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# Midwest Elementary School Principals and the Use of Social Media

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# Midwest Elementary School Principals and the Use of Social Media

by
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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed-methods study was to examine the use of social media among elementary school principals in Minnesota. The survey collected data from elementary school principals across the state of Minnesota gathering demographic information on age, years of service, presence of a district social media policy, gender, school location, school size, and school poverty level as defined by its free and reduced lunch rate. As a result of the study, it was found that a negative relationship exists between the number of years of service from an elementary school principal and their use of social media. Age, gender, school location, school size, and poverty level have no relationship with a principal's use of social media tools. A qualitative analysis was run on one open-ended question on the survey to determine its themes. Facebook was found to be the most popular tool for sharing information with friends and family while Twitter was cited as the most popular social media tool for professional development. The main concern Minnesota's elementary school principals hold for educational use of social media is the fear of the invasion on personal privacy.

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# Chapter I: Introduction

## Introduction to the Problem

Search the Internet and one quickly finds news stories reporting that Facebook now has over a billion users (Associated Press, 2012). YouTube has 4 billion visits daily (Wasserman, 2012) and Twitter posts 50 million tweets every 24 hours from its 175 million registered users (Golijan, 2013). It is now estimated that 93% of the people who live in the United States and own smartphones are using them as their primary device to access the Internet and communicate with others. In light of this, traditional forms of communication such as the newspaper or television news are being abandoned (Smith, 2010, p. 2). According to a recent Pew Research study, less than 30% of Americans read the paper in printed form, but over 50% or more are choosing to access their news electronically. This trend is likely to continue (Doherty & Dimock, 2012). Clearly the world is interested in social media.

## Background of the Study

In order to answer the social media craze, one must look at the evolution of communication itself. In March 2013, an organization called Viral Blog culled information from the United States Postal Service, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *Wikipedia*, *The Wall Street Journal, Twitter Blog, An Intrepid Scot, ABC News, AT&T, The Net Web, Internet World Stats, The Times of India,* and *ZDNet* in order to create a communication evolution timeline spanning from the use of African drums in 6000 B.C. to Jack Dorsey's first *tweet* in 2006. What follows are some key highlights.

Figure 1 shows that it was the pharaohs of Egypt who first implemented a courier service solely made of written information near 2000 B.C. according to the Viral Blog (2013). Likely these messages were written in hieroglyphs and passed from one location to the next after being

transcribed on paper made of papyrus. A more complete postal system which delivered packages along with messages was created 1500 years later in what is now modern day Iran (Viral Blog, 2013).

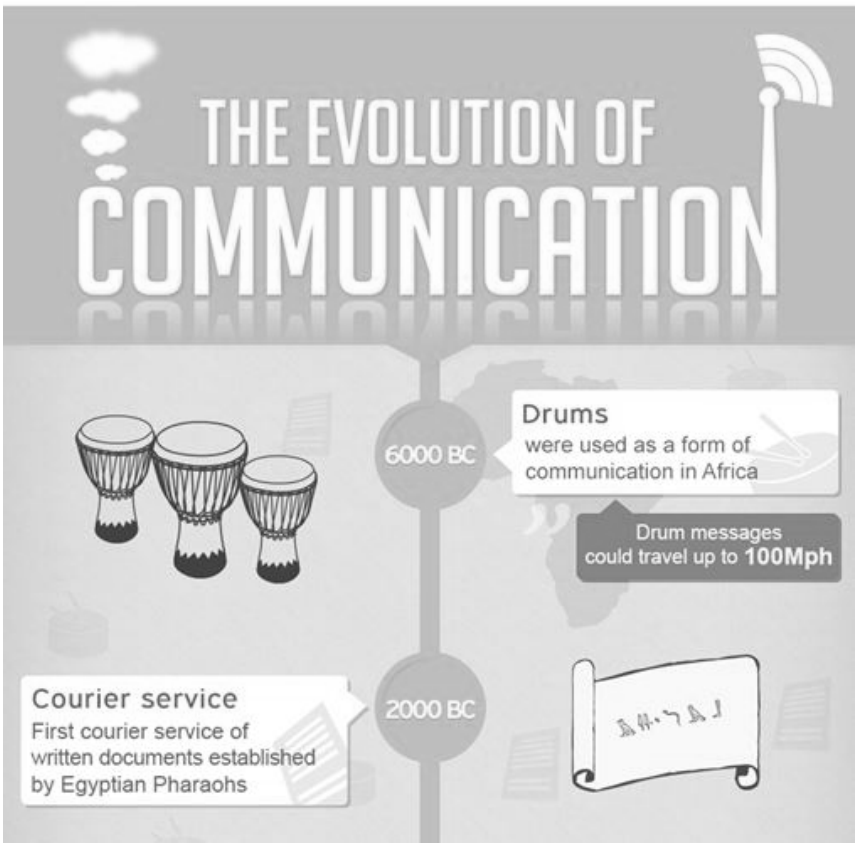


*Figure 1.* The evolution of communication from 6000–2000 B.C.
Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg

Figure 2, from *The Evolution of Communication Timeline*, notes that in 200 B.C., approximately 300 years later, the Chinese began successfully communicating along the now 13,000-mile stone wall by signaling to each other in short messages made of smoke (Viral Blog,

2013). However, the Romans who were credited with publishing the first newspaper out of stone in 59 A.D., and it was the Egyptians who sent the first pigeons to deliver messages in the 12th century. Surprisingly, the Viral Blog (2013) illustrates in Figure 3, that the next evolution in communication did not come about until the 1800s with the invention of Samuel Morse's telegraph.

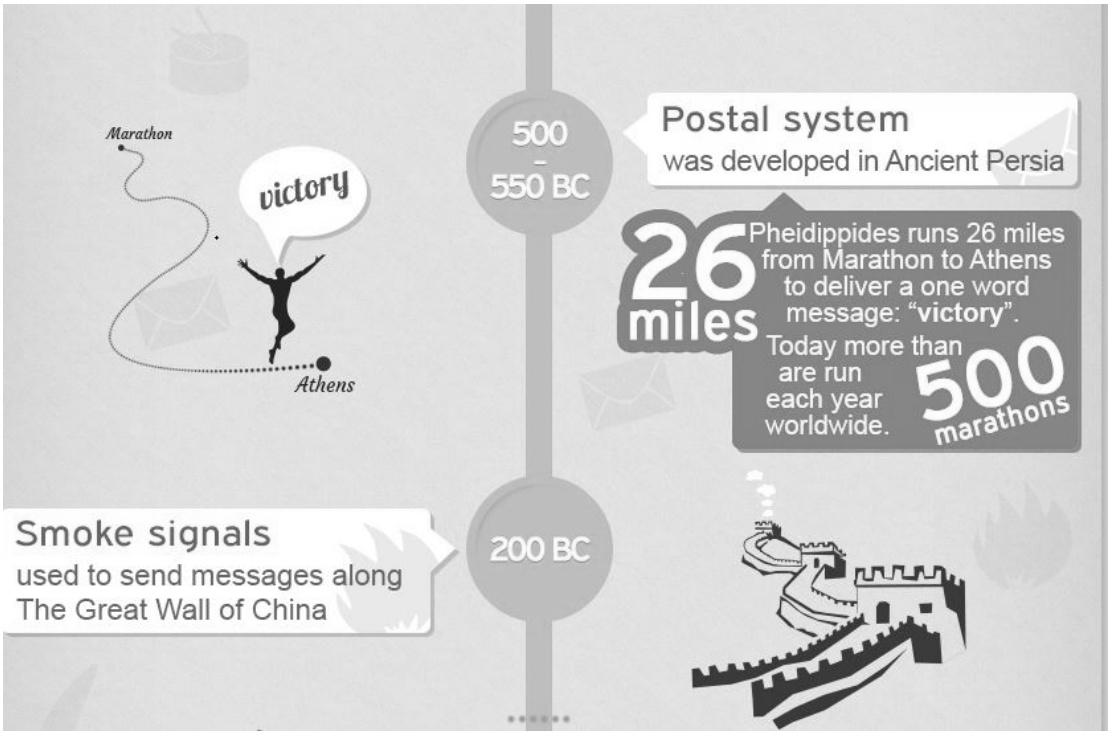


*Figure 2.* The evolution of communication from 500–200 B.C.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg

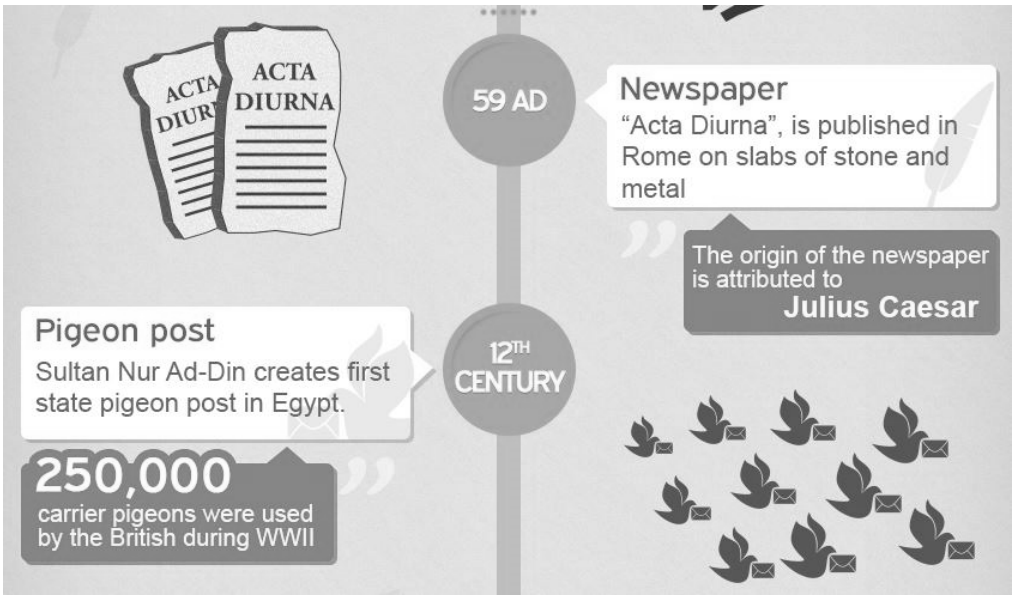


*Figure 3.* The evolution of communication from 59 A.D.–12th century.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg

Figure 4 shows that on May 24, 1844, Samuel Morse sent his famous message "What hath God wrought?" from Washington D.C., to Baltimore, Maryland. Long distance communication would never be the same. Ninety-eight years later, the first wireless phone call was placed. The phone weighed 80 pounds and only three people in a city could converse before the signals were overloaded (Viral Blog, 2013). Nearly three decades passed before communication evolved further when, according to the Viral Blog (2013), pictured in Figure 5, Ray Tomlinson sent his first email in 1971. Text messaging began gaining momentum in the 1990s as a way to send holiday greetings. In 2011, "8,000,000,000,000 text messages were sent worldwide" (Viral Blog, 2013). As early as 1995, Voice over the Internet Protocol (VoIP) was developed so people could easily make phone calls to one another using their computers. This technology continued to evolve with the creation of Skype by Microsoft in 2003 (Skype, 2013).

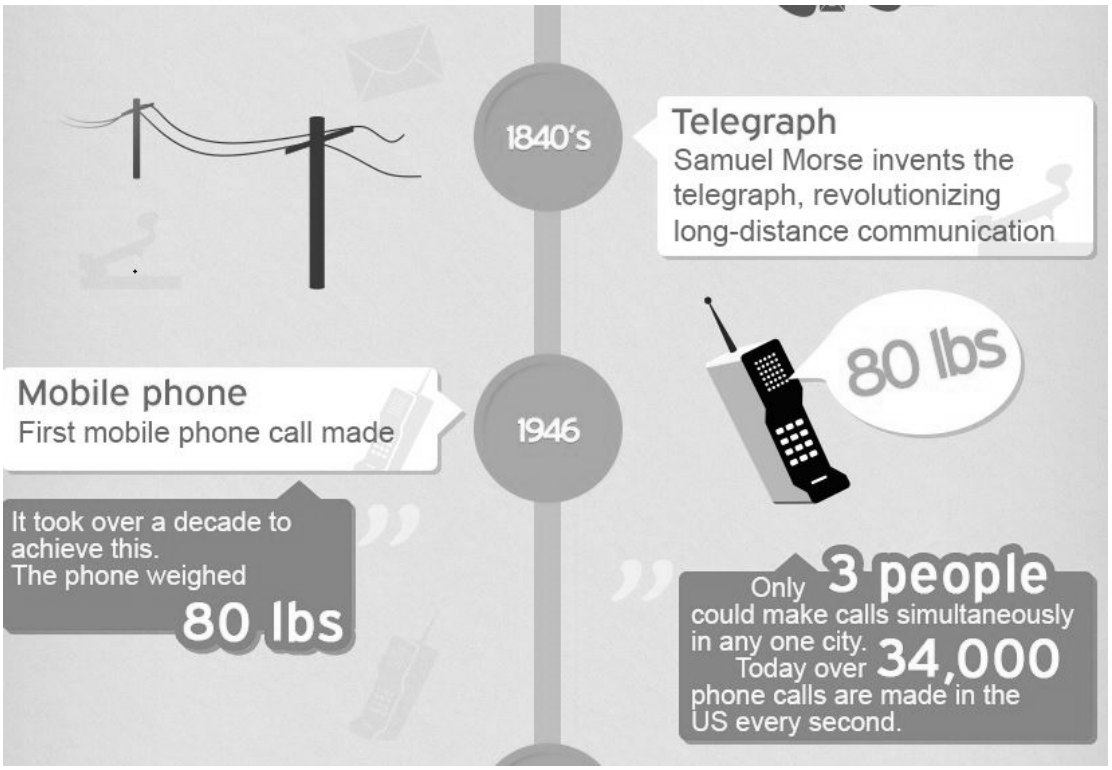


*Figure 4*. The evolution of communication from the 1840s–1940s.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg


*Figure 5.* The evolution of communication in the 1970s.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg


*Figure 6.* The evolution of communication in the 1990s.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg

In the following year, Mark Zuckerberg founded Facebook, shown in Figure 6, followed by the birth of Twitter in 2006 by Jack Dorsey. Dorsey's first tweet read, "just setting up my twttr" (Viral Blog, 2013). The Viral Blog (2013) reported that Facebook is responsible for over "20% of all page views on the Web," and "in the last five years, the number of tweets has increased by 6,800,000%" (para. 31).

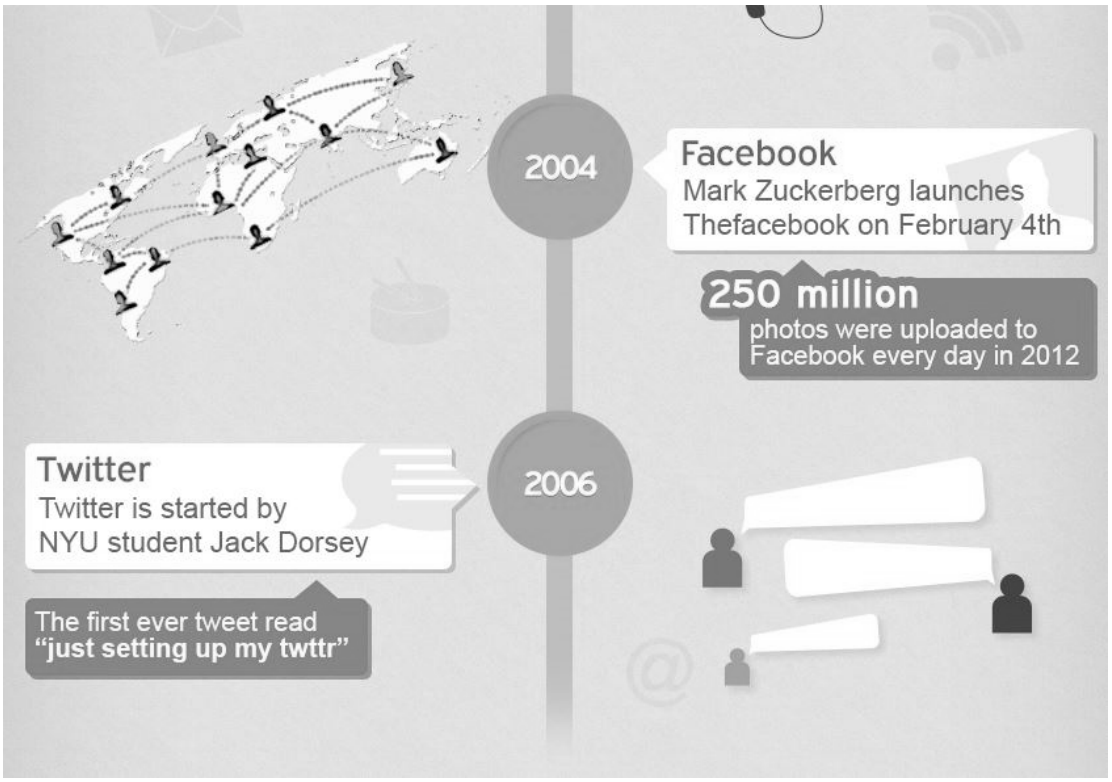


*Figure 7.* The evolution of communication in the 2000s.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg

Conversely, traditional forms of communication have decreased and shown in Figure 7. In 1980, there were an estimated 106 billion pieces of mail delivered by the postal service in the United States. This number continued to grow until it peaked in 2000 with 208 billion mail items. Then the number started to decrease. "The United States Postal Service lost a record $15,000,000,000 in 2012" (Viral Blog, 2013) with the trend predicted to continue. The Viral Blog (2013) also estimated that by 2020, the volume of mail in the United States may be down to 127 billion, a number that has not been seen in this country since the 1980s.

