GENERAL INTEREST ARTICLES

Geographically Dispersed Community Networks: Exploring Social Networking Site Experiences and Relationships in the Intercollegiate Forensics Community

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Abstract

A survey administered to current intercollegiate forensics competitors indicated members of the geographically dispersed forensics community extend existing community spaces using social networking sites (SNS). Results indicate participants connected and interacted with team members, fellow competitors, and judges using multiple SNS about forensics and non-forensics related topics. Participants reported differing levels of self-monitoring behaviors, which manifested in emphasizing or stifling particular personality attributes. Emphasized attributes included the participant's education level, professionalism, or consistency with perceived community values. Stifled content included competitive secrets, politics, profanity, and other negative personal images. Experienced competitors noted the overwhelmingly positive impacts on competitive success of networking with judges, both in person and using SNS. Finally, participants noted online interactions impacted offline interactions and identity portrayals within forensics.

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Social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram provide spaces where people can deepen and maintain connections online (Boase et al., 2006; boyd & Ellison, 2007;

Ellison et al., 2007; Yang et al., 2014). As a communication tool, social networking sites can help maintain and deepen relationships for geographically dispersed individuals (Gentile & Edwards, 2014; Johnson et al., 2008; Tillema et al., 2010). Intercollegiate forensics is a semi-transient, geographically dispersed community built around competitive speaking tournaments. While individual teams often have shared physical spaces (Carmack & Holm, 2005), the forensics community at large does not occupy physically exclusive, dedicated spaces. Tournament competitions require borrowing building spaces (e.g., classrooms) intended for purposes other than competition. Through signage and arrangements of furniture, physical spaces are transformed to meet needs of the competitions (Paine, 2005). However, when the tournament is over, participants relinquish the borrowed physical space. Social networking sites (SNS) provide intercollegiate forensics community members a physically unbounded opportunity to build connections, continue discussions, and facilitate relationships.

The forensics community encompasses competitors, judges, coaches, administrators, and alumni. Each group plays a unique role in the community, but competitors face complex and sometimes challenging relationships. Forensic teams often utilize physical spaces on their own campus, such as team rooms; these physical spaces create opportunities to develop beneficial relationships between the students. Beyond interpersonal benefits, the affiliation with a particular team may benefit individual competitors. Team success may add credibility to individual competitor performance choices. For example, a student may receive a judge's "benefit of the doubt" about the purposefulness of a performance choice (e.g., structure of a persuasive speech) if the student is affiliated with a typically successful team (e.g., if the team routinely earns top spots at national tournaments). Competitive and interpersonal benefits aside, team members who

share physical spaces (i.e., are geographically close) may maintain close ties, even if interpersonal conflict makes relationships less desirable.

Long-distance relationships maintained with competitors from other teams, program alumni, and judges represent important networks for competitive success. Students compete for many reasons, but competitive success (à la trophies and recognition) motivates many students (Burnett et al., 2003). As they develop performances, students may supplement the written feedback judges provide via ballots through direct conversation with the judges. During dyadic communication during or immediately following a tournament while still sharing the physical space, students can ask clarifying questions, and judges may offer nuanced additions to ballot feedback. These dyads, of course, are easier to form when students and judges maintain close relationships. Additional and clarified feedback may help students achieve more competitive success. Some judges extend additional availability for students (e.g., adding an email address to a ballot), but not all judges are available to the same degrees for all competitors. Competitors balance maintaining friendships with fellow competitors, building team cohesion, and maintaining friendships/professional relationships with those whose favor could advantage their competitive success (even if that is not the intended outcome of the relationship).

Many scholars explore SNS relationship maintenance, but the implications of a competition-focused network have not been explored. Many scholars limit their research to a single SNS (e.g., Marwick & boyd, 2011; Taylor et al., 2014). Notably, the process of conducting, submitting, and revising academic articles means research often lags behind SNS popularity trends and development (e.g., TikTok). Therefore, my study attempts to answer the following research questions:

RQ1) Through which, if any, SNS are forensics competitors connecting with team members, competitors from other teams, and judges?

RQ2) Are forensics SNS connections focused exclusively on forensics-related topics?

RQ3) How do forensics competitors monitor self-presentation when they are connected online with team members, competitors from other teams, and judges?

Self-Presentation Online

Ugh. I dropped him in a round and now all of a sudden he's trying to follow me on Instagram.

