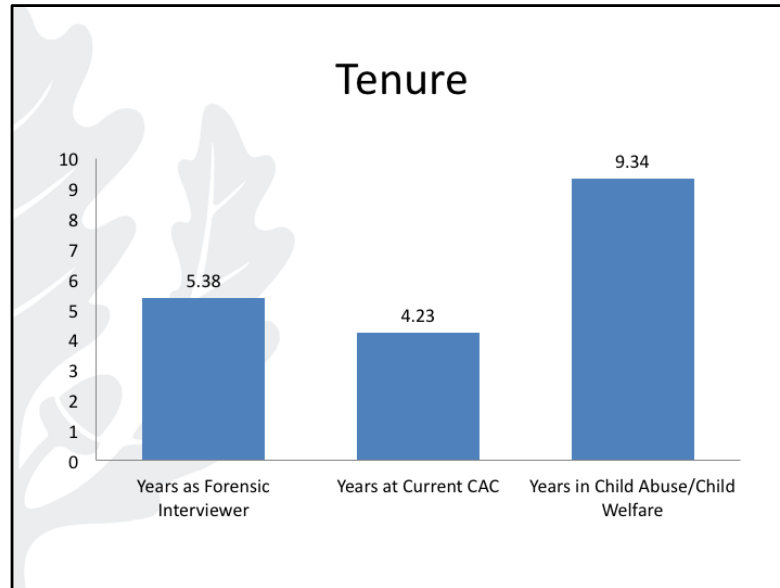
Forensic interviewers who participated in this study came from all nine states in the Northeast region. One forensic interviewer responded from Rhode Island; this is the only interviewer known for the entire state and is shared between the two CAC sites in the state.

Respondents presented with a range of educational backgrounds. Over a third (36%) of respondents had an undergraduate degree as the highest degree. Over half (53%) held a graduate degree. Two respondents (1%) had a doctorate. The remaining respondents reported some college (6%) or a high school degree or general educational development (GED) (1%).

Respondents reported a variety of training specific to the techniques of forensic interviewing and the dynamics of child abuse. Respondents accumulated from four to approximately 1,000 hours of training with the average being 151 hours.

Training is especially important given that respondents estimate they have interviewed from three to approximately 5,000 children. On average, respondents have conducted 527 forensic interviews. This calculates to an average of 78,000 children interviewed by the respondents in this study.

As expected, there was a range in the total number of individuals conducting forensic interviews within a single CAC. Ten respondents (7%) reported they are the only forensic interviewer at their CACs. The most frequent response was two forensic interviewers (21%) within a CAC, followed by three individuals conducting forensic interviews (16%). The average was six forensic interviewers, much higher than the national average of 2.73 interviewers found by Jackson (2004), but she specified forensic interviewers on-site at the CAC. The current study also sought out law enforcement and child protective services workers who conduct forensic interviews. This is also much higher than the number provided by the CAC directors/coordinators while developing the sampling frame for this study. Such discrepancies may be due to respondents counting all co-workers who are trained in forensic interviewing, while CAC directors/coordinators were asked to provide information for those who are currently conducting forensic interviews at the CACs. The CAC directors/coordinators may not be aware of all law enforcement and child protective services workers who conduct forensic interviews off-site.



On average, respondents had been forensic interviewers for over five years. On average, respondents reported being a forensic interviewer at their current CAC for just over four years. More impressive was the length of time working in the child abuse/child welfare field with an average of over nine years. The average tenure of nine years in the field is higher than previous research on workers in child welfare. The Annie E. Casey Foundation (2003) found the average tenure of workers within public agencies to be seven years and three years in private agencies.

## Organizational Factors

- Sexual abuse = 78% forensic interviews
- 3.78 forensic interviews per week
- Most frequent response 2 forensic interviewers (21%) per CAC
- 28% of supervisors have no training in forensic interviewing; 18% trained, but never conducted

The primary function of forensic interviewers is speaking with children about alleged crimes. Respondents primarily interviewed children regarding allegations of sexual abuse, which made up an average of 78% of forensic interviews.