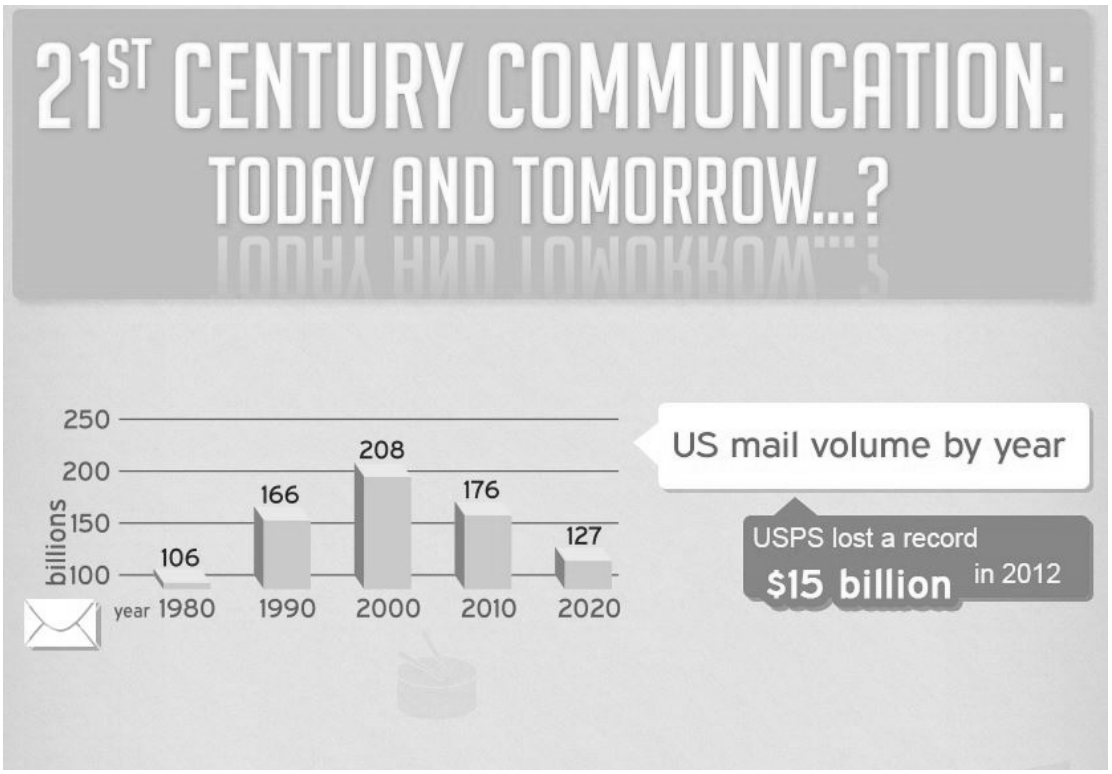


*Figure 8.* The evolution of communication in the future.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg

Communication via mobile device has taken an opposite trend as shown in Figures 8-11. In 2007, the Viral Blog (2013) reported there were an estimated half billion people connected to the Internet. This number jumped to 9 billion in 2012, and is predicted to climb to 50 billion by the close of this decade. "It is estimated that by 2020, there will be 6.6 Internet-connected devices per person" (Viral Blog, 2013), in the world. Communication is rapidly changing before our eyes, and differing practices are found within age demographics.

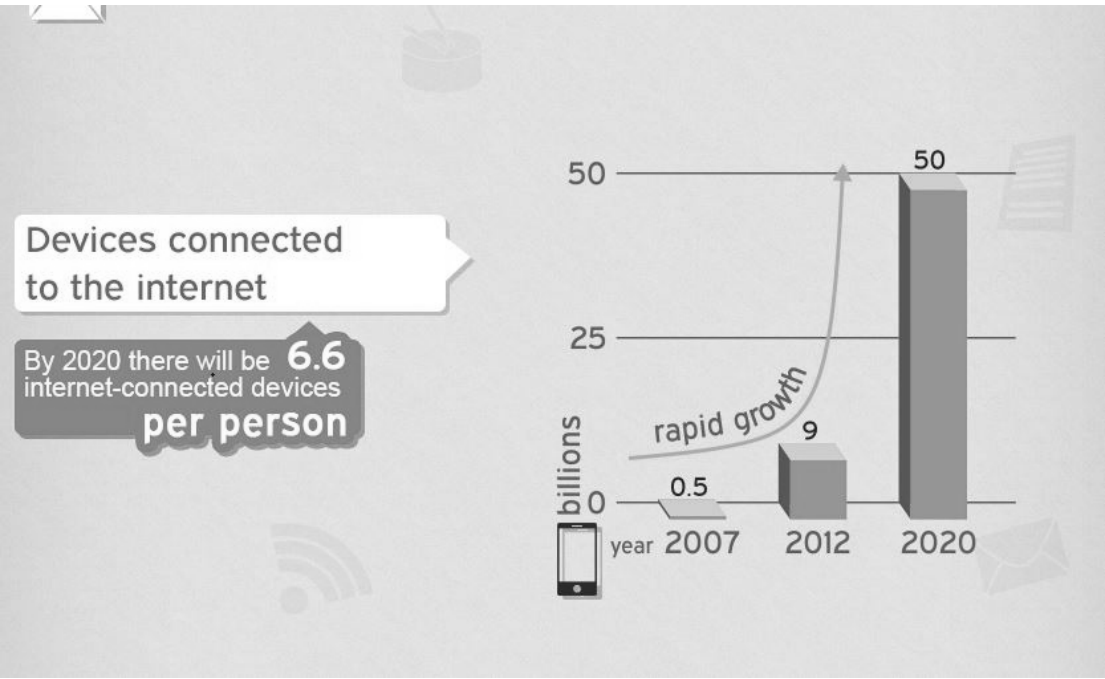


*Figure 9.* The evolution of communication through mobile devices.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg

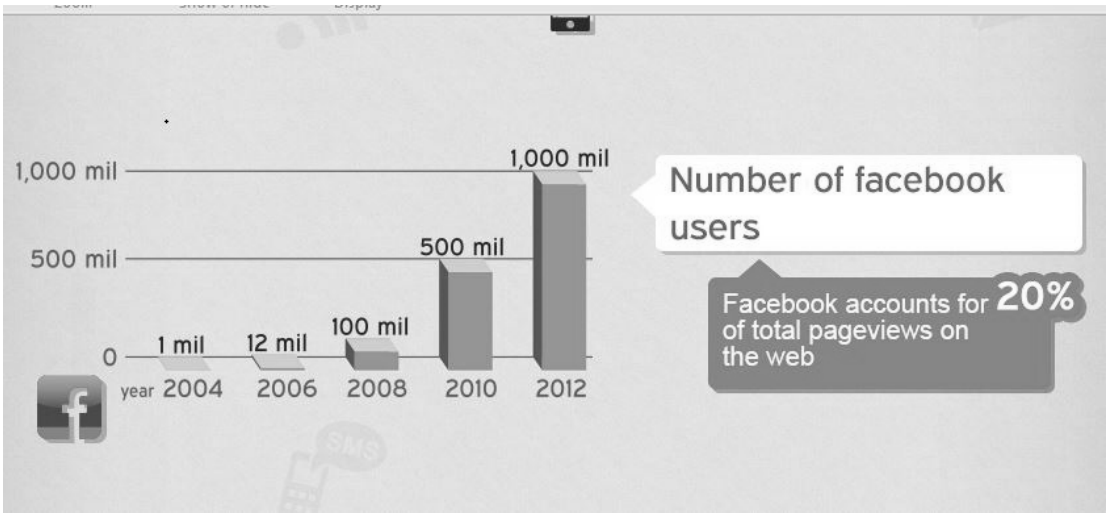


*Figure 10.* Facebook usages today.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg

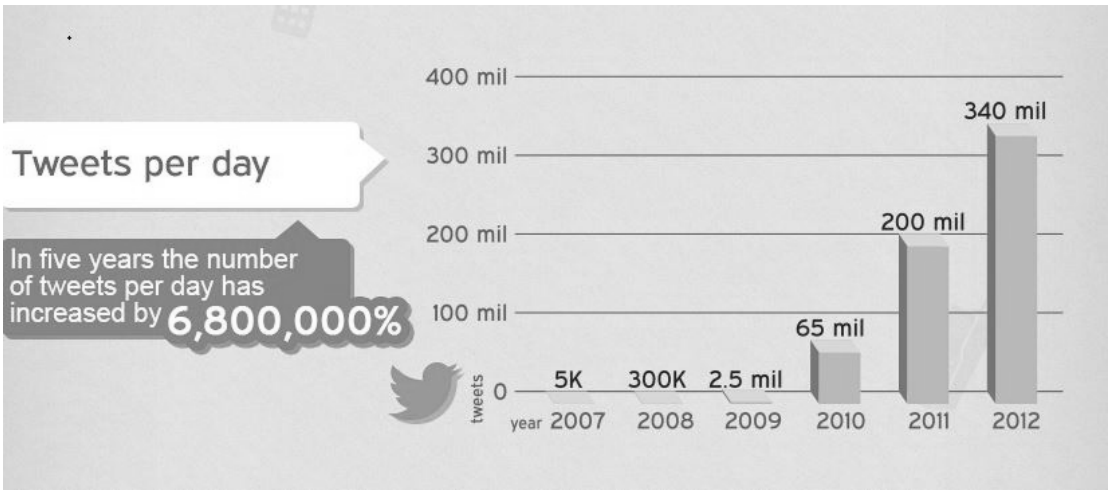


*Figure 11*. Twitter usages today.

Taken from Viral Blog. (2013, March 24). *The evolution of communication.* Retrieved from http://www.viralblog.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Evolution-of-Communication-Infographic.jpg

People from every generation are reported to utilize social media tools, but it is those who occupy the Millennial generation, that is, those who are 18–33 years old who are spending the most time online (Zickuhr, 2010, p. 2). In 2010, Hepburn gathered information on the demographics of Twitter users in the United States. He found that 47% were parents of children who attend school.

Consequently, many members of this generation are the parents of today's elementary school students. It is members of this cohort who are changing the way information is disseminated. Porterfield and Carnes, (2012) authors of *Why Social Media Matters: School Communication in the Digital Age* cited several distinctions in the way the Millennials and Generation X (those born between 1961 and 1981) prefer to communicate about their children with educators. Parents want to receive information as it happens, preferring to be updated continually as the day progresses instead of after the fact. Additionally, parents want to be

directly involved in their child's education, and social media can be seen as a way to build a strong, transparent bridge of communication between home and school.

Conversely, research shows that many educational leaders are not as enthusiastic. According to Porterfield and Carnes (2012), the American Association of School Administrators (AASA) surveyed its members in 2009 and found that 20% were using social mediums to communicate. AASA conducted a focus group with superintendents two years later to determine their feelings towards social media. The study found, "superintendents wanted nothing to do with social media. They found it dangerous and intrusive" (pp. 6–7).

These reported opinions may be due to the fact that little information is available for school leaders about this emerging topic. Few research studies can be found which address this phenomenon. Griffin and Lake (2012) reported, "While research on social networking sites…is beginning to appear in some fields, the educational literature is noticeably void of research on this topic" (p. 4). Furthermore, while some teachers and librarians have taken steps to integrate these powerful tools into their instructional practices, according to a study conducted by edWeb.net (edWeb), Interactive Educational Systems Design (IESD), Inc., MCH Strategic Data (MCH), Inc., and MMS (MMS) Education (2010) it would appear that school principals are often more hesitant to use social media for professional purposes. If school leaders are going to continue to successfully communicate with their constituents, this inconsistency must be addressed.

**Statement of the Problem**

According to recent research, school administrators acknowledge the potential benefits of connecting to others using social media, but are measurably less likely than the staff they supervise to join Facebook, MySpace, or LinkedIn (edWeb, IESD, MCH, & MMS, 2010).

When administrators were asked about their reluctance to use these technologies, many reasons were cited including concerns about unnecessary time consumption, unintended dissemination of personal information, and skepticism that this trend will someday pass. Other administrators mentioned that popular sites were blocked by their district's Internet filter, making social media impossible to access.

There are numerous other complicating issues for administrators to consider when choosing to engage with social media, including management of communication during a crisis situation (Coombs, 2008); the influence of a social media presence when hiring new teacher candidates (Griffin & Lake, 2012); and the prevalence of cyber bulling on and off campus (Fagenbush & Olivier, 2009). Since the issues surrounding social media are many and complex in nature, several schools are opting not to use them in the classroom. While the choice to abstain may avoid some immediate conflicts, it does not solve a growing problem in education. Choosing to avoid tools such as Facebook and Twitter inside the walls of the school building "has profound implications for keeping students engaged and preparing them to live in a 21st century world" (edWeb et al., 2010, p. 3).

There have only been a few studies completed which address school administrators and their use of social media tools. One such study was conducted by Schmucki, Hood, and Meell in 2009 and published in 2010 by edWeb et al. The report identified four major findings: Most principals indicated that social media proves to be beneficial for communication and professional development, those who use social media frequently appreciate its benefits more than those who have chosen not use them, administrators are interested in sites dedicated solely to education, and the need exists to expose teaching staff to such sites.

Schmucki, Hood, and Meell (2010) explored the demographic data addressing principals and their use of social media compared to teachers and librarians. Of those surveyed, it was discovered that 78% of educators, ages 18–34, utilize social media tools as compared to 65% for those 35–54 years old and only 47% for those who are 55 and older. When compared to coworkers in the education field, only 54% of principals reported belonging to a social networking site as compared to 62% of teachers and 70% of librarians who were surveyed.

Researchers found several factors which may contribute towards a leader's hesitation to engage with social media. The following is a quote from a principal who was interviewed by Schmucki, Hood, and Meell (2010):

> Some use of social networking sites is beneficial and meet various needs; however, to be inundated with trivial information (a 24/7 account of personal lives) is not only counterproductive but crippling. Although there is value for each, when networking sites for personal, professional, and educational purposes are all utilized there is no time for person-to-person interaction which is critical to human development. (p. 36)

Couros and Hilt (2011), both practicing principals, valued this report, highlighting the professional benefits of blogging and tweeting in order to connect with colleagues and enhance learning opportunities. While the potential for the application of social media tools in the educational sector is rich, Gooch (2012) expressed the need for principals to have more resources available on this topic to fully understand its dynamics when used by teaching staff. There is also a need for principals to more clearly understand the administrative role they need to play in order to ensure the integration of social media technologies.

## Purpose of the Study

Social media and its educational implications is complex. Leaders have identified many potential benefits and drawbacks. While some information is available to help explain principals' reluctance to use social media, it was evident that further research must be conducted on this topic (edWeb et al., 2010). This served not only to expand the available literature, but also to explore more fully the views of administrators towards social media. The purpose of this study was to understand the use of social media by elementary principals working in Minnesota K–12 public schools.

## Research Questions

Two main research questions were addressed:

Q1) What impact do demographic factors have on principal use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogging, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, wikis) for professional purposes?

Q1a) Does age have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1b) Does years of experience have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1c) Does gender have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1d) Does setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1e) Does the school's size have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1f) Does school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary school principals use social media?

Q2) How are elementary principals utilizing social media to communicate?

**Hypotheses**

There are six hypotheses and six alternative hypotheses proposed:

1st Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the age of the principal and use of social media to communicate.