Scholars conceptualizing online relationships look to Goffman's (1959, 1979) dramaturgical analyses of self-presentation as one of the ways to characterize the online behaviors. To Goffman, self-presentation is both conscious (*cues given*) and unconscious (*cues given off*). Self-presentation behaviors include revealing values, experiences, and other information pertinent to personal identity. Toma and Carlson (2012) constrained self-presentation in SNS through four factors: self-description, co-construction with network members, performing for a large number of people making up multiple audiences, and accrual over time. Self-description may take many forms depending upon the type of social media used. Smock (2010) described Facebook self-description on a profile as encompassing the individual's "sex, birthday, hometown, relationship status, sexual orientation, political views, religious views, activities, interests, favorite music, favorite TV shows, favorite movies, favorite books, favorite quotations, an 'about me' blurb, and group memberships" (p. 4). Smith and Sanderson (2015) evaluated self-presentations of professional athletes through the photographs and captions posted on Instagram. Marwick and boyd (2011) identified text-based public posts, pictures, followers, and retweets as self-presentation methods on Twitter, though profiles share information as well. Pinterest users present the self through items they pin and the names of the boards organizing the

items (such as the difference between naming a board "Crochet Patterns" or "Darling You Stay, Crochet Away"). SNS create a unique space with multiple communication methods through which to perform, but the messages are not contextually-situated as they would be offline (Hogan, 2010). In essence, all contacts interact with one, unified self-presentation.

One major difference between face-to-face and online self-presentation is the increased ability to control self-revealed information. Gradinaru (2013) explained online self-presentation occurs through editable posts; a caption may undergo several rewrites prior to release on a platform (unlike a spontaneously spoken comment in conversation). Dunn (2008) highlighted how text-based posts allow the user time to evaluate and edit messages before sharing with others. While in-person interactants may see contradictions between self-descriptors and behaviors, online users may present a version of what Hogan (2010) called an idealized front. Online idealized fronts are versions of ourselves (grounded in offline identities) exemplifying how we would like to be seen. For instance, someone cannot claim online to lose 150 pounds if pictures, posts from other people, and offline relationships contradict the claim. Toma and Carlson (2012) found people portray themselves in flattering manners with slight enhancements to their presentations, emphasizing traits like physical attractiveness, friendliness, likeability, outgoingness, humor, and easy-goingness.

The posts and comments of others validate (or dispute) the accuracy of self-presentations in SNS. Warranting theory (Walther & Parks, 2002; Walther, et al., 2009) suggests other-provided information is more trustworthy than self-provided information because others have less reason to manipulate (or idealize) presentations. Therefore, while information presented on SNS is likely embellished, information conveyed through images and captions is more likely based in verifiable offline truths than complete fabrications.

SNS audiences are made up of innumerable relationships, from acquaintances to what Boase et al. (2006) described as more important connections like core ties (e.g., family members, romantic partners) and significant ties (e.g., colleagues). Although SNS provide the ability to edit and control self-presentation behaviors, online individuals face a collapsed audience (Binder et al., 2012; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Vitak, 2012). Collapsed audiences refer to the multiple groups of people consuming SNS self-presentations simultaneously. The heterogeneous audiences observing an individual's profile may become "challenging as users attempt to balance these varied audience expectations" (Rui & Stefanone, 2013, p. 1292). Consider sharing undergraduate homecoming weekend stories with a grandparent, a boss, a student, or a friend; the self-presentation would likely change based on the dyad. In SNS, the grandparent, boss, student, and friend could hear the same version of the same story, posing potential self-presentation problems. The collapsed audience is also able to view archived versions of online self-presentations.

Hogan (2010) argued SNS users manage collapsed audiences by self-presenting more neutrally. Often, neutral self-presentation occurs by composing messages using an idealized manner based on the audiences most likely to find the post problematic. Rui and Stefanone (2013) noted, SNS users create posts that are "neutral and uncommitted, but acceptable to all social spheres" to fit the communication needs of more audiences (p. 20). Archived self-presentation further encourages neutral online posting. Kirmayer et al. (2013) compared the scattered and less accessible paper trails of the past to the Internet's indelible memory. The digital access to "past indiscretions, childish mistakes, and other errancies can come back to haunt us endlessly" (Kirmayer et al., 2013, p. 169). Gradinaru (2013) observed archived versions of the self passively maintain previous identity formations, which help individuals differentiate from (but have explicit access to) previous identities. Depending upon the individual's identity

salience over time, the archived versions of self may be unwelcome. Stryker and Burke (2000) defined identity salience as "the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations, or alternatively across persons in a given situation" (p. 286). The saliency spectrum ranges from consistent self-presentation regardless of the context or audience to people who tailor self-presentations closely to situations, foregoing consistent identity performances. Further complicating the impact of archived selves is the performer's level of self-monitoring.