A range exists in the average number of forensic interviews conducted per week by respondents. On average, respondents conducted 3.78 forensic interviews per week, with the median being 3 forensic interviews. The highest average was 15 forensic interviews per week.

A common way to preserve children's statements has been to video record forensic interviews. A majority (76%) of respondents indicated that the CACs where they conduct forensic interviews do record videos of the interviews. The MRCAC (2011) found that 94% of CACs record interviews, putting northeast CACs behind national norms.

## Job Satisfaction

*"I love my work as a forensic interviewer"*

		Job Satisfaction Subscale <i>M (SD)</i>
I am satisfied with my work as a forensic interviewer	Yes	18.32 (2.86)*
	No	15.00 (5.76)*

*Group Statistics for Job Satisfaction Global Item Independent-Samples t-Test*

*Note. \*  $p < .05$ .*

- ↑ Personal days off ( $p < .001$ )
- ↓ Conduct forensic interviews off-site ( $p < .005$ )
- ↑ Social work degree ( $p < .05$ )
- ↑ MDT support ( $p < .005$ )

A vast majority (88%) of respondents positively responded to being satisfied with their work as forensic interviewers. An independent t-test found a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction between those who stated they were satisfied and those who stated they were not. Those who stated they were satisfied with their work as forensic interviewers reported significantly higher job satisfaction, as measured by the Job Satisfaction Subscale (JSS) ( $p < .05$ ). The results of the t-test for this global item confirmed the correct construct of job satisfaction was being assessed.

An independent t-test found a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction between those who took personal days off when emotionally affected by forensic interviews and those who did not. Those who indicated that they took days off when emotionally affected experienced higher job satisfaction, as measured by the JSS ( $M = 19.22$ ,  $SD = 1.53$  vs.  $17.62$ ,  $SD = 3.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

An independent t-test found a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction between those who conducted forensic interviews off-site and those who do not. Those who indicated that they do not conduct forensic interviews off-site experience higher job satisfaction, as measured by the JSS ( $M = 18.59$ ,  $SD = 2.5$  vs.  $16.50$ ,  $SD = 4.7$ ,  $p < .005$ ).

An independent t-test found a statistically significant difference in job satisfaction between those whose highest degree was in social work and those whose highest degree was in another field of study. Those who indicated that their highest degree was in social work experience higher job satisfaction, as measured by the JSS ( $M = 18.63$ ,  $SD = 2.4$  vs.  $17.56$ ,  $SD = 3.9$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) testing supported differences in the level of mean job satisfaction for MDT support ( $p < .005$ ,  $F = 4.62$ ). Significant differences existed between the disagree ( $M = 15.64$ ,  $SD = 5.38$ ) and strongly agree groups ( $M = 19.46$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ). Those who felt supported by the MDT they work with most frequently had higher job satisfaction as measured by the JSS.

## Burnout

*"I know that if I remain in this unit burnout is an inevitable consequence"*

		Burnout Inventory M (SD)
As a result of my work as a forensic interviewer, I am experiencing burnout	Yes	41.40 (5.93)**
	No	33.80 (5.25)**

Group Statistics for Burnout Global Item Independent-Samples t-Test  
Note. \*\*  $p < .001$ .

- ↑ Health insurance and paid time off ( $p < .001$ ,  $p < .005$ )
- ↑ Multiple roles ( $p < .01$ )
- ↓ MDT support, satisfaction ( $p < .05$ ,  $p < .005$ )
- ↑ MDT stress ( $p < .01$ )

Almost a third (29%) of respondents self-reported that they were experiencing burnout as a result of their work as forensic interviewers. An independent t-test found a statistically significant difference in burnout between those who reported they are burnt out and those who reported they are not. Those who reported they are burnt out with their work as forensic interviewers experienced significantly higher burnout, as measured by the Oldenburg Burnout Inventory (OLBI) ( $p < .001$ ). The t-test finding for this global item confirms the correct construct of burnout was being assessed.