1st Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the age of the principals and the use of social media to communicate.

2nd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media.

2nd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media.

3rd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the gender of the principal and use of social media to communicate.

3rd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the gender of the principals and the use of social media to communicate.

4th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and use of social media to communicate.

4th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and the use of social media to communicate.

5th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school size and use of social media to communicate.

5th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school size and the use of social media to communicate.

6th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate.

6th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate.

**Significance of this Study**

Roberts (2010) pointed out that "A comprehensive, up-to-date literature review allows you to get to the frontier in your area of research, and, at the same time, become an expert in your field" (p. 86). While searching through available literature on the topic of social media use and school principals, little information can be found which directly addresses this phenomenon. In fact, the information available is thin, pointing to the need for further research to be conducted in order to fill the gap in the knowledge base. This is both indicative of a good research topic and the need for further careful searching of available resources. Continued efforts need to be focused on identifying which social mediums principals are choosing to use, how they are using them and in determining if social media is an effective form of communication.

The topic of principal use of social media may evoke strong emotions and responses when looking for answers to these questions. One parent commented on B. Ferriter's (2011, February 16) blog post, "If the principal has time to maintain Twitter or Facebook, then they have too damn much time on their hands and one of the assistant principals should be laid off" (para. 6). In addition to strong negative public opinion, one editor reports a problem of a different nature, "Few districts have systemically begun to research, plan, or implement effective uses of Web 2.0 applications, nor have they restricted their schools to enable participatory reform" (Stansbury, 2009). Without a plan in place or community support, it becomes challenging for school leaders to implement a successful social media campaign. This problem, however, may be detrimental. Ferriter, Ramsden, and Sheninger (2011), authors of *Essentials for Principals: Communicating and Connecting with Social Media*, had the following to say: "Our hesitance to explore the potential social media spaces hold for schools, however, means that we are quickly being left behind by *almost everyone*" (p. 1). The authors point out that colleges and corporations have already found ways to successfully harness the social networking power of the Internet, while K–12 education has yet to fully utilize its potential. This is disappointing when one considers how parents of children enrolled in school are choosing to communicate.

While the use of social media has been growing exponentially, the educational research surrounding its influence on the K–12 environment and its use by school leaders has not grown at a similar rate. There are limited research studies which have examined the use of social media by public school administrators. One key research project was a mixed-methods study conducted in 2010 by Schmucki, Hood and Meell. There were two phases of this project. The first phase employed quantitative research methods, surveying 1,200 professionals—principals,

teachers, and school library media specialists—and their use and attitudes towards social media. The second phase utilized qualitative methods during an online conversation with 12 school principals, gleaning insight towards their perceptions and usage of social media tools.

The findings of this report revealed that principals see the potential value in using social media for leaders to share innovative ideas. They acknowledged that teachers could harness social media tools in order to use them effectively in the classroom. The findings in this report also acknowledged that students could also use these tools effectively to engage in the learning process. However, despite this acknowledgement, social media has been largely underutilized in educational settings.

To bridge this gap between potential use and reality, the 2010 report by edWeb et al. made three recommendations for principals, teachers, and students: "Principals and teachers need more experience with education focused social networking technologies" (p. 22); "Educators need models for promising practices using social/collaborative networking in education" (p. 23); "Schools need more effective policies on the use of social/collaborative technologies" (p. 24). The study being proposed helps contribute to the body of academic knowledge available, helping to explain the factors which influence the use of social media use by administrators.

**Definition of Terms**

*Social Media:* "Social media involves the use of Web-based technologies to transform one-way communication into interactive online dialogue. A key component of social media is the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Dixon, 2012, p. 2).

*Facebook:* "Facebook is the world's most popular social networking site. On Facebook, users create personal profiles and connect to their friends by sharing photos, links, and updates" (Dixon, 2012, p. 20).

*Twitter:* "Twitter is a microblogging messaging service that limits you to 140 characters per message, including spaces and punctuation, to post updated content" (Dixon, 2012, p. 40).

*YouTube:* YouTube is an application and Website that, "allows you to search for and watch videos on almost any topic, and also lets you post your content on the Internet for anyone to access" (Dixon, 2012, p. 82).

*Blog:* "A blog is an online journal of ideas. It is a Website that is updated with new content frequently, whether daily or weekly. Blogs can take many different forms, including video, audio, text, and multimedia" (Dixon, 2012, p. 146).

*LinkedIn:* "Linked In is a social Website focused on professional networking. It is similar to Facebook in that users create their own profile and connect to people they know" (Dixon, 2012, p. 188).

*Google+:* "Google+ is a social networking offering by the Internet search giant Google. Google integrates many of the best tools for online collaboration into one product" (Dixon, 2012, pp. 203–204).

*Pinterest:* Hansen, Nowlan, and Winter (2012) stated that "Pinterest functions as a digital pinboard. It lets users post images and videos from the internet—either while viewing a website or by using a URL—and add user-created photos, both of which are referred to as pinning" (p. 2).

*Wikis:* Ben-Zvi (2007) defined as Wiki as a "Website that allows all users to add, remove, edit and change content, typically without the need for registration, and to the software

that facilitates the operation of a Wiki Website. In Wiki, users are writers, editors and contributors, rather than just readers or consumers, and jointly form a democratic community of collaboration" (p. 1)

**Assumptions**

The information gathered to answer the research questions in this study was solicited by surveying elementary school principals who are listed in the Minnesota Department of Education database. While conducting the surveys, it was assumed that principals accurately reported their use of social media and truthfully shared their opinions about these tools. It was also assumed that the email addresses on this database were correct and would reach the intended party.

**Conclusion**

This chapter gave an overview of the explosion of social media over the course of the last decade. A detailed history was given of the evolution of communication from African drums in 6000 B.C., to the first telegraph sent in the 1800s, to the proliferation in the use of Facebook and Twitter today. Mobile communication through cell phone texting is also on the rise. In one day alone, it is estimated that boys send 50 texts, while girls send an estimated 100 (Lenhart, 2012). Electronic forms of communication continue to abound, but traditional forms of communication, particularly mail sent by the United States Postal Service has continued to shrink.

While the evolution of communication has impacted everyone, it is the Millennials, those who are between 18–33 years old; who are utilizing social media tools the most. Many elementary school principals fall outside of this age range, preferring to communicate with other modalities. If this gap continues to grow, effective communication between home and school may significantly decrease. School principals cite reasons for their reluctance to use social media including time management, privacy, and restrictive policies. However, little academic

information is available to thoroughly understand this growing topic in education. Therefore, the aim of this study was to comprehensively understand the use of social media by elementary school principals.

Hypotheses that were explored included the relationship between social media and principals' age, years of service, student population, gender, setting of the school, and the school's poverty rate. Obtaining this information was valuable as it contributed to the body of knowledge available on this emerging topic.

The chapters that follow will provide more information about this study. Chapter II provides a literature review on the topic of social media. It gives a history of school communication, outlines challenges that many school principals face, and details the emergence of social media in the educational realm. Chapter III provides the methodology and procedures used to survey elementary principals in Minnesota about their use of social media. The findings and results of the survey are detailed in Chapter IV. Finally, Chapter V describes the conclusions of the survey and provides recommendations for further research.

## Chapter II: Review of Literature

### Introduction

Technology has long been and continues to be a topic of discussion for K–12 school principals. A database search of *principals* and *technology* found a plethora of articles written on topics such as technology integration in the classroom and use of Web 2.0 tools (Bebell & Kay, 2010; Fewkes & McCabe, 2012; Kim, Sachin, Westhoff, & Rezabek, 2008). Literature was also found addressing the myriad of professional development opportunities that await principals and classroom teachers who are willing to engage with emerging technologies. Applications were found in the areas of mentoring and coaching (Browne-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Kostin & Haeger, 2006), collaboration with colleagues, enhancement of professional learning communities, (Chen, 2011; Good & Kalmon, 2010), and the access of information and sharing of ideas (W. M. Ferriter, 2010, February). According to Afshari et al. (2010), Bebell and Kay (2010), and Chen (2011), it is evident that much information abounds encouraging educators to utilize technology in their practice. However, the idea of using *social media* in the field of education has yet to gain the same level of popularity. A small, but growing amount of literature is being written which explores the possibility of how school leaders are effectively utilizing social media tools. The focus of this review examines how principals communicate, and how school communication has been impacted by the proliferation of social media.

### The Evolution of Personalized Information in Education

Personalized education first appeared in the 1960s when Fred Keller introduced the Personalized System of Instruction, also known as PSI. It was originally launched in Brazil to assist students who neither lived in close proximity to a teacher nor a school. PSI have five key characteristics including: mastery of content, use of people to monitor tests and progress,

progress at the student's own pace, an emphasis on writing, and the use of lectures as a motivational tool (Eyre, 2007). Although PSI courses are less common today, the Internet has made it possible for teachers and learners to create and access the information they need. Bill Gates, Chairman and Chief Software Architect for the Microsoft Corporation, noted in 2004 how email has improved school communication and looked forward to the future where, "emerging web services technologies will create further opportunities for collaborative learning" (p. 5).

Eight years later, Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts (2010) observed that it was junior high students, particularly those between the ages of 11 and 14 who were the most engaged with current technology. They reported that this particular age demographic spends 230% more time online outside of the school building than their 8 to10-year-old counterparts. Most of their time was reportedly spent on social media sites, namely, Facebook. The study also found that "80% of junior high students own iPods or MP3 Players, 69% own their own cell phones, and 27% own their own personal laptop" (p. 10). The advent of social media has brought about much of this change in the past decade.

Renowned European business professor Kaplan, along with his colleague Haenlein (2010) outlined social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61). "There are many popular social media tools available, with Facebook having the most users in 2012 at 1.2 billion members" (Static Brain, 2012). With the advent of social media in the mid-2000s, academic literature began to change its focus. Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook in 2004. Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karimbegan started YouTube in 2005. Jack Dorsey started Twitter in 2006. Unfortunately, much of the academic literature has not been focused towards K–12 principals, but has rather been on its

application in higher education and business (Agozzino, 2010; Andrade, Castro, & Ferreira, 2012; Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011; Rinaldo, Tapp, & Laverie, 2011; Stuber, Watson, Carle, & Staggs, 2009; Wattal, Racherla, & Mandviwalla, 2010). The most popular social mediums reported to be used by principals include, but are not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, School Websites, Blogs, YouTube, LinkedIn, and Google+ (Dixon, 2012; Ferriter et al., 2011; Porterfield & Carnes, 2012; Schmucki, Hood, & Meell, 2010).

In *Social Media for School Leaders,* Dixon (2012) noted in his introduction how the explosion of social media choices has transformed school leadership. Principals are expected to do more than tend to the day to day tasks and responsibilities of running a school building. They are now supposed to also involve community members in the work that goes on within the walls of the school and promote its activities through vehicles such as Facebook, blogging, and Twitter.

**Principals and Computer Use**

Principals are no longer merely managers of the daily operations within the school building. Their roles and tasks have transformed throughout the decades to take on more and diverse tasks, leading in the areas not only of instruction and curriculum, but also technology (Chang, 2012). Several studies have illustrated that the principal's use of technology has an impact on effective school leadership (Afshari, Bakar, Luan, & Siraj, 2012; Cakir, 2012; Chang, 2012). Afshari, Bakar, Luan, and Siraj (2012) found that a principal's level of continuing education in regards to technology use had an indirect impact on its implementation in their schools. Those who had a favorable opinion of using technology for professional purposes tended to use it more often and encourage their teachers to do the same.

Chang (2012) noted that principals who can cast a clear vision of technology integration, support their teachers through staff development opportunities and appropriate funding are those who will be successful school leaders of the future. Woods (2000) found that while principals may defer to technology coordinators to troubleshoot technology problems, principals themselves can foster the use of technology in their schools by allocating time to their teaching staff in order to implement technology integration in the classroom effectively. Cakir (2012) agreed; successful technology integration within a school's curriculum is dependent upon the ability for administrators to provide necessary oversight for teachers and appropriate technical support as they seek to use technology in the classroom. Needs and resources also need to be identified in order to determine appropriate implementation strategies.

Afshari et al. (2010) found that secondary principals tended to frequently use computers if they possessed four qualities, including a "high level of computer access, strong perceptions of the attributes of [information communications technology or] ICT, a high level of computer competence, and high level leadership behaviors" (p. 8). Yee (2000) came to a similar conclusion. She conducted a qualitative study of school principals from the United States, New Zealand, and Canada in order to observe their leadership of ICT in their schools. Similar to Afshari et al., (2010), Yee (2000) also found the need for principals to embrace transformational leadership ideals in order to be effective. She found that those who used communication technologies in their schools, "valued opportunities to challenge educational assumptions and found inspiration in breaking those barriers that are traditionally entrenched in school bureaucracies" (p. 298). Additionally, Yee (2000) found that principals who incorporated ICT into their leadership practices exhibited certain behaviors: equitably providing access for staff members to access technology in the school, both in terms of hardware and time to learn and

integrate new technologies into the classroom, the ability to articulate their vision of technology use to staff and students, the willingness to learn new technologies independently and allocate a budget which supports ongoing learning, the ability to teach and encourage teachers to embrace new technologies in a supportive environment, and the diligence to supervise technology use to ensure it is used frequently and effectively.

**Principals and Communication**

Effective communication is vital for successful principals. Stronge, Richard, and Catano (2008), writers of *Qualities of Effective Principals,* found that successful principals are those who regularly reach out to parents and community members. Carr (2005) asserted that clear communication with stakeholders can also lead to increased funding for a school district and job security for an administrator.

The National School Public Relations Association (2013) also stressed the need for principals to communicate clearly and positively. They have found that face-to-face communication is most effective and transparency is critical. The National Association of Elementary School Principals agreed with this perspective. When asked about how principals can successfully communicate with others, former NAESP president Barbara Chester responded, "I think the simple virtues of honesty, integrity, and trust, along with having a clear and effective vision, and then following through on it are essential" (Steaffens, 2011, p. 10). Schoonover (2009) cited 10 ways principals can communicate effectively. Among them is the need to "communicate early and often," (pp. 1–2) at least seven to nine times, "communicate face to face whenever possible," (pp. 1–2) and to be "brief and to the point" (pp. 1–2). While it is evident that personal communication is the most effective method, time constraints sometimes make this form of communication impossible. In order to be frequent, brief, and transparent in

communications that reach parents and community members, employing the use of technology to disseminate information and foster conversations may be a wise option (Schoonover, 2009).

Couros (2013, December 12) agreed that communication with parents must be transparent. While great news about student learning can be communicated electronically, challenging news should be delivered over the phone or in person. Social media should never take the place of talking completely. Couros stated "It's important to consider parents as partners in learning" (para. 2). Couros went on to pose the question: "Why spend time and money building elaborate communication systems that are challenging to navigate when we can go online to Facebook and Twitter where the parents already are and communicate with them for free" (para. 3)?

Choosing to implement social media as a collaboration and communication vehicle has some noted benefits. Porterfield and Carnes (2012) authors of *Why Social Media Matters: School Communication in the Digital Age* cited 10 benefits of social media. Three main benefits that apply to principals are discussed here. First, the authors asserted, "Social media is a new way to build relationships" (p. 19). This increases bonds with parents, community members, and school board officers. The authors noted that connecting with others in this way can help foster a sense of inclusion and care for the school and a willingness to respond to needs that arise.

Using social media tools represents a paradigm shift in school communication. Instead of a one-way model which announces decisions and events, social media creates two-way conversations where ideas and opinions can be shared. Today's parents are Generation X'ers and Millennials who desire to work collaboratively and play an active role in their child's education. Louis, Leithwood, Wahlstrom, and Anderson's (2010) study through the Wallace Institute found that parent involvement is vital for student success. While this relationship is

important for school leaders to realize, it is just as important for them to understand how communication with the Millennial generation has changed from previous cohorts. Potterfield and Carnes (2012) wrote, "Communication is no longer about you; it's about your customers" (p. 18). The authors conceded that this new way of thinking may mean that school leaders lose some of their advantage and political power but this loss may prove to be valuable if communicating via social media tools effectively serves to bridge the gap between home and school.

Finally, social media will continue to have a strong presence in our culture. Many authors including Dixon (2012) and Ferriter et al. (2012) argued along with Porterfield and Carnes (2012) that social media is not a passing trend, but rather a permanent shift in the way the world communicates. The tools and Websites that are used may change, but the concept will remain. One challenge facing every school leader is to keep pace with changing technology and communication trends. Embracing social media will help principals accomplish this task.