Rui and Stefanone (2013) described high self-monitors as those who protect their public images due to high concern for social appropriateness, leading to what Smock (2010) described as strategic control of the self-presentation. Smock delineated several online self-presentation methods: attribution (emphasizing characteristics), repudiation (denying characteristics), and subtraction (removing damaging information). Weinstein (2014) suggested omission also presents strategic self-presentation opportunities. In a study of those engaged in political activism, Weinstein found "nearly 20% of participants—all of whom describe robust civic participation and identities offline—refrain entirely from expressing civic views on SNS" due to, in part, their "perceptions of their audience(s) as uninterested or hostile" (p. 227). Fox and Warber (2015) suggested high self-monitoring people may employ privacy settings to manage SNS collapsed audiences. However, frequent changes to privacy settings and the easy ability to screenshot or save online content mean, without careful attention to privacy settings, this type of management may not be the most effective self-presentation strategy.

Outside of the ever-changing privacy options through social media, some users opt for more low-tech methods. Some individuals have tacit (or explicit) agreements that no one may post content including the person's name and/or image online. For instance, some high school teachers request friends do not post pictures of them consuming alcohol online. Even if not

tagged, high school teachers risk their job security if students see and circulate an "inappropriate" photo. While less technologically taxing, requesting discretion relies on someone else's evaluation standards and a continued positive relationship. Online acts of denigration, like revenge porn, illustrate the power of other-posted content and the potential impact it may have on online image management. Crampton (2015) described revenge porn as when people post intimate pictures of someone else without the express consent of the person pictured. The prevalence of revenge porn has prompted laws criminalizing the act in over 46 states and the District of Columbia (Crampton). Given the existing literature, the following extends Toma and Carlson's (2012) description of Facebook profiles as "complex and highly tactical creations where aspects of self are strategically emphasized, deemphasized, or accurately portrayed" (p. 21) to SNS more broadly. Moreover, the research attempts to discern the ways (un)consciously curated online content impacts face-to-face relationships.

Forensics, SNS, and Self-Presentation

Julie: "Ugh! I hate what she posts! She's so narcissistic"

Ben: "Just unfriend her."

Julie: "No, I can't. She's a forensics person."

The complex nature of balancing multiple self-presentations with in-person behavior at tournaments and in team spaces deepens with the collapsed audiences in SNS environments. Geographically distant competitors and judges do not see one another except in tournament settings (usually), so SNS may help maintain relationships. SNS provide networking opportunities, but collapsed online audiences combine forensics relationships with completely separate communities. Once networks are established (online and/or offline), some network members may have expectations about relationship longevity. When network connections are

offered (e.g., "following" a competitor on Twitter) some SNS etiquette norms require reciprocation or acknowledgement; failing to follow etiquette norms online impacts offline relationships. For instance, after unfollowing a competitor's social media page, I received a direct question from the competitor seeking justification for why the online relationship changed. The online relationship alteration led to in-person relationship consequences.

Managing relationships in networked communities where networking hubs create important opportunities for social capital is complex; added SNS maintenance can be both fruitful and frustrating (Ellison et al., 2007). Students benefit from network connections, but they may feel stifled from conveying certain identities the forensic community typically does not reward (such as conservative political beliefs). Offline networks impact online identity and self-presentation, but the present study explores the relationship between the offline and online network interactions and the impacts each have on one another. The impact of online behavior impacting offline identity has been documented (Aarsand, 2008; Ellison et al., 2007), but little research explores how offline community membership in highly networked communities impacts online self-presentation. Therefore, the present study sought to explore the ways community membership, specifically in a competitive focused community where networking is important to success, might impact online and offline self-presentation.

Method

She always posts the same stuff to Instagram, Twitter, AND Facebook. I don't need to see your foodporn in three different places. Guess we're just Facebook friends now. Unfollow.

To better understand SNS use of intercollegiate forensic competitors, I created (and received IRB approval to distribute) an online survey. The questions gathered data regarding team makeup, current SNS use, the ways and types of connections made with fellow competitors

and judges, the ways participants control their self-presentations online, and participants' overall experiences with SNS and the forensics community. Participants were recruited from forensics teams spanning the United States using nonprobability convenience sampling. Calls sent through SNS, forensics listservs, and via direct email requests to forensics coaches sought participants in all competition regions. Inclusionary criteria required individuals to be: (a) at least 18 years old and (b) current forensics competitors at the time of taking the survey. No compensation was offered for participation.