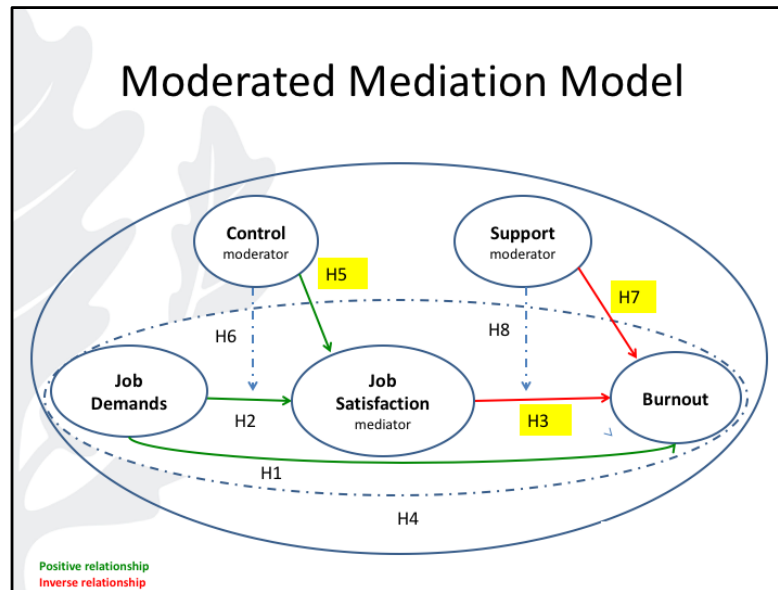
An independent t-test found a statistically significant difference in burnout between those who received health insurance and paid time off through their employers and those who did not. Those who indicated that they received health insurance through their employer experienced significantly higher burnout, as measured by the OLBI ( $M = 36.85$ ,  $SD = 6.03$  vs.  $32.51$ ,  $SD = 7.03$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Those who indicated that they received paid time off through their employers experienced significantly higher burnout, as measured by the OLBI ( $M = 36.81$ ,  $SD = 5.93$  vs.  $31.15$ ,  $SD = 7.42$ ,  $p < .005$ ).

An independent t-test found a statistically significant difference in burnout between those who held multiple roles at their organization and those who did not. Those who indicated that they held multiple roles at their organization experienced significantly higher burnout, as measured by the OLBI ( $M = 37.10$ ,  $SD = 6.24$  vs.  $34.03$ ,  $SD = 6.39$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

ANOVA supported differences in the mean level of burnout for MDT support ( $p < .05$ ,  $F 3.12$ ). Significant differences existed between the disagree ( $M = 39.04$ ,  $SD = 7.02$ ) and strongly agree groups ( $M = 32.8$ ,  $SD = 6.9$ ). Those who did not feel supported by the MDT they worked with most frequently had higher burnout as measured by the OLBI.

ANOVA found differences in the mean level of burnout for MDT satisfaction ( $p < .005$ ,  $F 4.67$ ). The greatest difference was noted between the disagree ( $M = 38.13$ ,  $SD = 7.15$ ) and strongly agree groups ( $M = 32.84$ ,  $SD = 5.96$ ). Those who reported dissatisfaction with the MDT they work with most frequently had higher burnout as measured by the OLBI.

ANOVA found significant differences in the level of mean burnout for MDT stress ( $p < .01$ ,  $F 3.43$ ). Significant differences existed between the all of the response groups with the greatest difference noted between the strongly agree ( $M = 40.33$ ,  $SD = 6.15$ ) and strongly disagree groups ( $M = 31.99$ ,  $SD = 7.42$ ). Those who felt the MDT they work with most frequently caused them stress had higher burnout as measured by the OLBI.



To test hypothesis 1, a multiple linear regression was used to predict the value of burnout given the value of job demands (using the four factors composites of court-based dissemination demands, opinion-based dissemination demands, expert-based dissemination demands, and supervisory demands). Statistical significance was not found in the regression model, therefore, the hypothesis was not supported ( $F = .575$ , n.s.).

A multiple linear regression was used to predict the value of job satisfaction given the value of job demands to test hypothesis 2. Statistical significance was not found in the regression model, therefore, the hypothesis was not supported ( $F = 1.08$ , n.s.).