**Social Media Communication Challenges**

Although there are benefits to using social media, there are also challenges. Hines, Edmonson, and Moore (2008) interviewed 10 secondary principals who identified 12 challenges for using computers including concerns over the increase in communication, the time required of leaders to sit at their computer to the exclusion of face-to-face interactions, and the need for training. Papaioannou and Charalambous (2011) found similar attitudes were displayed in primary principals who used computers when conducting their study. Like their secondary colleagues, primary principals looked favorably upon the use of ICT, but reported being encumbered by a variety of concerns including the need for site-based inservice training, the

need to hire professional staff to support technology within their school building, and the need to lead and motivate its integration in the classroom.

For some, this has resulted in the need to revise what effective school leadership looks like in the Information Age. Even though Dixon (2012) believed this change in perspective can lead to "engaged families, higher student enrollment, a collaborative school culture, and community buy-in" (pp. 3–4), this does not negate that choosing to use social media to communicate is without hurdles that need to be overcome. Dixon has found some teachers and school leaders to be leery towards social media use, admitting their fears that it is often unstable, overly dynamic, time consuming, and prone to error. Dixon (2012) found other common obstacles include policies which prohibit both the use of mobile devices and access to sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Concerns for student's safety on the Internet also abound. Student safety is now a far reaching topic with many dangers including, "accessing and sharing explicit content online, cyberbullying, engaging in inappropriate relationships, and sexting" (p. 240).

Other researchers report similar dilemmas. Principals have many competing interests and demands upon their time which limit their involvement with social media. Such demands include a focus on student achievement (Arnold, Perry, Watson, Minatra, & Schwartz, 2006), "diagnosing and meeting the needs of their schools," providing leadership and "governance" in all "critical areas" of the school, and engaging in professional development activities, (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003). Similar to Dixon (2012), Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, and Gundlach (2003) reported that Internet safety for a student is also cited as an issue of concern, particularly cyberbullying and social isolation.

## Professional Uses of Social Media in Education

### Information privacy and hiring practices.

Other emerging issues facing school administrators are the issues of privacy and integrity of information, especially as it relates to hiring practices. A recent study outlined that, "81% of adults between the ages of 18 and 29 are wireless internet users" (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010, p. 4). Many preservice and teachers early in their career fall into this demographic. Griffin and Lake (2012) examined the use of teacher's interactions on social networking sites (SNS) and its impact on hiring decisions in the K–12 arena. They concluded that there is evidence to suggest that personal data left on SNS, such as compromising photographs and unprofessional comments, do affect hiring decisions. Further, this study found that women and African Americans ranked the discovery of these items as having a greater impact on hiring decisions than their counterparts.

### Impact of social media and professional development.

Brooks and Gibson (2012) have seen a shift in professional development opportunities for teachers with the integration of social media. They wrote "The literature calls upon professional development to be reorientated with the learner, in this case the teacher, at the center, rather than the event (conference), theme or subject (assessment for learning or mathematics)" (p. 9). Duran, Brunvand, Ellsworth, and Sendag (2012) echoed this need for a readjusted focus, calling for professional development opportunities that are learner centered and suggests the use of collaborative technologies such as wikis to accomplish this task.

Moran, Seaman, and Tinti-Kane (2011) found that teachers often utilize popular social media sites both for professional and personal causes; however, they infrequently required their students to do the same. Luehmann and Tinelli (2008) recommended that teachers blog to

encourage professional reflection and Mitra, Lewin-Jones, Barrett, and Williamson (2010) discovered that encouraging students to create and share video content via YouTube or Vimeo can be an effective mode of sharing and demonstrating learning.

Much research abounds citing the need for teachers to develop personal learning communities or PLNs with the use of technology (Perez, 2012; Rieckhoff & Larsen, 2012; Taranto, 2011; Trust, 2012). The idea is to share professional information with colleagues through various social media platforms such as blogging, Facebook, and Twitter (Perez, 2012). This provides opportunities for both teachers and principals alike to reflect on their professional practice and engage with new ideas and best practices to help transform their schools (Reickhoff & Larsen, 2012).

Seasoned teachers have also found online PLNs to be beneficial. Trust (2012) reviewed three popular online tools which help teachers establish such a community: Classroom 2.0, Edmoto, and The Educator's PLN. The researcher suggested that these sites have become popular because they place fewer demands on the teacher's time and allow for easy collaboration between colleagues. Due to the numerous options available for teachers who want to join a PLN, it is recommended that educators choose one platform to begin with and grow from that starting point.

In a study of new teachers engaged in a PLN, Taranto (2011) found that 100% of participants agreed that an online learning community was helpful, "as a tool to help improve instruction, as a means to seek support, in a dialogue between teachers, and dialogue between teachers and mentors" (p. 11). Following the study, it was suggested that all district administrators join the new teacher PLN for the following year.

## Conclusion

The ability to effectively communicate is a vital skill set for any school administrator. This is crucial especially when creating a bridge between home and school to ensure student academic success. Now more than ever before, there is a wide variety of ways to connect with people both within the greater community, towards staff members, and amongst colleagues. Technology, and increasingly, social media, is changing the way communication is happening.

School administrators have many demands upon their time. They cited one of the biggest hindrances to utilizing communication technology is the amount of time it takes to learn and the way in which it takes away from opportunities to interact face to face. While psychologists such as Dweck (2006) argued that developing skills such as the ability to communicate via social media will take time and effort, Couros (2013, January 7) and others argued that time using social media as a leader is time well spent. Couros (2010, July 6) wrote "This is not about technology. This is about connecting and sharing with others and yes, technology can be a fantastic medium for this. It is still ultimately about the relationships you create" (para. 12).

# Chapter III: Methodology

## Introduction

Social media and its use by school principals is a complex topic. Gathering demographic data and the number and type of social media tools used by an administrator provided a framework around this issue. In order to gain a deeper understanding, it was necessary to also seek out qualitative responses to open-ended questions on this topic. Creswell (2009) wrote, "Problems addressed by social and health science researchers are complex, and the use of either quantitative or qualitative approaches is inadequate to address this complexity" (p. 203). Creswell further stated "Their combined use provides an expanded understanding of research problems" (p. 203).

Integrating the data provided a rich and full view of this issue, illustrating the relationship that exists between principals and their use of social media. Ultimately, collecting and integrating quantitative and qualitative data elicited unique knowledge and increased the body of literature that concerns this topic.

## Research Method and Design

Based on the work of Schmucki, Hood, and Meell (2010), this study was a mixed-method approach employing the use of a Qualtrics Survey to ask elementary school principals about their use of social media tools. See Appendix A for possible survey questions based on Schmucki, Hood, and Meell's (2010) study. The majority of questions were quantitative in nature in order to gather demographic information about the school leaders being surveyed and the schools they serve. Quantitative questions were also asked about the number and nature of social media tools that were being used. Actual survey questions that were asked in this study are outlined in Appendix B.

In order to gather additional information, respondents were given the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions about their social media use. These questions were designed to gather in-depth information, determine trends across respondents, and provide an explanation for the quantitative responses given. Quantitative data were analyzed using statistical tests available in the most current version of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

A copy of the email that was sent out to principals can be found in Appendix C. Appendix D is a copy of the follow-up e-mail sent to principals a week later. Appendix E is shows the consent form participants were given who chose to be part of this study. Appendix F shows the permission the researcher was given to base this study off of the national study completed by Schmuki, Hood, and Meell in 2010.

Qualitative data were analyzed by pasting open ended responses from the survey into an Excel document. Qualitative responses were read through a minimum of six times following the steps for qualitative analysis outlined by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) in order to determine their meaning. The initial reading was of all open-ended responses given in the survey to gain an overview of the information provided from the data. Initial impressions from the first reading were be recorded on paper for future reference.

During the second reading, meaning units were recorded for each open-ended response and recorded in a column in the spreadsheet. The third reading involved coding the data. Saldana (2009) stated "To codify is to arrange things in a systemic order, to make something part of a system or classification, to categorize" (p. 8). Each unique meaning unit was assigned a code next to ideas or themes that were found within the text of the responses. During the subsequent fourth and fifth reading, it was determined if codes can be combined, separated, or placed into subcategories. The sixth read was to determine if the themes that emerged have

sufficient supporting data to be identified as an independent theme. Additional reads were necessary in order to attain precise findings.

Finally, to ensure reliability of findings, interrater reliability was conducted. An additional person with background knowledge in schools and technology read through the data analysis. Discussion ensued until analysis.

**Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to understand the use of social media by elementary principals working in Minnesota public schools. Two main research questions were addressed:

- What factors impact elementary principal use of social media for professional purposes?
- How are elementary principals utilizing social media to communicate?

**Hypotheses**

There were six hypothesis and six alternative hypotheses proposed:

1st Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the age of the principal and use of social media to communicate.

1st Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the age of the principals and the use of social media to communicate.

2nd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media.

2nd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media.

3rd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the gender of the principal and use of social media to communicate.

3rd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the gender of the principals and the use of social media to communicate.

4th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and use of social media to communicate.

4th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and the use of social media to communicate.

5th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school size and use of social media to communicate.

5th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school size and the use of social media to communicate.

6th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate.

6th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate.

**Sample**

The entire population (N) that the study takes as a reference consisted of all public elementary school principals serving students in Minnesota. Elementary school principals are defined by those serving students from kindergarten to sixth grade. The sample (n) that was used in this study was elementary principals working in Minnesota. The sample for this study was drawn through the use of purposive sampling. In order to get a representative sample of the entire population, a survey was distributed using the email addresses provided from the

Minnesota Department of Education. According to the information provided, there were 922 elementary principals serving in Minnesota's public schools. A survey was sent to each principal.

**Setting**

The setting for this study was online. A Qualtrics survey was developed based on the work of Schmucki, Hood, and Meell (2010). Demographic information was collected including, but not limited to: principal's age, years of administrative service, gender, school setting (metro or outstate) size of school, and student's socioeconomic status. Principals were asked to identify what social media tools they utilize and for what purposes. Opportunities were given for respondents to further explain their answers through open-ended qualitative questions.

**Instrumentation and Measures**

Survey questions were based upon the work of Schmucki, Hood, and Meell (2010). An email was sent to the researchers and permission was granted use their research questions as a basis for this study. These questions have been tested for face validity and content validity. Indiana State University student Neal McCutcheon (2013) used this survey as the basis of his doctoral research. McCutcheon (2013) stated "Survey reliability was determined through research and nonbiased review. Members of the Indiana State University Ph.D. 2012–2013 cohort reviewed the Social Media survey. Students provided instrumental feedback on continuity, clarity, and content" (p. 95).

The survey was written by three researchers who work for four different known organizations: edWeb.net, ISED Inc., MCH Strategic Data, and MMS Education, respectively. Their data were used in 2010 to issue a report that has been cited in academic literature. This survey has been cited by MMS Education (2012), quoted by the Association of American

Publishers (2009), cited as a resource by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development in an article by W. M. Ferriter (2010, December/ 2011, January), and *Tech & Learning Magazine* (2009). The questions asked are broad in their focus and cover the types of social media tools, and the issues associated with them that are mentioned most frequently in the literature.

The study was revised in 2012 to include survey questions for educators about social networking, online communities, and Web 2.0 tools (Schmucki, Hood, & Meell 2012). According to MMS Education (2012) the new report found Facebook to be the most popular social media tool, but also found that newer sites such as Google+ and Edmoto are growing in their popularity among educators. The report also found a 35% increase in the total number of educators who report using a social media network. The new report also includes information about mobile devices, and acceptable use policies that are being followed by school districts.

**Data Collection**

An introductory letter and a link to the Qualtrics survey was sent to respondents through the Minnesota Department of Education sample via email. They had 2 weeks to respond. After one week of the response window has passed, a reminder email was sent to those who have not responded in order to glean as many responses as possible. All survey answers were anonymous and confidential.

**Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS. Muijs (2011) found that while there are other software packages available, Microsoft's SPSS is the most widely used in the educational field. It is commonly believed to be the most user-friendly and is available in most institutions

of higher learning (Muijs, 2011). Originally developed to work with Microsoft Windows, SPSS is also available on Macintosh computers.

When studying a population, it can be challenging to determine if results are due to sampling errors, random chance, or if the results are statistically significant. In order to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists between two variables, a chi-square test can be administered (Muijs, 2011). If the analysis reveals that the *p* value is less than .05, than the null hypothesis can be rejected (Patten, 2012).

According to the Institute for Digital Research and Education at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA; 2014), "A chi-square test is used when you want to see if there is a relationship between two categorical variables." All independent variables in this study were either one independent variable with two levels of independent groups (e.g., gender) or one independent variable with two or more levels of independent groups (years of service, size of school, age of principal, etc.). The dependent variable in this study was the categorical use of social media. Therefore, the chi-square was an appropriate test to use in order to analyze all hypotheses. All qualitative (i.e., open-ended responses) data were read and coded using the procedures outlined previously in the research and design section of this chapter.

**Field Test**

Quantitative and qualitative research questions were adopted from the 2010 Schmucki, Hood, and Meell report to address all previously listed hypotheses. A Qualtrics survey consisting of 13 questions was sent to 26 individuals who were not potential participants in the researcher's actual forthcoming study. Of the 26 invited to participate in this trial, 14 people responded. The survey was sent out in early November, 2013. Respondents were given 2 weeks to complete the survey. One reminder email was sent at the start of the second week in hopes of

garnering a higher response rate. Once the 2-week window closed, quantitative data was exported from Qualtrics into SPSS for analysis.

The dependent variable in this trial survey was the categorical use of social media. All independent variables were either one independent variable with two levels of independent groups (e.g., gender, urban/rural setting) or one independent variable with two or more levels of independent groups (years of service, size of school, and age of principal.) Therefore, the Chi-Square Analysis was an appropriate statistical test to determine if a statistically significant relationship existed.

All qualitative data were exported from Qualtrics and imported into QSR NVivo 10. The researcher read through the responses and coded the data based on themes. Data were then represented in both a cluster analysis and a word cloud.

**Findings**

Chi-Square analyses were run to test all five hypotheses. The Pearson Chi-Square Analyses are noted with an * and shown in the following tables. Table 1 shows the relationship between a principal's use of social media and their age.

Table 1

*Hypothesis #1: Principal's Use of Social Media and Age*

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 18.000[a] | 14 | .207* |
| Likelihood Ratio | 19.069 | 14 | .162 |
| N of Valid Cases | 18 | | |

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, the average age of a Minnesota school principal as of the 2003–2004 school year is 48.4. The *p* value in this Pearson Chi-Square test was higher than .05 meaning that the results were not statistically significant. This data fail to reject the null hypothesis. There were not enough data nor ample statistical significance within the data to prove a relationship exists between the use of social media and age of the principal.

Table 2 shows the relationship between a principal's use of social media and their years of experience serving as a school leader.

Table 2

*Hypothesis #2: Principal's Use of Social Media and Years of Experience*

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 8.743[a] | 3 | .033* |
| Likelihood Ratio | 9.061 | 3 | .028 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 2.386 | 1 | .122 |
| N of Valid Cases | 18 | | |

The *p* value in this Pearson Chi-Square test was higher than .05 meaning that the results were not statistically significant. These data fail to reject the null hypothesis. There were not enough data nor ample statistical significance within the data to prove a relationship exists between the use of social media and years of experience of the principal.

Table 3 shows the relationship between a principal's use of social media and their gender.

Table 3

*Hypothesis #3: Principal's Use of Social Media and Gender*

| Chi-Square Tests | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | 12.600[a] | 1 | .000* | | |
| Continuity Correction[b] | 7.779 | 1 | .005 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 11.722 | 1 | .001 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .005 | .005 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 11.900 | 1 | .001 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 18 | | | | |

Although the sample of people surveyed was heterogeneous, only females chose to respond. Therefore the Chi-Square Pearson test for gender was .000. These data are biased and fail to determine whether social media use is impacted by gender.

Table 4 shows the relationship between a principal's use of social media and their school's setting: urban, rural, or suburban.

Table 4

*Hypothesis #4: Principal's Use of Social Media and School Setting: Urban, Rural, or Suburban*

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | .505[a] | 2 | .777* |
| Likelihood Ratio | .511 | 2 | .774 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .474 | 1 | .491 |
| N of Valid Cases | 18 | | |

The *p* value in this Pearson Chi-Square test was higher than .05 meaning that the results were not statistically significant. These data fail to reject the null hypothesis. There were not enough data nor ample statistical significance within the data to prove a relationship exists between the use of social media and the setting of the school.

Table 5 shows the relationship between a principal's use of social media and their school's size.