Qualitative data analysis utilized Tracy's (2013) method. Tracy et al. (2015) described a seven-step process: 1) organize and prepare the data, 2) immerse yourself in the data, 3) conduct a primary coding cycle, 4) create a codebook, 5) conduct a secondary coding cycle, 6) synthesize data, 7) analyze for data significance and saturation. After grouping the data, I (re)read the information several times and completed the primary coding cycle. I assigned gerunds and adjectives to pare down open-ended question answers into basic chunks, and I created a codebook encompassing emergent themes. Based on the final codebook, I then recoded the data to find emergent and relevant themes to the research questions. Finally, I synthesized the data into major codes to answer the research questions.

Results

It's so cool that she is posting about her persuasion topic. She must actually care about it.

The online survey garnered 48 participants. Of these, 47 individuals fit study criteria and thus resulted in the total number of completed surveys[1]. Participants represented five of the eight

NOTES:
[1] Community size estimates (pre-COVID-19) offered by coaches and administrators involved in national tournament administration differ significantly, ranging from 1,200 to 8,000 total competitors in any given year. They estimated roughly 1,600 student competitors actively

active competition districts in the forensics community, though a disproportionate number of participants (77%) represent teams from the Midwest (North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Nebraska). Participant experience level competing in forensics at the collegiate level also varied, with 35% (n=17) competing for 1-2 semesters, 33% (n=16) competing for 3-4 semesters, 8% (n=4) competing for 5-6 semesters, and 23% (n=11) competing for 7 or more semesters[2]. SNS usage for connecting with community members relies on participants to first use a social medium, and then connect with others. Participants initially indicated SNS usage and frequency before relating the usage to their community member connections. The following sections describe general SNS usage, media connections, and rationale for usage.

General Social Media Usage

Participants began by describing SNS usage in broad terms to establish which SNS channels participants used. Because SNS can be passively consumed (e.g., reading posts, watching videos, looking at photos) and/or actively created (e.g., posting photos, posting captions), participants were asked to specifically note their usage of nine SNS popular at the time of data collection: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Pinterest, Tumblr, Reddit, LinkedIn, YikYak, and Vine. Nearly all participants (93%, n=43) consumed Facebook information at least once per day, while the amount each participant posted varied more significantly (see Table 1). Over half of the participants (65%, n=29) noted consuming Instagram information at least once per day,

competing (meaning attending four or more tournaments each year) as an appropriate estimate for total community participation, so while 46 participants is fairly small, compared to the number of active community members the percentage taking the survey is likely an adequate representation.

[2] Providing data regarding the median or mean age of competitors is fruitful because competitor experiences differ significantly between 1 semester and 7 semesters competing.

though 35% (n=16) noted they consumed information less than once per month. Posting on Instagram was also significantly lower than posting to Facebook, with 32% (n=14) of participants posting only once or twice per week and 46% (n=21) noting they posted less than once per month. Slightly fewer participants (59%, n=26) reported reading Twitter posts at least once per day, but similar to Instagram, most participants (57%, n=25) posted once per month or less frequently. Notable decreases in the frequency of each SNS were found for Tumblr, Reddit, YikYak, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Vine (see Table 1)[3].

Facebook represented the highest average percentage of connections between team members (μ=connection with 85% of team) with Instagram (μ =35% of team) and Twitter following (μ =34% of team). Likewise Facebook (μ =interacting with 67% of team), Instagram (μ =23% of team), and Twitter (μ =18% of team) showed the largest numbers of actual interactions with teammates. For community member connections and interactions, Facebook again showed the highest average connections, and was followed by Instagram and Twitter.

[3] Obviously based on the SNS listed in the study, the data collection occurred prior to 2019 when Vine discontinued service. The data here provide a snapshot in the ever-changing landscape of SNS use, so they still hold value for analysis.