To test hypothesis 3, a linear regression was used to predict the value of burnout given the value of job satisfaction. Assumptions for simple regression were satisfied and the null hypothesis was rejected ( $F = 134.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hypothesis 3, forensic interviewers who report higher job satisfaction ( $M = 17.91$ ,  $SD = 3.49$ ) report lower levels of burnout ( $M = 36$ ,  $SD = 6.45$ ), was supported with 48% of variance in burnout explained by job satisfaction.

To test hypothesis 4, a simple mediation model was used to test for the presence of a mediator. From the mediation analysis using ordinary least squares path analysis, there was no support to suggest that job satisfaction indirectly influences the relationship between job demands and burnout, therefore, the hypothesis is not supported.

A linear regression was used to predict the value of job satisfaction given the value of control to test hypothesis 5. Assumptions for simple regression were satisfied and the null hypothesis was rejected ( $F = 34.40$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hypothesis 5, forensic interviewers who report more control ( $M = 25.96$ ,  $SD = 3.47$ ) report higher levels of job satisfaction ( $M = 17.91$ ,  $SD = 3.49$ ), was supported with 19% of variance in job satisfaction explained by control.

To test hypothesis 6, a test of interaction was applied to assess whether job demand's effect on job satisfaction depends linearly on control. Using the Johnson-Neyman technique, there are no statistically significant transition points within the observed range of the moderator. Visual representation of the data also showed no interaction point. Results do not suggest that the effects of job demands are moderated by control; therefore, the hypothesis is not supported.

A multiple linear regression was used to predict the value of burnout given the value of support (using the social and external support subscales and indirect support factor composite) to test hypothesis 7. Using social and external job support as the independent variables, assumptions for multiple regression were satisfied and the null hypothesis was rejected ( $F = 34.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Hypothesis 7, forensic interviewers who report higher levels of support (social support  $M = 25.44$ ,  $SD = 3.78$ ; external job support  $M = 23.9$ ,  $SD = 4.42$ ) report lower levels of burnout ( $M = 36$ ,  $SD = 6.45$ ), was supported with 32% of variance in burnout explained by social and external support.

To test hypothesis 8, a test of interaction was applied to assess whether job satisfaction's effect on burnout depends linearly on support. Using the Johnson-Neyman technique, there were no statistically significant transition points within the observed range of the moderator. Visual representation of the data also showed no interaction point. Results do not suggest that the effects of job satisfaction are moderated by support; therefore, the hypothesis was not supported.

The moderated mediation model was tested to identify multiple pathways through which the independent variables affected the dependent variables (Hayes, 2013). The first and second stage moderation model used a series of multiple regression models to test if job demands' effect on job satisfaction was moderated by control and job satisfaction's effect on burnout was moderated by support. The conditional indirect effects were tested to examine if job demands on burnout was mediated by job satisfaction at each level of the two moderators, control and support. After estimating the coefficients in the statistical model, the interaction between job demands and control was found not to be statistically significant and the interaction between job satisfaction and support was found not to be statistically significant. Therefore, results do not suggest the existence of moderated mediation occurring as the model was proposed.



## Open-Ended Question

- **Burnout Theme**
  - Experienced or are aware of the potential for burnout
  - Burnout not related to forensic interviewing
    - *“I feel like my position as an interviewer is not valued, respected, and often misunderstood by some CAC staff as well as my own employer”*
  - Burnout due to other roles
  - Preventing burnout
    - Self-care
    - Organizations play a role

As a final question, respondents were asked to provide any additional thoughts about their experience as forensic interviewers, in regard to engagement, satisfaction, or burnout. The responses to this open-ended question provided great detail and important insight. A content analysis of the 70 qualitative responses resulted in a list of themes.

Responses to the open-ended question suggested that respondents are aware of the potential for burnout due to the demands of being forensic interviewers. As one respondent stated, “I know that if I remain in this unit burnout is an inevitable consequence” (33). Caused by lack of supervision or supervisors’ lack of understanding and the number of interviews expected to be conducted in one week was cited in regard to feeling burnt out at different times.

Burnout not related to forensic interviewing, but the reality of working in a “broken” system was frequently cited as a cause of burnout. Lack of respect by administrators, co-workers, and the MDTs was cited as a common cause of burnout.