Table 5

*Hypothesis #5: Principal's Use of Social Media and School Size*

| Chi-Square Tests | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
| Pearson Chi-Square | .891[a] | 2 | .641* |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.111 | 2 | .574 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .841 | 1 | .359 |
| N of Valid Cases | 18 | | |

The *p* value in this Pearson Chi-Square test was higher than .05 meaning that the results were not statistically significant. These data fail to reject the null hypothesis. There were not enough data nor ample statistical significance within the data to prove a relationship exists between the use of social media and the size of the school.

Three qualitative questions were asked on the survey and analyzed in QSR NVivo 10 for common themes. The three questions were:

1. Please share any additional information about why you use social media tools.
2. Please share how you are using social media tools in new and innovative ways as an administrator.
3. If you are hesitant to use social media tools, please indicate your reservations that were not listed above.

The Pearson Chi-Square was higher than .05 in all tests except gender, meaning that the results were not statistically significant. These data fail to reject all of the null hypotheses.

There were not enough data nor ample statistical significance within the data to prove a relationship exists between the use of social media and age, years of experience, school setting, or school size. Although the sample of people surveyed was heterogeneous, only females chose to respond. Therefore the Chi-Square Pearson test for gender was .000. These data are biased and fail to determine whether social media use is impacted by gender.

The responses to the qualitative questions were coded and categorized into nodes. Nodes reflected the following categories: misuse, ease of use, need more training, parent communication, no hesitation, privacy, reputation, self-esteem, stay informed, waste of time, and writing instruction.

**Recommendations**

The field test was helpful in the sense it allowed the researcher to practice upcoming methods to see how well they worked before moving ahead with the actual study. However, the sample size was too small and too homogenous to garner statistically significant results. The proposed study had to capture a larger and more heterogeneous sample of males and females. If the majority of the study's sample of elementary school principals are female, it would have to be noted in the limitations section of the dissertation.

This exercise taught the researcher that a need for increased proficiency with SPSS and NVivo software was evident as the field test data were analyzed. YouTube was a valuable source of information, demonstrating how various tests on the data should be conducted. The support of an expert statistical analysis would have to be required for analyzing the proposed study's data.

## Limitations and Delimitations

The possibility of a low response rate may have been a limitation in this study. A link to the survey was sent out to respondents followed by a reminder a week later, but the researcher had no way of enforcing participants to respond. There was a possibility that some of the email addresses obtained through the Minnesota Department of Education were incorrect, or no longer active. New administrators may not have yet been be listed. There may also have been some bias introduced through the dissemination of an online survey. Since email is a form of social media, those who choose to respond to the survey may have been more inclined to use social media tools.

Limitations were also present in this study. Middle and high school principals were not included in this study. Their use and concerns of social media may have been different than their elementary colleagues as their student populations are older and may have greater access to personal mobile technologies. Students having widespread access to social mediums change the dynamics of this issue considerably. Choosing to survey only elementary school principals narrowed and focuses the scope of this study. Principals leading private school were not considered for this reason.

## Ethical Considerations

The researcher attained approval from Bethel's Institutional Review Board prior to beginning her research to ensure that all activities were carried out in an ethical manner. In addition, the researcher followed all guidelines given in the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). CITI ensures that researchers are trained to carry out research projects that are both ethical in their approach and administered in accordance with the federal law. All participants were given an informed consent document to review in the body of the email that

was sent above the survey link indicating their understanding of the risks and benefits involved in the study, along with their voluntary agreement to participate. Finally, no names of principals, names of schools, or any other identifiable characteristics were collected, except for necessary demographic information. All responses were kept anonymous and confidential.

# Chapter IV: Results

## Introduction

The purpose of this study was to further understand how elementary school principals in Minnesota are using social media tools in their personal and professional lives. This study was done by sending a Qualtrics survey link to elementary school principals via email. The survey collected both quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative data from this survey were analyzed at St. Cloud State University's Statistical Consulting and Research Center using the Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS). A Pearson Chi-Square Analysis was run on variables to determine the relationship between social media use and age, years of service, gender, school setting, student population, and free/reduced lunch rate. Qualitative data were analyzed by reading, rereading, and coding responses to determine emergent themes.

What follows in this chapter are a discussion of the Pearson Chi-Square analysis results, as well as an overview of the other responses to survey questions addressing the presence of a district social media policy, social media membership and familiarity, frequency of social media use, and social media concerns. A qualitative analysis is given to determine the ways administrators are using social media in new and innovative ways. The chapter concludes with a table outlining each of the study's six hypotheses and their results.

## Descriptive Statistics

### Demographics

The demographic results from the survey are shown in Tables 6–13. Tables represent information including sample size, age, presence of a social media policy, years of service, gender, school setting, student population, and free/reduced lunch population.

Table 6

*Demographic Data: Sample Size*

| Minnesota Elementary School Principals | |
|---|---|
| Sample (*n*) | 145 |
| Population (N) | 922 |

There were 922 elementary school principals who were emailed a link to complete this survey during a 2-week timeframe. Exactly 145 principals chose to respond. This resulted in a response rate of 15.7%.

Table 7

*Demographic Data: Age*

| What is your age? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Age in years | Number of Principals | Percentage of Sample |
| 31 | 1 | .7 |
| 32 | 1 | .7 |
| 33 | 1 | .7 |
| 34 | 4 | 2.8 |
| 35 | 2 | 1.4 |
| 36 | 5 | 3.4 |
| 37 | 13 | 9.0 |
| 38 | 5 | 3.4 |
| 39 | 6 | 4.1 |
| 40 | 3 | 2.1 |
| 41 | 3 | 2.1 |
| 42 | 4 | 2.8 |
| 43 | 4 | 2.8 |
| 44 | 6 | 4.1 |
| 45 | 5 | 3.4 |
| 46 | 4 | 2.8 |
| 47 | 3 | 2.1 |
| 48 | 6 | 4.1 |

*(continued)*

| What is your age? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Age in years | Number of Principals | Percentage of Sample |
| *Table 7, cont.* | | |
| 49 | 7 | 4.8 |
| 50 | 7 | 4.8 |
| 51 | 6 | 4.1 |
| 52 | 4 | 2.8 |
| 53 | 3 | 2.1 |
| 54 | 5 | 3.4 |
| 55 | 3 | 2.1 |
| 56 | 1 | .7 |
| 57 | 1 | .7 |
| 58 | 5 | 3.4 |
| 59 | 5 | 3.4 |
| 60 | 2 | 1.4 |
| 61 | 2 | 1.4 |
| 62 | 3 | 2.1 |
| 63 | 4 | 2.8 |
| 64 | 2 | 1.4 |
| 65 | 6 | 4.1 |
| No Response | 3 | 2.1 |

Participants' ages ranged from 31–65 years old. Every age was represented in this survey by at least one individual within the given age range. Three participants chose not to respond to this question. The age most highly represented was 37 years old with 13 participants. Ages with only one participant include: 31, 32, 33, 56, and 57. The mean age of participants in this sample was 47.67 years old.

Table 8

*Demographic Data: School Media Policy*

| Does your school have a social media policy? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Answer | Number of Principals | Percent of Sample |
| Yes | 116 | 80 |
| No | 27 | 18.6 |
| No Response | 2 | 1.4 |

The majority of participants (116 principals representing 80% of the sample) reported having a district social media policy. Of the 145 respondents, only 27 principals, or 18.6% of the sample reported not having a policy outlining social media use in their school district. A reported two principals, or 1.4% of the sample chose not to respond to this question.

Table 9

*Demographic Data: Years of Service*

| How many years have you been serving as an elementary school principal? |
|---|

| Years | Number of Principals | Percent of Sample |
|---|---|---|
| 1–5 | 67 | 46.2 |
| 6–10 | 36 | 24.8 |
| 11–15 | 19 | 13.1 |
| 16 or more | 23 | 15.9 |
| No Response | 0 | 0 |

Participants were asked to indicate the number of years they have served as an elementary school principal in increments of 5 years. Over 70% of respondents have served for 10 years or less in this role. Approximately 13.1% reported serving between 11–15 years, and 15.9% have served for 16 years or more. All 145 participants chose to answer this question.

Table 10

*Demographic Data: Gender*

| What is your gender? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Answer | Number of Principals | Percent of Sample |
| Male | 69 | 47.6 |
| Female | 75 | 51.7 |
| No Response | 1 | .7 |

The reported gender of principals is roughly equally divided. Females represent slightly more of the sample population at 51.7%, while males are represented by 47.6% of the sample population. Only one participant chose not to respond to this question.

Table 11

*Demographic Data: School Setting*

| What is the setting of your school? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Setting | Number of Principals | Percent of Sample |
| Urban | 16 | 11.0 |
| Rural | 83 | 57.2 |
| Suburban | 46 | 31.7 |
| No Response | 0 | 0 |

Participants were asked to indicate where there school was located in Minnesota. They had a choice of three settings: urban, rural, or suburban. The majority of participants led schools in the rural setting, 83 principals representing 57.2% of the sample population. The next most common setting was suburban with 46 principals representing 31.7% of the sample population. Urban was the least reported setting with only 16 principals representing 11% of the sample. All participants chose to answer this question.

Table 12

*Demographic Data: Student Population*

| How large is your student population? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Number of students | Number of Principals | Percent of Sample |
| 0–500 students | 71 | 49.3 |
| 501–1000 students | 68 | 46.9 |
| 1001–1500 | 5 | 3.4 |
| More than 1500 students | 0 | 0 |
| No Response | 1 | 0.7 |

The majority of participants lead school that have populations of 1000 students or less. Schools of this size represent a combined total of 96.2 % of the population. Only 5 participants, 3.4% of the population, lead schools that have 1001–1500 students. No schools have more than 1500 students. One participant chose not to answer this question.

Table 13

*Demographic Data: Free/Reduced Lunch*

| What percentage of your enrollment meets the criteria for free/reduced lunch? | | |
|---|---|---|
| Percentage of Students | Number of Principals | Percent of Sample |
| 0–25% | 36 | 24.8 |
| 26–50% | 70 | 48.3 |
| 51–75% | 28 | 19.3 |
| 76–100% | 10 | 6.9 |
| No Response | 1 | .7 |

Many participants lead schools that have a free/reduced lunch rate of 26–50%. Only 6.9% of participants' schools have a free/reduced lunch rate of 76–100%. Only one participant chose not to respond to this question.

**Social Media Use**

Participants were asked on the survey, "Communication is being increasingly delivered through social media. Are you currently an active participant in any form of social media including, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google+, Pinterest, Vimeo, or Blogger?" Results are shown in Table 14.

Table 14

*Demographic Data: Social Media Membership*

| Are you currently an active participant in any form of social media? |
|---|

| Answer | Number of Principals | Percent of Sample |
|---|---|---|
| Yes | 114 | 78.6 |
| No | 31 | 21.4 |
| No Response | 0 | 0 |

All participants chose to respond to this question. The majority of participants, 114 principals representing 78.6% of the sample population, report being an active participant in some form of social media. Only 21.6% have chosen not to use any form of social media use.

The following graph reflects participants' responses to: "For each of the following social media tools, please indicate whether you are currently a member, familiar with the tool but not a member, or have never heard of the site." Responses are shown in the bar graph in Figure 12.

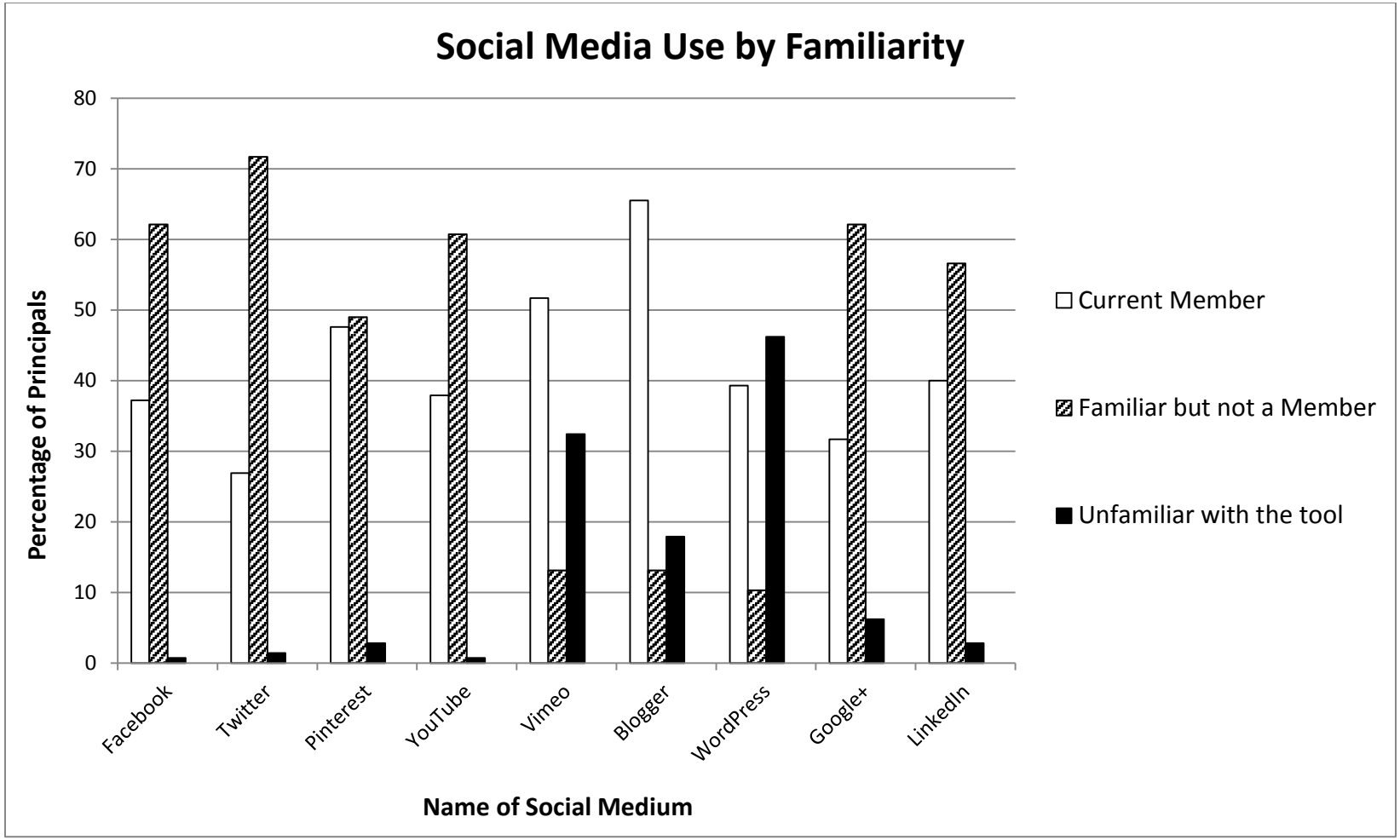


*Figure 12.* Social media use by familiarity.

Blogger was the most commonly used social medium of which participants reported being a member. Membership of Blogger was reported by 65.5% of the sample population. The next most commonly used social medium was Vimeo. Approximately 51.7% of respondents reported being a member. The social medium that most participants reported being unfamiliar with was WordPress. An estimated 46.2% of the sample population were unfamiliar with this blogging platform.

Frequencies of social media tool use are represented in Table 15.

Table 15

*Frequencies of Social Media Use by Purpose*

| | Facebook | Twitter | Pinterest | YouTube | Vimeo | Blogger | WordPress | LinkedIn | Google+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| To Connect with Friends and Family | 51.7% | 17.2% | 21.4% | 15.9% | 2.1% | 2.1% | 3.4% | 5.5% | 15.9% |
| To Connect professionally with peers and colleagues | 17.2% | 54.5% | 11% | 17.2% | 2.8% | 2.8% | 3.4% | 44.1% | 34.5% |
| To learn about current technologies | 4.8% | 29.7% | 9.7% | 15.9% | 1.4% | 1.4% | 1.4% | 4.1% | 11% |
| To communicate with community members | 15.9% | 17.9% | 4.1% | 9.7% | 2.1% | 4.8% | 2.8% | 1.4% | 4.1% |
| To communicate with staff members | 7.6% | 13.1% | 1.4% | 9.0% | 1.4% | 2.8% | 2.1% | 1.4% | 13.8% |
| To promote your school to parents and prospective students | 26.9% | 23.4% | 2.8% | 15.9% | 4.8% | 1.4% | 4.1% | .7% | 4.8% |
| To make money | .7% | .7% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Other | 2.1% | 2.8% | 14.5% | 18.6% | 2.8% | 1.4% | .7% | 5.5% | 8.3% |
| I don't use this social media tool | 31.1% | 30.3% | 44.8% | 12.4% | 78.6% | 79.3% | 80.7% | 46.9% | 36.6% |

Participants' responses show that specific social media tools are used for differing reasons. The most commonly reported purpose for using social media to connect with friends and family was through Facebook (51.7%). Pinterest followed at 21.4%, with Twitter close behind at 17.2%. The least common social media tool used to connect to friends and family were Vimeo and Blogger, both at 2.1%.