Table 1
Participant Consumption and Posting on SNS

Medium	Multiple Times per Day		Once per Day		Twice per week		Once per week		Once per month		Less than once per month	
Facebook												
Consuming	40	87%	3	7%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	2	4%
Posting	3	6%	6	13%	10	22%	8	17%	9	20%	10	22%
Instagram												
Consuming	19	43%	10	22%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	16	35%
Posting	0	0%	3	6%	7	16%	7	16%	7	16%	21	46%
Twitter												
Consuming	19	43%	7	16%	5	11%	0	0%	2	5%	11	25%
Posting	7	16%	3	7%	4	9%	5	11%	6	14%	19	43%
Tumblr												
Consuming	9	20%	3	7%	4	9%	2	4%	1	2%	26	58%
Posting	8	19%	1	2%	1	2%	0	0%	3	7%	29	70%
Reddit												
Consuming	6	14%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	1	2%	37	82%
Posting	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	0	0%	40	98%
YikYak												
Consuming	3	7%	2	5%	3	7%	1	2%	2	5%	31	74%
Posting	0	0%	0	0%	2	5%	2	5%	0	0%	37	90%
Pinterest												
Consuming	2	4%	3	7%	5	11%	5	11%	5	11%	25	56%
Posting	3	7%	0	0%	0	0%	3	7%	5	12%	31	74%
LinkedIn												
Consuming	1	3%	0	0%	2	5%	6	14%	3	7%	30	71%
Posting	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	7%	38	97%
Vine												
Consuming	0	0%	0	0%	3	7%	4	9%	2	5%	33	79%
Posting	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	1	2%	40	98%

The number of team connections and community member connections established through Tumblr, Reddit, Pinterest, LinkedIn, and Vine[4] were overwhelmingly small percentages

[4] YikYak could not be studied for specific connections because the nature of the medium includes anonymous posting. However, competitors could conceivably interact with other competitors on YikYak when at tournaments (the medium depends upon location proximity), which is why YikYak was included in the survey.

of team members connected, and the number of participants actually interacting with team and community members was even smaller (see Tables 2 and 3). Therefore, in response to RQ1, at the time of data collection forensic competitors primarily connected with team members, competitors from other teams, judges, and coaches through Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. The remaining results sections focus on connections built through Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter since they represented the primary SNS connections and interactions for participants within the forensics community.

Table 2
Connecting/Interacting With Forensics Team Members

	75%-100% of team		25%-50% of team		0% of team	
	Connect With	Interact With	Connect With	Interact With	Connect With	Interact With
Facebook	81%	67%	13%	24%	6%	9%
Instagram	31%	16%	28%	28%	41%	56%
Twitter	24%	7%	42%	40%	34%	53%
Tumblr	0%	0%	16%	14%	84%	86%
Reddit	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Pinterest	0%	0%	9%	2%	91%	98%
LinkedIn	2%	2%	14%	2%	84%	96%
Vine	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%

Note. Percentages of team member connection and interaction were used rather than the number of team members since the number of team member connections and interactions is subject to the team size.

Table 3
Connecting/Interacting With Forensics Community Members

	30 or more		5-30		Less than 5	
	Connect With	Interact With	Connect With	Interact With	Connect With	Interact with
Facebook	43%	20%	35%	28%	22%	52%
Instagram	19%	7%	22%	12%	59%	81%
Twitter	22%	9%	17%	18%	61%	73%
Tumblr	0%	0%	7%	0%	93%	100%
Reddit	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	100%
Pinterest	0%	0%	4%	0%	96%	100%
LinkedIn	5%	0%	14%	2%	81%	98%
Vine	0%	0%	2%	0%	98%	100%

Content and Rationale for Interacting with Community Members

RQ2 inquired about SNS interaction content. Participants described interactions with fellow competitors (students competing on teams from different universities) and judges (coaches and other individuals charged with adjudicating the highly subjective speech competition rounds). Interactions were separated into forensic-related (e.g., asking questions about ballot comments, offering encouragement regarding performances) and not forensic-related (e.g., sharing photos of food, asking questions about personal lives). Table 4 shows participant interaction subjects broken down by population. The results demonstrate SNS connections are not solely focused on competition-related topics.

Table 4
Participant Interaction Content Summary

	Fellow Competitors		Judges	
	Forensics	Non-Forensics	Forensics	Non-Forensics
Facebook	67%	67%	33%	41%
Instagram	35%	30%	7%	16%
Twitter	29%	29%	7%	16%

Finally, RQ3 sought to understand how competitors used self-monitoring behaviors for SNS presentations. Participants differed in opinions on if and how they altered their online images in relation to their participation in forensics. Some, like Participant 35, explicitly answered, "[t]he image I have on Facebook is manipulated and meant to look a certain way," whereas Participant 39 wrote, "[m]y social life is independent of my Forensics participation." Others, like Participant 4, noted, "I always try to put my best person out on social media for professional reasons not just forensics," or Participant 1 who expressed, "[b]ecause I tailor my 'friends lists' to my online presence, rather than the other way around, I don't feel pressure to change what I post or share." While many participants indicated they did not alter their online

identity performances to impact the forensics community, some indicated they emphasized some personality aspects while stifling others.