Responses also suggested that burnout is due to holding dual roles within the organization.

Respondents provided insight on ways to actively prevent, or at least address, burnout. Respondents used terms such as balance and creativity in the ability to work through the emotional demands of the work. The importance of self-care was cited by a number of respondents who suggested that self-care is a personal responsibility; as one respondent stated, “we have to be responsible for checking in with ourselves” (8). Yet the organization must play an active role in promoting self-care. As one respondent stated, “My director is extremely health conscious (physically and emotionally) and we take self-care very seriously” (40). Maintaining interests separate from work, such as hobbies and exercise, was a way respondents cared for themselves. Respondents suggested that taking time off and vacations were also ways to actively address burnout.

## Open-Ended Question

- **Satisfaction Theme**

- Rewards

- “Even with these frustrating challenges, I am grateful every day that I get to meet the brave children I interview”

- Supportive work environment

- Flexibility
    - Diverse job responsibilities

Despite the potential for burnout, responses to the open-ended question suggested that respondents were satisfied with their work as forensic interviewers. Respondents used words such as “happy” and “enjoy” when describing their work. A number of respondents began the open-ended response by stating “I love my work as a forensic interviewer,” some emphasizing the word love in capital letters. Respondents described a passion and belief in the work, recognizing the importance and necessity of forensic interviewers in child abuse investigations.

Respondents described their work as rewarding. As one respondent stated, “The work definitely can become difficult. However, the rewards far outweigh the frustrations” (9). One of the most frequently cited rewards of the position was the ability to help children. One respondent summed up this sentiment, “But even with these frustrating challenges, I am grateful every day that I get to meet the brave children I interview” (70). Some respondents even cited the challenges of the position as a reward. One respondent stated, “I am continually engaged and challenged in a positive way conducting forensic interviews” (44). Another reward is the ability to hold offenders accountable. This was often cited as a reward among those who are also law enforcement officers. Respondents also described feeling effective and confident in their role as forensic interviewers.

Respondents cited the importance of having a supportive work environment as a contributor to satisfaction. Respondents also cited organizational support as important. Respondents mentioned specific benefits, especially flexibility, as examples of organizational support. Respondents related their satisfaction to diverse job responsibilities as well.

## Discussion

- Forensic Interviewers
  - 13% conduct interviews in languages other than English
  - 3.78 interviews conducted per week
    - *“Conducting more than two interviews in a day really drains me”*
  - 42% declared expert witnesses
  - 76% video record interviews

This study found only 13% of forensic interviewers conduct interviews in languages other than English. Considering that the research was conducted in the Northeast region of the United States, an area with cities populated with non-English speaking residents, concern is raised as to whether there is limited support in CACs for children and families who do not speak English. Investigation is necessary to answer the question as to why there are so few forensic interviewers conducting interviews in languages other than English in the Northeast region. The National Children's Advocacy Center had previously offered training specific to conducting interviews in Spanish, but do not have any upcoming trainings listed on their website ([www.nationalcac.org](http://www.nationalcac.org)). A lack of training for interviewing in languages other than English is an issue that must be addressed. The limited number of bi-lingual interviewers also raises concern regarding the degree to which there is greater demand placed on forensic interviewers who conduct interviews in other languages. Further research is necessary to understand the experience of forensic interviewers who are expected to conduct interviews in multiple languages and the effect on burnout and job satisfaction.

As expected, allegations of sexual abuse were the primary focus of the interviews. The average number of interviews conducted per week being 3.78 forensic interviews was lower than expected. This seems like a reasonable number of interviews per week for employees who only function as forensic interviewers. An average of less than one interview per day allows time to process an interview and complete interview-related duties. For forensic interviewers who hold additional roles, such as investigator or child protective services worker, having as many as four forensic interviews per week in addition to other responsibilities related to a case might be overwhelming (Atkinson-Tovar, 2002). Law enforcement and public child welfare administrators should take this into consideration when assigning child abuse cases.