When looking to connect professionally with peers and colleagues, Twitter was used by over half of the respondents, 54.5%. Other common tools used for this purpose were LinkedIn, 44.1%, and Google+ 34.5%. Vimeo and Blogger were not commonly reported to be used for this purpose, both at 2.8%.

Twitter (29.7%) and YouTube (15.9%) were the two most common tools used to learn about new technologies. Several other social media tools were infrequently used for this purpose, with only 1.4% of the sample population reporting their use. Those tools included: Vimeo, Blogger, WordPress, LinkedIn, and Google+.

Twitter (17.9%), Facebook (15.9%), and YouTube (9.7%) were the top three most common social media tools used by elementary principals to communicate with community members. All other tools were used infrequently by comparison. When communicating with staff members, however, both Google+ and Twitter were the most common tools of choice being used at a rate of 13.1% and 13.8% respectively.

Facebook (26.9%), Twitter (23.4%), and YouTube (15.9%) were the most common tools of choice for principals to use when promoting their school to parents and prospective students. LinkedIn was the least popular tool for this task with only .7% of the sample population reporting its use for this purpose.

Social media tools were not frequently reported to be used for the purpose of making money. Only .7% of the sample population reported using Facebook or Twitter for this purpose, specifically noting fundraising. No other social media tool was reported to be used in this manner.

Administrators reportedly use Blogger and WordPress the least of all the social media tools. Approximately 80.7% of respondents reported to not use WordPress and 79.3% reported not using Blogger. The most frequently used tool appears to be YouTube with only 12.4% of the sample population reporting not to use this tool.

When the survey was originally sent out, this question had an error. Respondents were only able to select one way that they use social media instead of being given the option to *click all that apply*. Respondents emailed the researcher and the problem was fixed after the first 30 submissions of the survey. Most respondents were able to answer the above question the way it was intended, but some were limited to one choice.

Respondents were asked an open-ended question to gain further insight about the use of social media. "Please share how you are using social media tools in new and innovative ways as an administrator." Of the 145 members of the sample, 63 responded. Two responses were thrown out because their statements related to a technical problem with the survey mentioned previously and not to the question being asked. Seventeen statements communicated that the respondents were not using social media in any innovative ways. A qualitative analysis was conducted to determine themes present in the remaining responses. Responses were read a total of six times and codified to determine meaning. When a response seemed to belong in multiple themes, the response was reread in the context of existing themes to determine best fit. Responses, coding, and themes were reviewed by an outside, objective analyzer to ensure

reliability. There was an 89% consistency in coding. The resulting themes that emerged were: school promotion, sharing information with students' family members, contact or meetings with staff members or district administration, and learning/professional development. Responses are listed in Appendix G. Themes are analyzed below.

**School Promotion**

"We use social media to send out announcements, to keep our community informed about exciting things that are taking place in our school."

School promotion was one of the four main themes emulating throughout the responses to how social media is being used in new and innovative ways as an administrator. One person wrote, "Facebook as the 'new' newsletter provides an opportunity to create and build culture and tell a school story (mission/vision connections with programming)." Principals are looking to harness the convenience and widespread availability of social media to tell others about their schools. Fourteen different statements fell into this category out of 63 for a total of approximately 22% of the responses. In this category, key words were used such as *communication and PR*, *promotion*, *fundraising*, and *community members*.

**Sharing Information with Students' Family Members**

"I find putting the info into the parent's hands is important. Any tool I can use that makes it go to the parent without having them have to go someplace else is my key."

Sharing information with students' family members was the second theme that emerged in this analysis. The word *families* was discussed at length between the researcher and the objective analyzer. At the elementary level, students may utilize information posted via social media through their parents. For example, if a due date of an assignment is listed or the date of an upcoming field trip, a parent or guardian may pass this information on to their child. It can

also be noted that an elementary student may not live with parents, or find that some information posted via social media is relevant to siblings, grandparents, or other extended family members. Therefore, the phrase *student's family members* seemed to encapsulate all interested parties. Seventeen or 27% of all responses fell into this category. Key words or phrases included *students and families*, *information sharing*, and *communicate with parents*.

**Contact or Meetings with Staff Members or District Administrators**

"I use Google docs to collect teaching evidence in the classroom. Google+ for meetings with admin in other buildings…"

It became evident when analyzing the data that elementary school principals were using social media to communicate professionally both with the staff members in their school and other district administrators. This was sometimes happening through formal meetings. Participants made mention of both *Google+* and *Google Hangout* for this purpose. Communication was also happening through more informal methods such as a casual tweet. Two responses mentioned the use of Twitter during staff meetings, and one mentioned uploading a YouTube video for teachers to watch as part of their observation. Seven responses fell into this category or just over 11% of all responses. Key words included *staff meetings*, *teacher walk-throughs*, *PLCs*, and *meetings with admin*.

**Learning/Professional Development**

"Twitter is hands down one of the best PD forums on the market today. It is heavily utilized."

Principals are either using social media tools in this category to learn something professionally about leadership, or to pass on instructional resources or knowledge to their teachers. One participant said, "I use Twitter to connect with my colleagues professionally."

Another respondent added, "…for viewing current articles." In regard to passing ideas on to teachers, one principal said they are using Twitter, "to collect/share innovative ideas to enhance the student learning experience. (i.e., get the latest information and perspectives on current best practice, innovative tools, modular robotics, 3D printing, to crowd-source funding for digital technologies, etc.)." Not only are teachers and students given access to best-practice ideas, but their leaders are staying informed as well. Eleven, or 17.4% of responses fell into this category. Key words or phrases included *professional development*, *educational conversations*, *connect with colleagues*, *Twitter chats*, and *leadership forums*.

The final questions on the survey asked participants to, "Please rate whether the concern listed is: *Not A Concern*, *A Minor Concern*, or *A Major Concern*." The resulting concerns are in the bar graph in Figure 13.

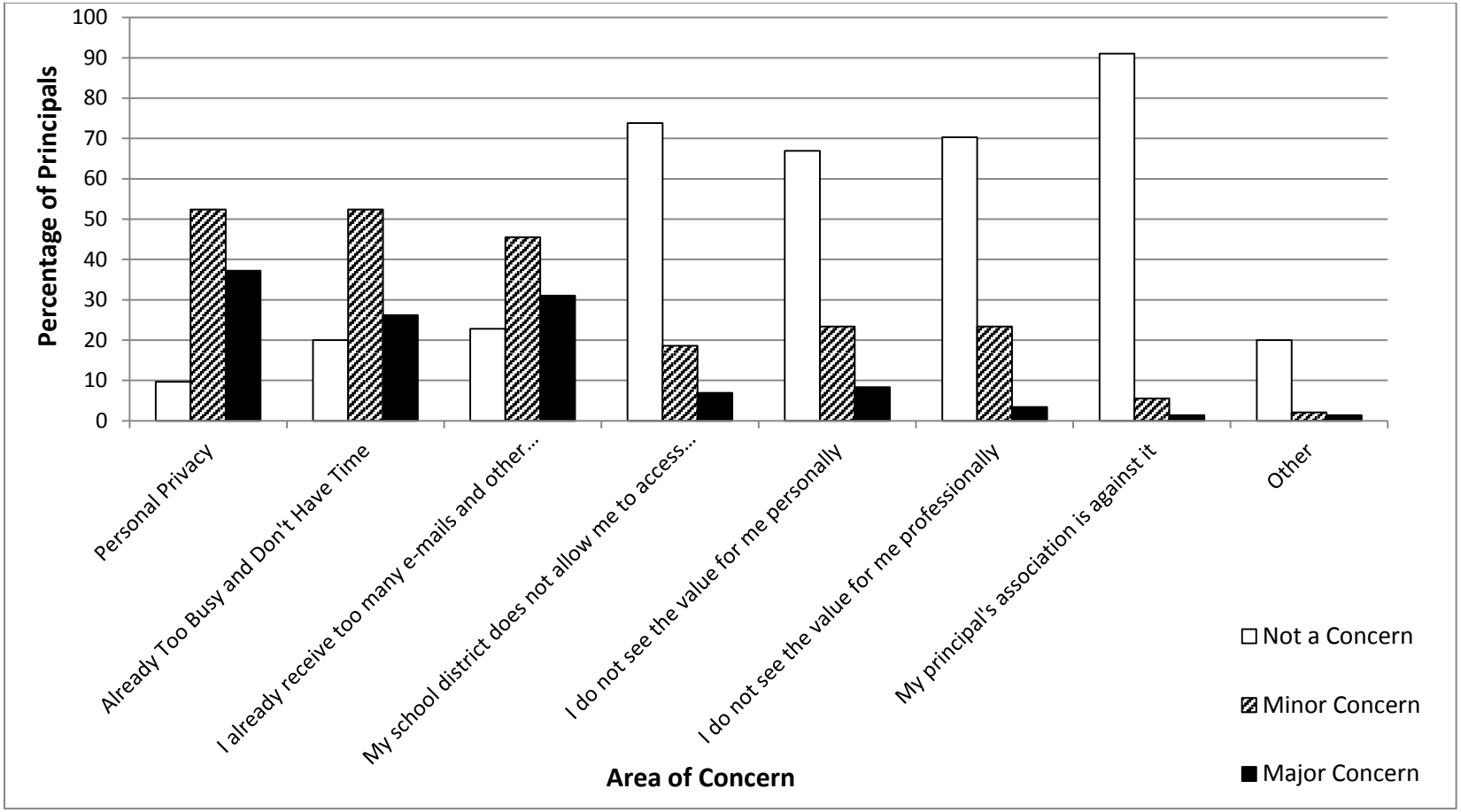


*Figure 13.* Frequencies of social media concerns.

Approximately 37.2% of respondents reported that personal privacy was their biggest concern when using social media, followed closely by 26.2% reporting that their biggest concern was that they were "already too busy and didn't have enough time" to use social media tools. Alternatively, a little over half of the sample population, 52.4% found "personal privacy," and being "already too busy and not having enough time," to be a minor concern. About 44.5% only reported being minimally concerned that they "already receive too many emails and other electronic communication" interfering with their use of social media. There were three factors which most of the sample population reported not being concerned about when considering social media use. An estimated 73.8% of the sample population was not concerned that "their district would not allow access to these sites." 70.3% were not concerned that they "did not see the professional value in these sites." Finally, 66.9% were not concerned that they "did not see the value in these sites personally."

**Chi-Square Analysis**

A Pearson chi-square computed for a 2x2 table was used to test the significance of the differences among elementary school principals' demographic data and their use of social media. The items which addressed one of the study's six hypotheses are in tables 16–22.

1st Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the age of the principal and use of social media to communicate.

1st Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the age of the principals and the use of social media to communicate.

Table 16

*Chi-Square Data: Age of Principal*

| | Value of Pearson Chi-Square | df | Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 12.495 | 6 | .052 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 12.727 | 6 | .048 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 9.486 | 1 | .002 |
| N of Valid Cases | 142 | | |

$\chi^2$ (6, $N$ = 142) = 12.495, $p$ = .052 (two-sided).

*p>.05* so we can accept the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the age of the principal and use of social media to communicate. The *p* value was just over .05 by .02. Had the *p* value been equal or smaller than .05, the null hypothesis could have been rejected.

2nd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media.

2nd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media.

Table 17

*Chi-Square Data: Years of Service*

| | Value of Pearson Chi-Square | df | Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 15.327 | 3 | .002 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 15.371 | 3 | .002 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 3.610 | 1 | .057 |
| N of Valid Cases | 145 | | |

$\chi^2$ (3, $N$ = 145) = 15.327, $p$ = .002 (two-sided).

*P<.05* so we can reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between years of experience being an elementary school principal and use of social media to communicate. We can accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a relationship between the years of experience being an elementary school principal and the use of social media to communicate. The more years of experience being an elementary principal, the less likely he or she uses social media.

The crosstab analysis of these two variables further illustrates why the alternative hypothesis can be accepted. Table 18 shows that in general, the more years of service a principal has completed, the less likely he/she are to participate in social media use.

Table 18

*Crosstab: Years of Service with Social Media Use*

| How many years have you been serving as an elementary school principal? | Are you currently an active participant in any form of social media? | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | No | Total |
| 1–5 | 35.9% | 10.3% | 46.2% |
| 6–10 | 23.4% | 1.4% | 24.8% |
| 11–15 | 11% | 2.1% | 13.1% |
| 16 or more | 8.3% | 7.6% | 15.9% |

3rd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the gender of the principal and use of social media to communicate.

3rd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the gender of the principals and the use of social media to communicate.

Table 19

*Chi-Square Data: Gender*

| | Value of Pearson Chi-Square | df | Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | .216 | 1 | .642 |
| Likelihood Ratio | .216 | 1 | .642 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .215 | 1 | .643 |
| N of Valid Cases | 144 | | |

$\chi^2$ (1, $N$ = 144) = .216, ns. $p$ = .642 (two-sided).

*p>.05* so we are unable to reject the null hypothesis. There is no relationship between elementary school principal gender and use of social media to communicate.

4th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and use of social media to communicate.

4th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and the use of social media to communicate.

Table 20

*Chi-Square Data: School Setting*

| | Value of Pearson Chi-Square | df | Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 5.198 | 2 | .074 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 5.803 | 2 | .055 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .018 | 1 | .893 |
| N of Valid Cases | 145 | | |

$\chi^2$ (2, $N$ = 145) = 5.198, ns. $p$ = .074 (two-sided).

*p>.05* so we are unable to reject the null hypotheses. There is no relationship between elementary school principal's school location and use of social media to communicate.

5th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school size and use of social media to communicate.

5th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school size and the use of social media to communicate.

Table 21

*Chi-Square Data: School Size*

| | Value of Pearson Chi-Square | df | Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.861 | 2 | .394 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 1.742 | 2 | .418 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .081 | 1 | .777 |
| N of Valid Cases | 144 | | |

$\chi^2$ (2, $N$ = 144) = 1.861, ns. $p$ = .394 (two-sided).

*p>.05* so we are unable to reject the null hypotheses. There is no relationship between elementary school principal's school size and use of social media to communicate.

6th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate.

6th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate.

Table 22

*Chi-Square Data: School Poverty Percentage*

| | Value of Pearson Chi-Square | df | Significance (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 5.466 | 3 | .141 |
| Likelihood Ratio | 5.729 | 3 | .126 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .015 | 1 | .904 |
| N of Valid Cases | 144 | | |

$\chi^2$ (3, $N$ = 144) = 5.466, ns. $p$ = .141 (two-sided).

*p>.05* so we are unable to reject the null hypotheses. There is no relationship between elementary school principals' school poverty percentage as defined by its free and reduced lunch rate and use of social media to communicate.

Table 23 shows all hypotheses proposed in this study whether or not they could be accepted or rejected.