Emphasizing Personality Attributes

Participants noted emphasizing team membership had potential benefits. For instance, Participant 23 wrote, "[s]ometimes I share pictures of my team because I know that people will like it," and Participant 19 shared, "[t]eam pictures are meant to intimidate from my perspective. We are gorgeous." Participant 7 noted increasing awareness of "grammar, spelling, and punctuation" to enhance the appearance of being educated, and Participant 15 acknowledged maintaining a "good image" to avoid appearing to be "an idiot" or a "drunk." Participant 23 admitted posting "feelings on specific topics" knowing community members may react positively in response. Participant 1 described emphasizing success through images:

> I will always post an image of me in a suit at any tournament I go to, as well as an image with anything that I've won. It shows that I am an active presence in the community (and sometimes maybe even a successful one).

Showing a different perspective, Participant 4 noted, "I am more hesitant to share these wins…for fear of coming off as pompous." Fearing retribution was one issue leading participants to stifle identity performances.

Stifling Personality Attributes

Participants noted several ways they stifled aspects of their online identity portrayals on SNS, specifically recognizing competition-focused rationale. Participants 4 and 7 noted not sharing the title of their literature or the topics of their speeches until after the speech had been "claimed" during a competition. Participant 7 wrote, "I won't make a status or tweet with the title of my speech piece until I have taken it out to at least one tournament. It's a competitive edge

sort of thing." Avoiding politics was mentioned numerous times. Politics may be avoided for many reasons, but Participant 31 shared, "I refrain from posting anything about political correctness or involving my political views because I am afraid they will not be agreed with by many forensic involved people." Many other participants noted behaviors to control the image community members and judges may have of them, such as those who control the profanity they use online. Participant 12 described avoiding "swearing and foul language." Participant 27 mentioned a team-based initiative to avoid swearing: "As a team, we try to refrain from postings/reposting anything profain [sic] so we don't make ourselves look bad to our coaches, other coaches or the region." While some participants limited profanity, others like Participant 21 reported avoidance of posting "drinking at tournament selfies."

Ultimately, the rationale for stifling or downplaying certain identity characteristics or behaviors resulted from the desire to manage presence for competitive purposes. Participant 28 noted the self-portrayal online through SNS had the ability to affect perceived credibility. Participant 3 avoided sharing personal details "because I don't want others to see me for that." Participant 10 stated bluntly

> I don't interact with judges on social media but I do keep my social media presentable in the event someone begins viewing it during the competition. Any potential discoveries might produce positive or negative bias, and I don't want that to happen, so I won't post about much aside from forensics in the day leading up to a tournament.

A competitive rationale for self-monitoring may develop based on the potential impacts SNS relationships have on face-to-face relationships.

Two thirds (66%, n=29) of competitors indicated they felt online SNS relationships impacted in-person relationships with competitors and judges, while 25% (n=11) reported no

impact. Others (9%, n=4) described not connecting with forensics community members online, the impact being minor, or, as Participant 35 suggested, "I think in some ways it does, maybe not overtly, but that information exchanged on the platform does have an impact."

Participants answered an open-ended question about the impacts online relationships have on in-person interactions. A few individuals noted face-to-face interactions were not impacted by online connections (e.g., Participant 22: "No matter where we're talking, it's the same connection despite the fact if it's in person or not" or Participant 23: "I think it doesn't because I like to keep the people that I meet in speech in a very business-esque relationship"). The vast majority of respondents noted positive relationship results. Most frequently cited were ways online interactions changed the nature of the face-to-face relationship, such as Participant 1 who shared, "I feel people I interact with online have a better/different understanding of my entire personality, rather than just the persona I wear at forensics tournaments." Participant 14 described online interactions as "more friendly," and Participant 10 suggested "interaction advances our relationship." Participant 27 noted the ability to "share funny things when we're not together."