Most forensic interviewers testify in various courts as part of their responsibilities. Forensic interviewers provide a range of testimony on protocols used to conduct forensic interviews as well as the facts of a case. Yet, of those who testify less than half are declared expert witnesses in their jurisdiction. Not being declared an expert in court limits the value of forensic interviewers and their testimony is considered on the same level as a lay person, whereas an expert witness maintains higher regard. This limits the ability for forensic interviewers to provide testimony on research specific to forensic interviewing and the dynamics of abuse, important considerations for a jury.

Findings indicate that all CACs still do not video record the interview. Forensic interviewers conducting non-recorded interviews are burdened with the additional stress of having to make note of specific details of the child's disclosure, while at the same time maintaining a supportive focus on the child. This practice places too much confidence on notes and personal recollection of the child's statement during an interview. Forensic interviewers who have video to rely on might not experience as much work-related stress to recall all of the specific details or to rely strictly on notes – which may, in retrospect, fail to capture some important points. A video recording preserves the child's statement verbatim, allows the interviewer to review the case in preparation of testimony, and can be shown in court. Prosecutors who are afraid of a “bad interview” need more education on the benefits of using trained forensic interviewers. Research that compares case outcomes when video recording is used might shed light onto the benefits of utilizing this technology (Jones, Cross, Walsh, & Simone, 2007). Resources should be put into educating MDT members, especially those with decision-making abilities in the judicial system, about the benefits of video recording and the expertise of forensic interviewers.

## Implications

- Better understanding of who forensic interviewers are and impact of the working conditions
- Enhance organizational support
- Reduce burnout
- Increase job satisfaction
- Policy and practice implications
- Social work implications



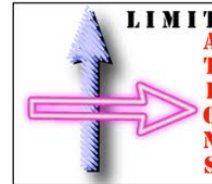
The suggested policy and practice implications will enhance organizational support, increase job satisfaction, and reduce burnout which will in turn lead to a stronger workforce. Such implications impact children – and in the largest sense, society as a whole – as forensic interviewers will be more effective. Providing forensic interviewers with control and support are areas of which CAC administrators must be mindful when considering the forensic interviewer position.

Forensic interviewers need the ability to develop their skills set, be creative, and have a variety of things to do on the job. Forensic interviewers need the authority to make decisions related to their work without fear of repercussion from CAC administrators or MDT members. Child abuse protocols should designate the use of CACs as the primary location to conduct forensic interviews, with the caveat that alternative locations be used when deemed necessary.

Supervision plays a significant role in support for forensic interviewers, as indicated by findings throughout the survey in closed-ended and open-ended questions. Therefore, the supportive nature of supervision is as important as having access to supervision. This study found coworker support is beneficial for forensic interviewers in terms of reducing burnout. While CAC administrators cannot predict how co-workers will get along, they can provide a model for facilitating supportive relationships. External job support from family, friends, clients, the public, and other professionals was also found to reduce burnout in this study. While CAC administrators cannot control the support a forensic interviewer receives outside the organization, they can take steps to encourage support from the community.

## Study Limitations

- Definition of forensic interviewers
- Job demands
- Volunteer participants



The definition used for forensic interviewers may have been a limitation in this study. Forensic interviewers were defined as any individual identified as a CAC employee, contractor, or other personnel affiliated with a CAC who is authorized to conduct forensic interviews. A discrepancy arose when examining the number of interviewers identified for the sampling frame by CAC directors/coordinators and the number of forensic interviewers at the CACs with which they are affiliated as reported by respondents. The difference may be due to respondents counting all co-workers who are trained in forensic interviewing, while CAC directors/coordinators provided information for those who are currently conducting forensic interviews at the CACs. The CAC directors/coordinators may not be aware of all law enforcement and child protective services workers who do not conduct forensic interviews at the CACs but who have been trained to do so.

Job demands in this study were conceptualized as unique expectations specific to the forensic interviewer position, such as report writing and testifying in court. None of the hypotheses with job demands produced significant results, suggesting that the way job demands were measured was not valid. Karasek's (1979) conceptualization of job demands involves the psychological aspects of managing work expectations. The Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ) contains a validated subscale used to measure job demands. Future research should consider using the JCQ job demands subscale.