Table 23

*Hypotheses*

| Hypothesis | Result |
|---|---|
| 1st Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the age of the principal and use of social media to communicate.<br><br>1st Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the age of the principals and the use of social media to communicate. | $\chi^2$ (6, $N$ = 142) = 12.495, $p$ = .052 (two-sided).<br><br>*p>.05* so we can accept the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between the age of the principal and use of social media to communicate. |
| 2nd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media.<br><br>2nd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media. | $\chi^2$ (3, $N$ = 145) = 15.327, $p$ = .002 (two-sided).<br><br>*P<.05* so we can reject the null hypothesis that there is no relationship between years of experience being an elementary school principal and use of social media to communicate. We can accept the alternative hypothesis that there is a relationship between the years of experience being an elementary school principal and the use of social media to communicate. |
| 3rd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the gender of the principal and use of social media to communicate.<br><br>3rd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the gender of the principals and the use of social media to communicate. | $\chi^2$ (1, $N$ = 144) = .216, ns. $p$ = .642 (two-sided).<br><br>*p>.05* so we are unable to reject the null hypothesis. There is no relationship between elementary school principal gender and use of social media to communicate. |

*(continued)*

| Hypothesis | Result |
|---|---|
| *Table 23, cont.* | |
| 4th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and use of social media to communicate.<br><br>4th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and the use of social media to communicate. | $\chi^2$ (2, $N$ = 145) = 5.198, ns. $p$ = .074 (two-sided).<br><br>*p>.05* so we are unable to reject the null hypotheses. There is no relationship between elementary school principal's school location and use of social media to communicate. |
| 5th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school size and use of social media to communicate.<br><br>5th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school size and the use of social media to communicate. | $\chi^2$ (2, $N$ = 144) = 1.861, ns. $p$ = .394 (two-sided).<br><br>*p>.05* so we are unable to reject the null hypotheses. There is no relationship between elementary school principal's school size and use of social media to communicate. |
| 6th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate.<br><br>6th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate. | $\chi^2$ (3, $N$ = 144) = 5.466, ns. $p$ = .141 (two-sided).<br><br>*p>.05* so we are unable to reject the null hypotheses. There is no relationship between elementary school principal's school poverty percentage as defined by its free and reduced lunch rate and use of social media to communicate. |

# Chapter V: Summary

## Introduction

The popularity of social media use in education continues to grow. Experts are starting to address this topic at major educational leadership conferences. In February 2015, the Minnesota Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA) hosted Tony Sinanis and Joseph Sanfelippo, authors of *The Power of Branding Your School,* as their main presenters at their conference. The pair both appeared previously on the *Talks with Teachers* podcast which has ranked number 2 in the K–12 education category on iTunes according to Sztabnik (2014). The topic of social media was again explored at the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) conference when Todd Whitaker, author of *School Culture Rewired*, delivered his talk as the main presenter at their 2015 Conference in Long Beach, California. Whitaker is a professor of educational leadership at Indiana State University and has been a long-time supporter of using virtual tools in the educational realm to improve teaching and learning (Whitaker, 2013). Despite its popularity at professional conferences, and on the internet through blogs and podcasts, this topic has yet to hit the field of academic research with equal fervor. In fact, few academic studies can be found which address educational leadership and social media use. The need for more literature in this area was a major impetus for this study.

## Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between social media use and elementary school principals in the state of Minnesota. The research examined how school leaders are utilizing popular social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter for varying purposes from marketing and promotion to parent communication and professional development. The research questions posed in this study examined the factors that influence social media use

as well as explored how principals are using social media to communicate with stakeholders. Six hypotheses and their alternatives were proposed aiming to answer these questions. Chapter V reviews the study, research questions and hypotheses, conclusions, and implications. Recommendations for practitioners and academics are given preceding concluding comments.

**Research Questions**

Two main research questions were addressed in this study:

Q1) What impact do demographic factors have on principal use of social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogging, LinkedIn, Google+, Pinterest, wikis) for professional purposes?

Q1a) Does age have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1b) Do years of experience have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1c) Does gender have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1d) Does setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1e) Does the school's size have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary principals use social media?

Q1f) Does school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) have a statistically significant impact on the ways that elementary school principals use social media?

Q2) How are elementary principals utilizing social media to communicate?

**Hypotheses**

There are six hypotheses and six alternative hypotheses proposed:

1st Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the age of the principal and use of social media to communicate.

1st Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the age of the principals and the use of social media to communicate.

2nd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media.

2nd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the years of experience being an elementary principal and the use of social media.

3rd Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the gender of the principal and use of social media to communicate.

3rd Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the gender of the principals and the use of social media to communicate.

4th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and use of social media to communicate.

4th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between the setting of the principal's school location (metro or outstate) and the use of social media to communicate.

5th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school size and use of social media to communicate.

5th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school size and the use of social media to communicate.

6th Null Hypothesis: There is no relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate.

6th Alternative Hypothesis: There is a relationship between principal's school poverty percentage (as defined by free and reduced lunch percentage) and the use of social media to communicate.

**Conclusions**

Overall, demographic factors had little impact on a principal's choice of using social media to communicate. Due to observations in the field and previous experiences, a relationship between the age of the principal and their use of social media to communicate was expected to exist. However, after a Chi-Square analysis was completed, the *p* value was found to be equal to or slightly greater than .05, so the null hypothesis had to be accepted that no relationship exists between the two variables.

Again, based on experience in the field, it was expected that a negative relationship would exist between a principal's years of service and their use of social media. Meaning, the longer they have served as principal, the less likely they are to use social media. It was found that this negative relationship generally exists. As the years of service increased, the use of social media decreased. Principals serving 1–5 years represented 46.2% use of social media; principals serving 6–10 years represented 24.8% of the sample population, and those serving 11–15 years represented 13.1% of the sample population. The overall total percentage of principals who have served 16 years or more and use social media was 15.9% as compared to their counter parts. This is 2.8% more than those serving 11–15 years, and the only exception found in this trend.

The rest of the demographic factors: gender, school setting, school size, and school poverty percentage, showed no statistically significant relationship towards the use of social media by the principal. These results are consistent with the findings in McCutcheon's (2013) dissertation on *The Use of Social Media as a School Principal.* There is no suggestion that such a relationship exists.

This study did provide interesting insight into the second research question, "How are principals using social media to communicate?" The survey found that of the 145 respondents to the survey, the majority of principals are using social media at a reported rate of 78.6%. When asked what social media sites that principals were active members of, the top three were Blogger (65.5%), Vimeo (51.7%), and Pinterest (47.6%). These responses were not consistent with the public's marked saturation of Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Principals were also asked to indicate how they were using social media tools. The most common way to connect with friends and family was through Facebook (51.7%), but the most common way to connect with peers and colleagues was through Twitter (54.5%). Twitter was also cited as the most used tool to learn about current technologies (29.7%) and to communicate with community members (17.9%). Google+ is the social medium of choice to communicate with staff members (13.8%), while Facebook (26.9%) is the favorite medium used by principals to promote their school to parents and prospective students. Very few principals use social media to make money. Only 0.7% of principals responded to use Facebook or Twitter for this purpose. The most commonly used social medium for purposes not mentioned in this survey was YouTube (18.6%). The social medium used the least by elementary school principals is WordPress (80.7%). When principals were asked open-endedly how they are using social media

tools in new and innovative ways, the overall themes that emerged were: promotion of their school, external communication, and professional development.

Elementary school principals were asked about their concerns when using social media. The top three major concerns were personal privacy (37.2%), already receiving too many emails and other online communications (31%), and already busy and don't have time (26.2%). There were also several areas where principals showed little to no concern in regards to social media use. Approximately 91% of principals reported no concern of their principals' association being against its use. Comparatively, 78.6% reported no concern over their district allowing access to social media. A reported 70.3% reported no concern over being unable to see the professional value of using social media.

## Implications

### Recommendations for practitioners.

Since there was a negative relationship discovered between years of experience and social media use, it may be beneficial for younger principals to mentor older principals on how to use social media effectively. Twitter was cited as the most commonly used social media tool for professional development. For example, mentoring could be accomplished via Twitter chat using appropriate hashtags. Another avenue for mentoring could be through a presentation at a principals' association meeting. Over 90% of participants reported no concern that their professional association was against its use. Finally, mentoring needs to take place between districts that are allowing access to social media tools with those districts that are not allowing access to social media tools. A reported 18.6% of principals work in districts that have no social media policy. They could rely heavily upon the reported 80% who report having such a policy in order to draft a comprehensive document. Additionally, a combined total of 25.5% of principals

reported their district's not allowing them access to social media tools was a concern. Mentoring received by the 73% who reported access to not be a concern may serve to alleviate some fear and hesitation.

There are numerous means by which principals are using social media for promotion, communication, and professional development. Some of these ideas included, "Looking at how to rebrand my school with the community. Determining a consistent twitter hashtag;" "We put our fundraising links on Twitter and Facebook. We also have a Twitter feed on our school webpage;" "I use youtube and touchcaset to create web casts for staff, students and families. Using this more in place of the traditional newsletter. Also using facebook and twitter to communicate, brand and showcase our school;" "Mass texts to families;" "Parent and community information sharing with pictures and short video;" "I use Google docs to collect teaching evidence in the classroom. Google+ for meetings with admin in other buildings. Facebook to brag about my school;" "Twitter is hands down one of the best PD forums on the market today. It is heavily utilized." Clearly, there is a wealth of knowledge among elementary school principals in regard to how social media tools can be utilized effectively. It would be beneficial to have a forum where these ideas could be shared, so leaders can quickly adopt methods that work best to serve their populations.

**Recommendations of academics.**

There continues to be a shortage of academic literature available exploring the relationships between educators, principals, and the use of social media. To date, only one other dissertation could be found on the topic. Meanwhile, the educational use of social media remains a heavily discussed topic in the school building, through blog posts, and at professional conferences.

This study only explored the use of social media among elementary school principals in Minnesota. Further research could be done within the state of Minnesota to determine if there are any differences among leaders serving at the middle and high school levels compared to their elementary colleagues. Studies could also be completed nation and even worldwide to look for differences in trends. This study only focused primarily on nine different social media tools mentioned in the literature: Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, YouTube, Vimeo, Blogger, WordPress, LinkedIn, and Google+. However, in addition to these aforementioned tools, respondents mentioned the use of *TouchCast* and *Schoology* in their day to day operations. This study could be further expanded to include more and different social media tools. It could also be expanded to include the use of popular applications on personal wireless devices such as the iPhone, iPad, or Chromebook.

While this study focused solely on school principals and their use of social media, further studies could be conducted to determine how teachers and students are using such tools and if their methods and motivations differ from those in school leadership positions. When analyzing the qualitative data for this study, this comment was made by one principal, "I use Twitter to host and moderate educational conversations (PD) and to collect/share innovative ideas to enhance the student learning experience." With over 80% of junior high students owning a mobile device according to Rideout et al. (2010), it would appear that there is room to discover how social media is impacting professional development and how it can be utilized by both teachers and students to "enhance the learning experience."

Parents are another population that could prove worthwhile to study when considering the educational use of social media. Porterfield and Carnes (2012) argue that when it comes to communication, "Today's parents refuse to be shut out of the education process" (p. 6). When

principals in this study were asked how they were using social media, ten of them mentioned the use of social media to communicate with parents, wanting to share information with them whether through text, pictures, or video. Further study could be used to explore how to strengthen communication between home and school through the use of social media.

**Concluding Comments**

The story of communication is one of evolution. From the beginning of time, humans have needed to communicate with one another. What started with a simple drumming system, evolved through the centuries to include smoke signals, carrier pigeons, the telegraph, the telephone, television, email, and now social media. What was once viewed as futuristic technology, the stuff of science fiction, such as Star Trek's communicator, and Knight Rider's watch, are now available for purchase at the local mall. One cannot predict with certainty how long the social media trend will last or what kind of an impression its footprint will leave on education. What is certain, is that all of humanity, including elementary school principals, will need to carry on adapting and evolving their communication methods in order to stay connected, share information, and continue to learn.

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Appendix A

Possible Survey Questions

Source: Schmucki, L., Hood, J., & Meell, S. (2010). *Final report: A survey of K–12 educators on social networking and content-sharing tools*. Retrieved from http://www.edweb.net/survey

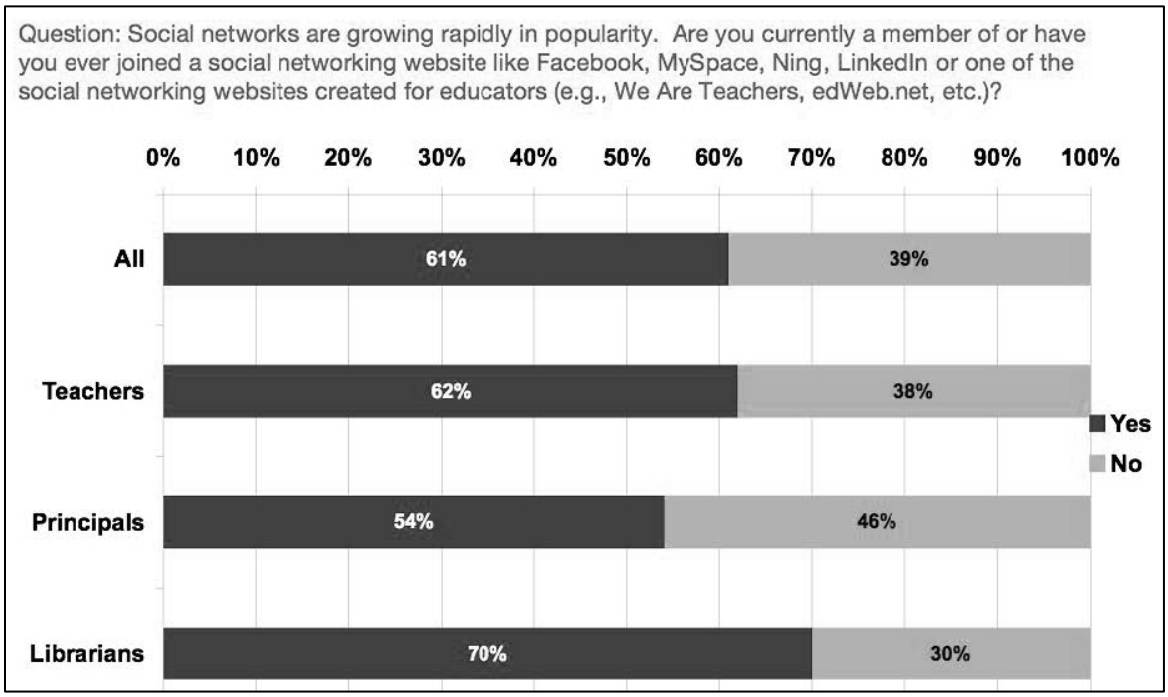


*Figure A-1. Principals were less likely than teachers or librarians to have joined a social network.*

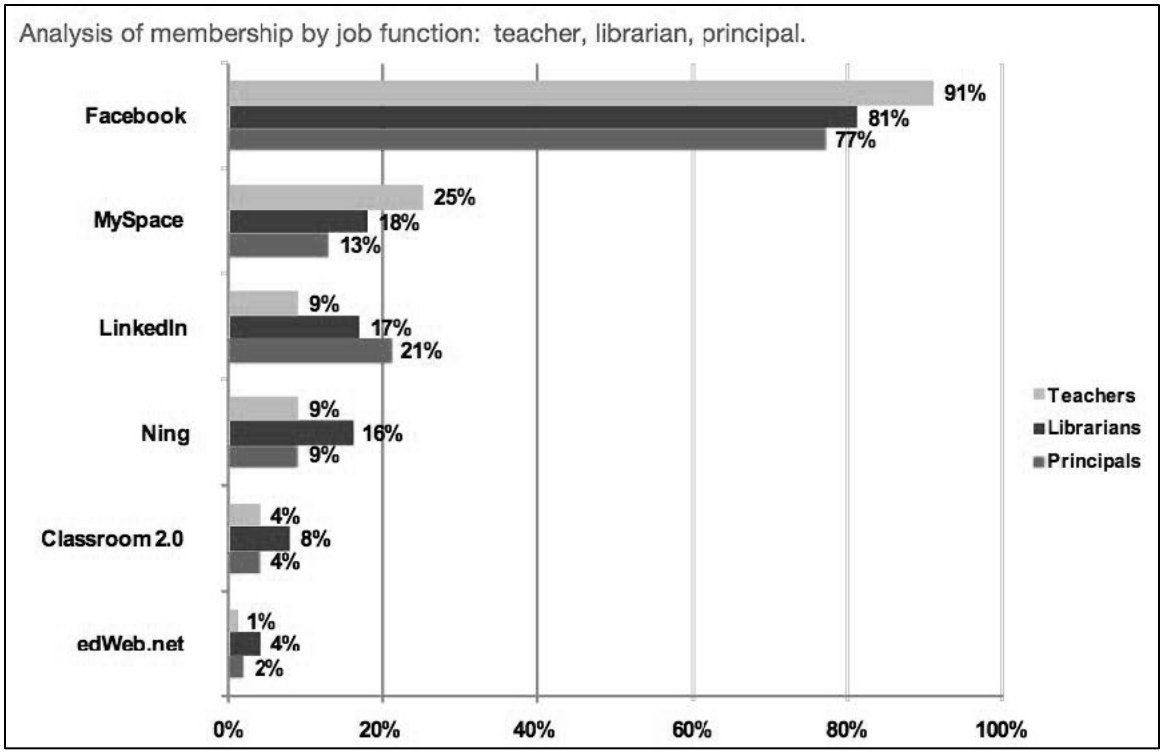


*Figure A-2. Social networking sites have different appeal for principals, teachers and librarians.*