The changing relationship likely occurs in conjunction with the increased discussion frequency noted by many participants. Participant 5 noted online interactions occur between "people you do not see everyday [sic]," noting the transient nature of the forensic community. The chance for "more frequent discussion" (Participant 39) may be the key to the relationship. Increased conversation provides opportunities to, as Participant 12 noted, "have more conversation topics" and, as Participant 43 wrote, make "them seem more like 'real' people." Performance benefits included competitors feeling "more comfortable performing for" people they know (Participant 37), getting an "idea of [judges'] politics" (Participant 19), and

conversations can "help build credibility" (Participant 3). The competition benefits extended beyond comfort and credibility, though the extent of the perceived benefits differed depending on the participant.

When asked if networking with judges affected competitive success, 49% (n=22) responded yes and 47% (n=21) responded no. Participants responding "other" noted, "I wouldn't doubt that some would be more favorable if they knew you through social networking but I could also see some judging harder because they think you can do more" (Participant 45) and "it's important to not over network with judges, otherwise you'll come off as a schmoozer" (Participant 15). Interestingly, when the responses were broken down by years spent competing, the results were noticeably different. Less experienced competitors (in the first half of their competitive years) less frequently felt judge-competitor networking affected competition than more experienced competitors (see Table 5).

Table 5
Judge-Competitor Networking Impact Broken Down by Experience

	1-4 Semesters		5 or more semesters	
Yes	10	32%	12	86%
No	19	61%	2	14%
Other	2	7%	0	0%

A similar divide occurred when comparing responses for the impact of networking with judges specifically on social media sites. Eighty-four percent of less experienced competitors did not see networking on social media as impacting success, whereas 69% of experienced competitors saying online networking *did* have an impact on success (see Table 6). Despite the emphasis or downplaying of identity characteristics and performances for competitive reasons, the impacts of improved face-to-face relationships were augmented by community benefits.

Table 6
Judge-Competitor Networking through Social Media Affect Broken Down by Experience

	1-4 Semesters		5 or more semesters	
Yes	3	10%	9	69%
No	26	84%	3	23%
Other	2	6%	1	8%

Community Benefits

Participants noted that the geographically dispersed nature of the forensics community is augmented by SNS relationship maintenance. Participants noted the geographical differences are decreased through the use of social media. Participant 36 wrote, "I think social media-use [sic] has been a bridge to making the national circuit closer and stronger," and Participant 19 stressed, "I think the social media experience in forensics is an overall very positive community." Participant 1 observed the forensic community is "using social media to keep the community alive, even in the off season." Participant 1 went on to explain the role social media plays in advocacy for the forensics community: "I think social media is becoming a large part of the forensics community. From pages like 'Save RC Forensics' that raised awareness of their team's struggles (and eventually helped save them)." To answer RQ3, while not all competitors self-monitor when communicating through SNS, many do for a number of reasons.

Discussion

I would never have been able to make the friends I've had in speech without Facebook. Who they are online is so much more whole than the way they perform their identities at tournaments.

The current study explored SNS use by current competitors in the intercollegiate forensics community. Participants used Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as their primary SNS consumption and posting platforms (as well as the primary SNS through which they connected and interacted with teammates and the larger community). Participants reported more

consumption than posting on all SNS, indicating participants fit the category of SNS lurkers (Badzin, 2012). Interactions with fellow competitors equally included forensics and non-forensics based content on Facebook and Twitter, and competitors interacted more about forensics than non-forensics topics on Instagram. Interestingly, competitors focused more on non-forensics related topics when interacting with judges on SNS than forensics related topics.

Participants noted self-image manipulations on SNS, but most manipulations corresponded with Toma and Carlson's (2012) suggestion that online self-portrayals are slightly enhanced in flattering ways. Smock's (2010) online self-presentation attribution method was primarily enacted by emphasizing team membership, education level, values perceived to be held by the forensics community, and individual competitive success. Participants deemphasized competition-based information (e.g., topic or literature choice), political affiliation or statements, and profanity to avoid being perceived negatively by the community.

Participants noted offline relationships are changed by online relationships based on the frequency of communication. Participants noted seeing the interactant in new environments (i.e., outside the competition context) made interactants seem like more full or real people. The relationship changes were generally seen as competitive advantages. More experienced competitors noted benefits to networking with judges, including networking using SNS. Less experienced competitors did not perceive benefits associated with networking with judges. Participants asserted SNS connections provide additional communication opportunities across the nationally dispersed forensics community and increased opportunities to advocate for the forensics community.