As an alternative? It isn't clear here that you used something other than the JCQ. Another independent issue that you may wish to bring in here – if you haven't already used it elsewhere – is the issue about 12 of the items on the jobs demands scale not loading on any factor.

This study was reliant on volunteer participants. The use of non-randomized sampling limits the ability to generalize findings to the entire population of forensic interviewers. Given the high response rate and assuming there are no major differences among those who participated in the survey and those who did not, it is reasonable to suggest the findings can be extrapolated to the population of forensic interviewers in the Northeastern region of the United States.

The findings are also limited in the generalizability beyond forensic interviewers associated with NCA-member CACs. It is likely that forensic interviewer and organizational characteristics of CACs in the Northeast not currently members of NCA are similar to those represented in this study. CACs not currently members of NCA may find these results helpful in understanding burnout and job satisfaction among forensic interviewers, especially given that this is the first study to specifically look at organizational factors.

## Future Research

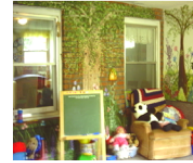
- Other regions
- Former interviewers
- Social work versus other disciplines



There are many areas for future inquiry to expand the empirical picture of burnout and job satisfaction among forensic interviewers. This study was limited in its sampling frame of forensic interviewers in the Northeastern region of the United States. Future research should be expanded to other regional and national levels. Former forensic interviewers, who may have changed jobs due to burnout, as well as any interviewers at a CAC not currently a member of NCA were excluded from the study. As there is no known literature on such groups, these are also areas for future research.

This research establishes that social workers are doing the work; future research can investigate whether this assumption regarding education and skills is true. Future research can examine differences that exist between forensic interviewers trained in social work versus other disciplines . Specifically in relation to burnout, does social work education provide a buffer for the development of burnout? If so, what social work skills or education are necessary for the prevention of burnout? Potential differences may be related to social work education that focuses on self-care and reflection, required practicum experiences, and strengths in problem-solving, communication, and listening skills .

## Summary



- Forensic interviewers are experiencing burnout, yet feel a great deal of satisfaction in their work
- Higher job control, higher job satisfaction
  - Forensic interviewers thrive when able to make decisions, enhance skills, be creative, and have diverse responsibilities
- Higher job satisfaction, lower burnout
  - Taking time off from work, on-site interviews, a social work degree, and MDT support all contribute to job satisfaction
- More support, less burnout
  - Supportive supervision and co-worker relationships play a significant role
- Dissemination of findings
- Stronger workforce, better care for abused children

Forensic interviewers perform an important function in the child welfare and criminal justice systems. These professionals are exposed in varying degrees to detailed, graphic accounts of child maltreatment as narrated by children. Due to the nature of their work, forensic interviewers are experiencing burnout, yet feel a great deal of satisfaction in their work. This research contributes to the literature on burnout among forensic interviewers and addresses a specific gap in the literature by focusing on organizational factors. This study also begins a line of inquiry on job satisfaction among forensic interviewers.

The NCA and all CAC program directors/coordinators in the Northeast region of the United States will receive a summary report of the findings. Providing the NCA and CAC program directors/coordinators with a report will be the most effective way to disseminate the information to direct practitioners in the forensic interviewing field. This will hopefully contribute to the implementation of the policy and practice recommendations. The research will also be submitted for presentation at national conferences and publication in social work journals. Dissemination through these avenues will raise awareness about organizational factors that affect burnout and job satisfaction among forensic interviewers throughout the social work and research communities.

This dissertation began with my experience of burnout, which influenced my research focus. I can relate this to one respondent who summed up, “I was the forensic interviewer at this CAC years ago and left the job due to [burnout] symptoms. I have since returned and I am now the director. My goal is to create an environment that will not have the same outcome happen to my staff. I learned so much from my experiences and would not trade them for anything. My journey, however painful at times has made me a better supervisor/teacher/director/therapist” (67). My experience as a forensic interviewer who experienced burnout makes me a better researcher. My goal in disseminating this research is to help create a better work environment for forensic interviewers; which will in turn support forensic interviewers to provide the best services for abused children.