Three implications come from the data shared by participants. First, competitor relationships online with forensic community members demonstrate the use of SNS to extend the

tournament space beyond the physical weekend locations. Using multiple SNS creates online community spaces for geographically dispersed communities. The online spaces provide the opportunity to extend relationships developed during limited face-to-face interactions. Individuals have the opportunity to feel more connected to community members.

Second, extended community relationships may stifle individual identity performances. Because as Rui and Stefanone (2013) pointed out, high self-monitoring individuals recognize the power of their personal performances, they may be more apt to tailor identity performances to specific audiences, potentially creating disingenuous portrayals of who they are. The cognitive dissonance caused by the disingenuous portrayals may negatively affect the individual. Moreover, if identity stifling becomes an expected norm, the community's image may appear duplicitous. As is true within any community space, an individual's self-monitoring level depends on constructs like concern for social appropriateness, observation of social cues given off by others, desire to be seen positively in interactions, and ability to actually change behaviors in relation to cues (Snyder, 1974; Snyder & Gangestad, 1986). Just as in face-to-face dyads, the present study demonstrates individuals vary in self-presentation monitoring behaviors during interactions. Future research should explore the individual self-monitoring behavior differences in face-to-face versus online spaces.

Third, online interactions impact offline interactions and identity portrayals. When individual A interacts with individual B and sees B beyond the context of a competitive situation (like a workplace or a forensics competition), animosity may be more difficult to maintain. If a highly successful competitor B is seen only in competition contexts, a moderately successful competitor A may feel animosity toward B based on a number of potential rationale (e.g., B's performances did not warrant a higher ranking). When A sees B in non-competition situations

(e.g., walking a dog, volunteering, posing with friends), B becomes more than the winning competitor; B becomes a full person with a life outside of the community. The increased ability to see fellow competitors as humans with lives outside of forensics may impact the way individuals interact in competition spaces.

As with any survey, several limitations were present. First, the geographical diversity of participants disproportionately represented Midwestern forensics competitors. Only 23% of respondents were from outside the Midwest, which may skew the SNS use and experiences and limit the overall generalizability of the study. Second, while data were gathered regarding community membership (e.g., team size, years competing), no demographics were gathered regarding race, sex, sexuality, or other identity markers. Third, because the study explored multiple SNS (each bearing unique consumption and posting norms), participants may have differing opinions about what constitutes "posting" to an SNS. For instance, Facebook posting could include "liking" a post, sending a private message, posting content to your or a friend's wall, poking an individual, or sharing an emotional response to a post (Roses, 2016). Comparing the engagement of "liking" a Facebook status, retweeting on Twitter, or commenting on an Instagram picture may need further exploration. The care individuals use dependent upon the perceived significance of interaction methods may impact how closely they monitor the secondary messages sent through the media. Fourth, participants recorded SNS consumption and posting primarily regarding currently popular SNS. An open-ended question regarding additional SNS used found participants also used YouTube, SnapChat, GroupMe, and several other SNS. Future research should explore if additional SNS should be studied for the ways participants interact with one another, including potential identity manipulations and interaction content. Additionally, the year the data was collected impacts the replicability of the survey data. Since

the data collection, major changes have happened to SNS. For instance, Vine was purchased and transformed into TikTok, and YikYak is no longer functional. As was noted earlier, the quick-paced alterations of SNS mean the process of collecting, analyzing, and publishing scholarly articles does not keep pace. As such, future research would need to adjust platforms addressed in data collection.

Finally, the forensic community faced significant disruptions during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The already geographically-dispersed community could no longer gather safely for in-person tournaments from mid-March 2020 to the time this article was published. SNS connections may have been altered by the virtual tournament structures. Because of the recency of the COVID-19 disruptions on forensics, the impacts for SNS identity performances are not recorded in the current analysis.

Future research should explore if identity manipulations and relationship benefits exist in related fields, like geographically-dispersed businesses teams. Cultural cohesiveness in dispersed teams may benefit from SNS connections and interactions, both about work- and non-work-related topics. SNS interactions may strengthen the sense of community and desire to advocate for community goals to outside parties. Additionally, following the massive changes to online interactions with the COVID-19 global pandemic, research should continue to explore the ways relationships form in-person and virtually.

Despite limitations, participants demonstrated the ways identity is emphasized or downplayed when attempting to portray a specific image through SNS. Participants illustrated how differences between high and low self-monitoring behaviors extend into online interactions. The forensics community showed SNS has the potential to build connections, and through online

groups and pages, build spaces for discussion and relationships otherwise difficult in geographically dispersed communities.

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