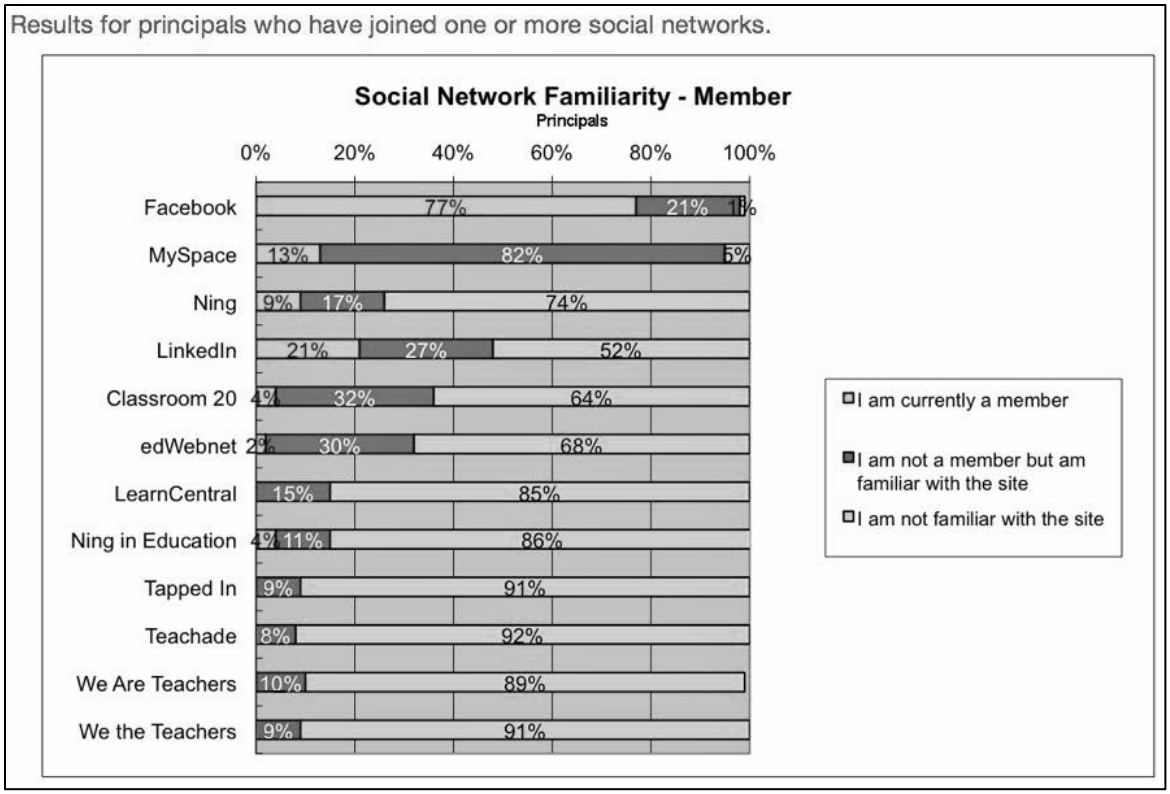


*Figure A-3. An overview of principal awareness of social networking websites.*

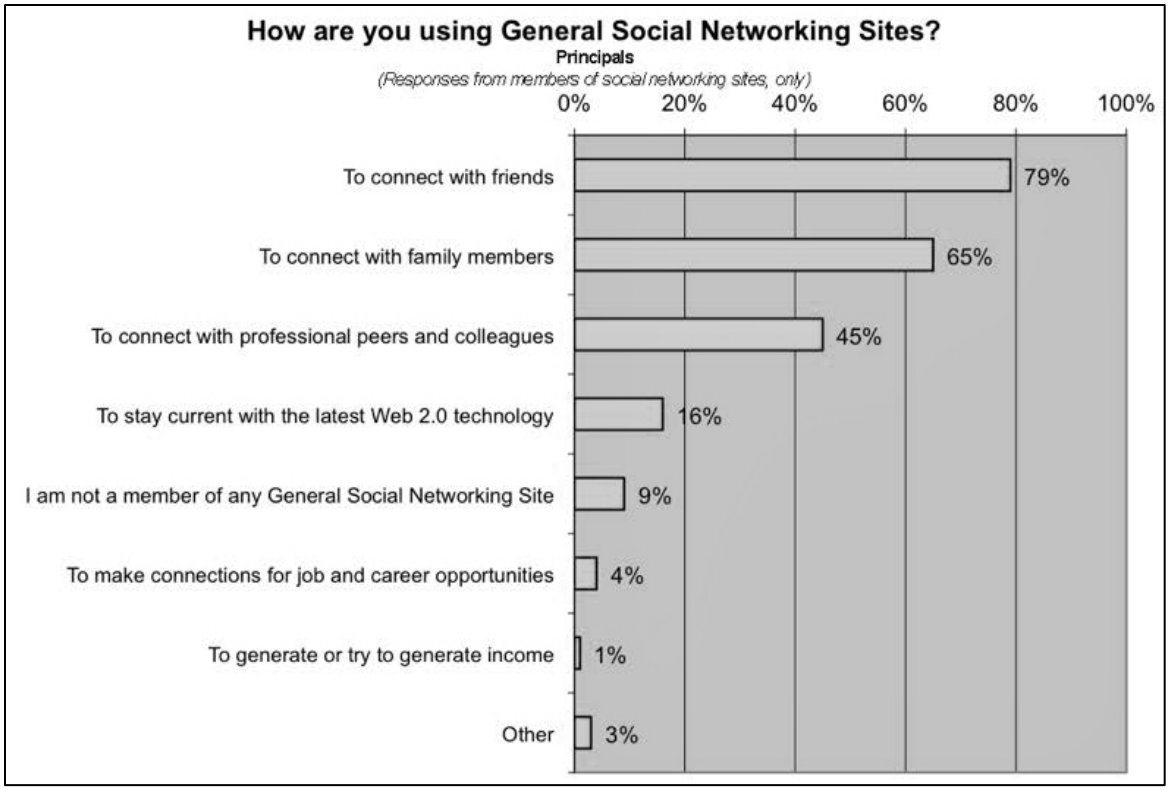


*Figure A-4. Principals use general social networks primarily for personal use.*

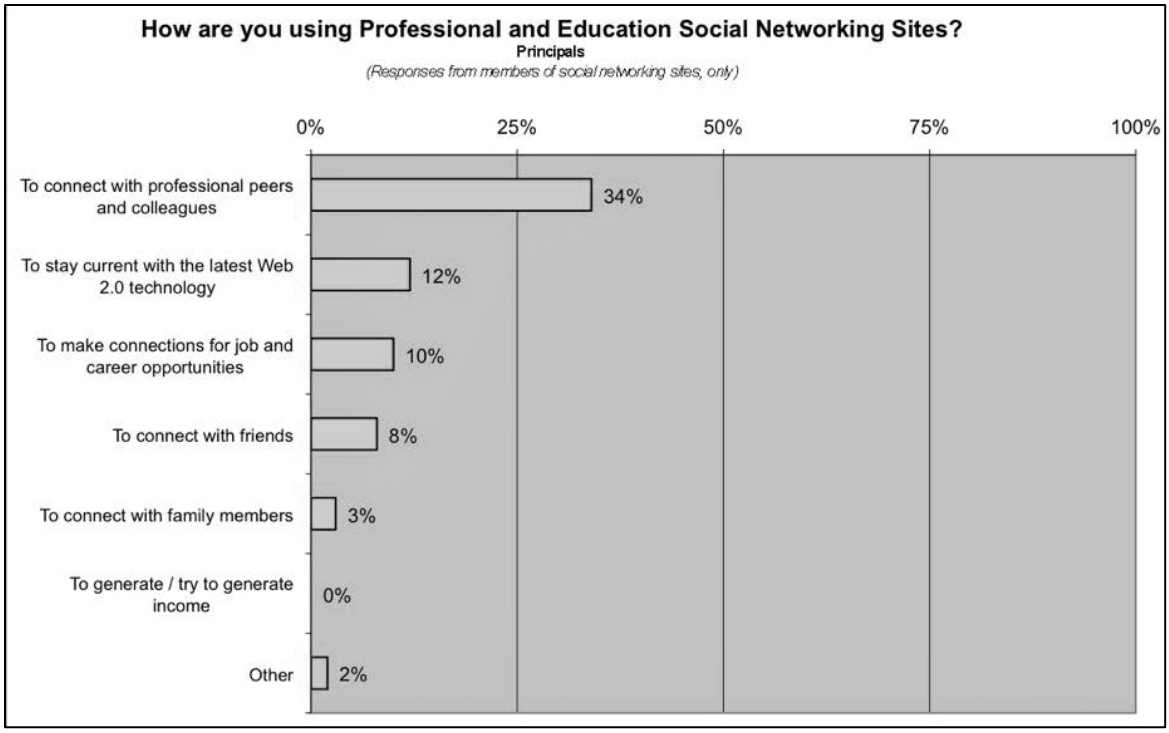


*Figure A-5. Principals prefer professional/educational social networks for professional use.*

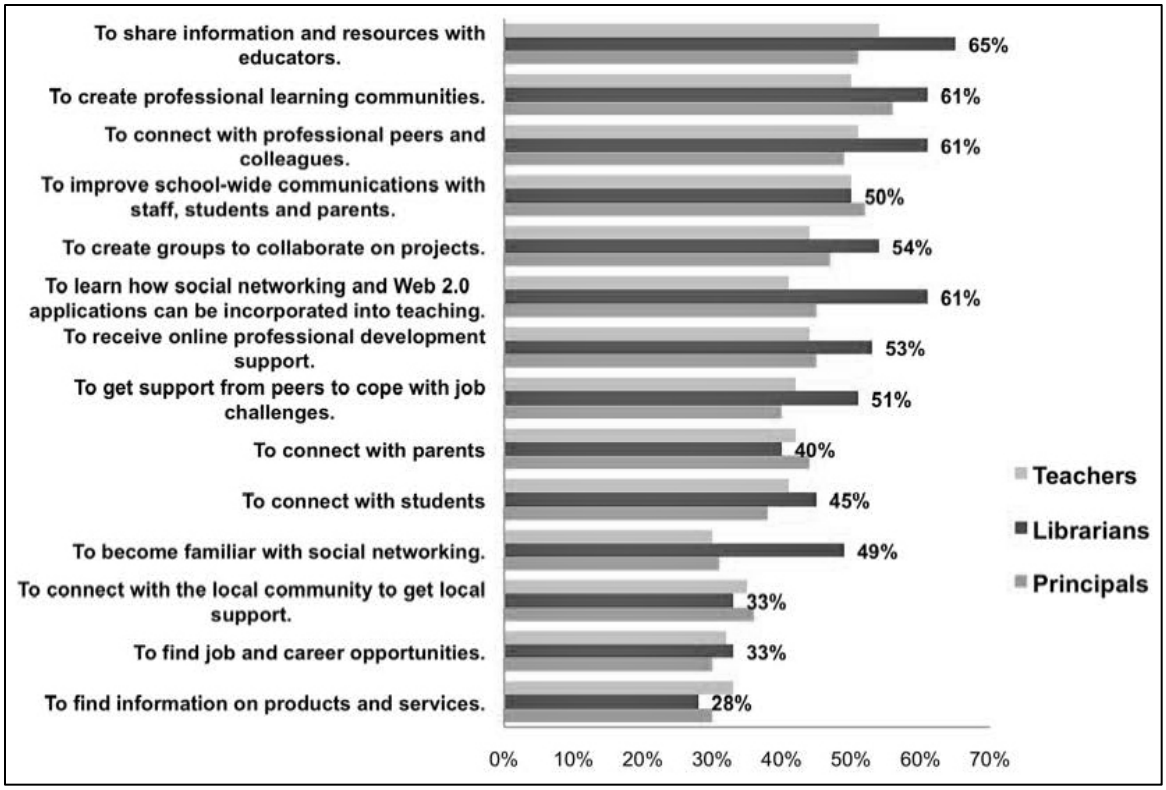


*Figure A-6. Librarians see the highest value in social networking, followed by principals, then teachers.*

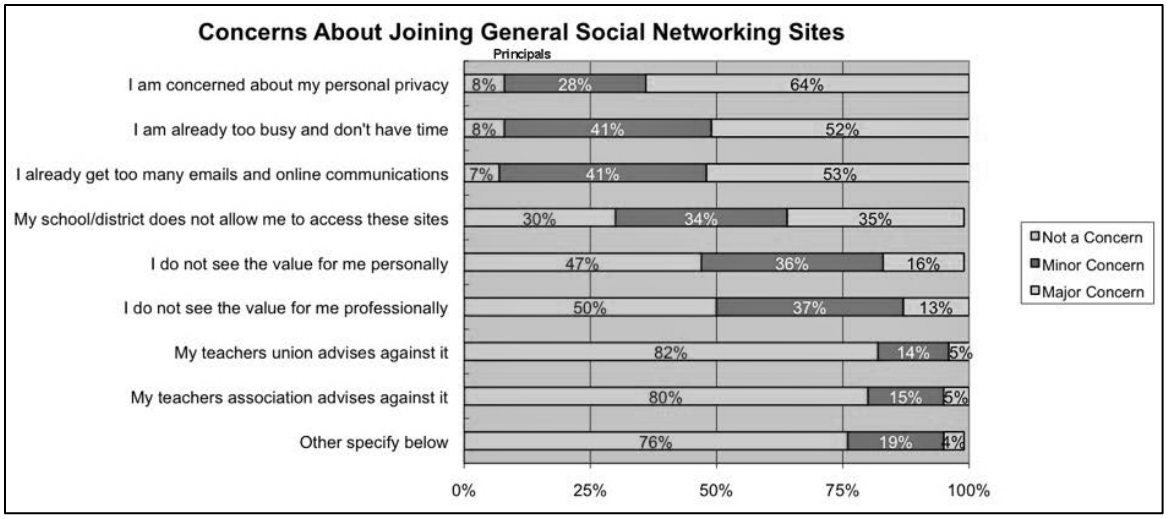


*Figure A-7. Principals have many concerns about joining general (non-professional) social networks.*

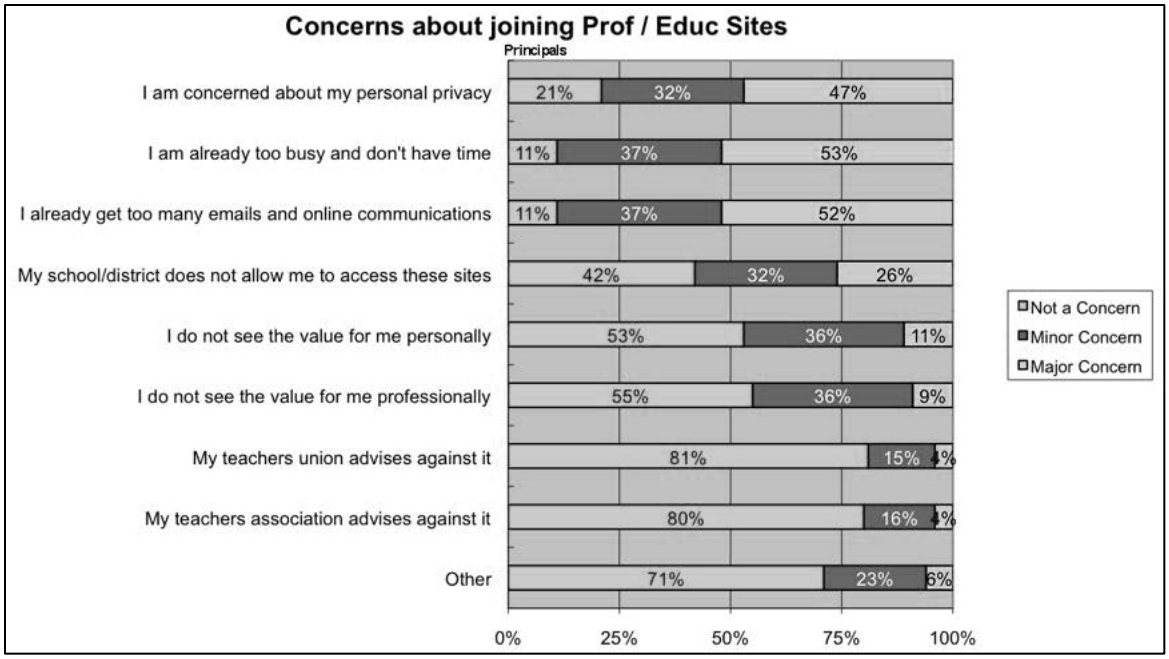


*Figure A-8. Principals' concerns about privacy are lower for professional/educational sites.*

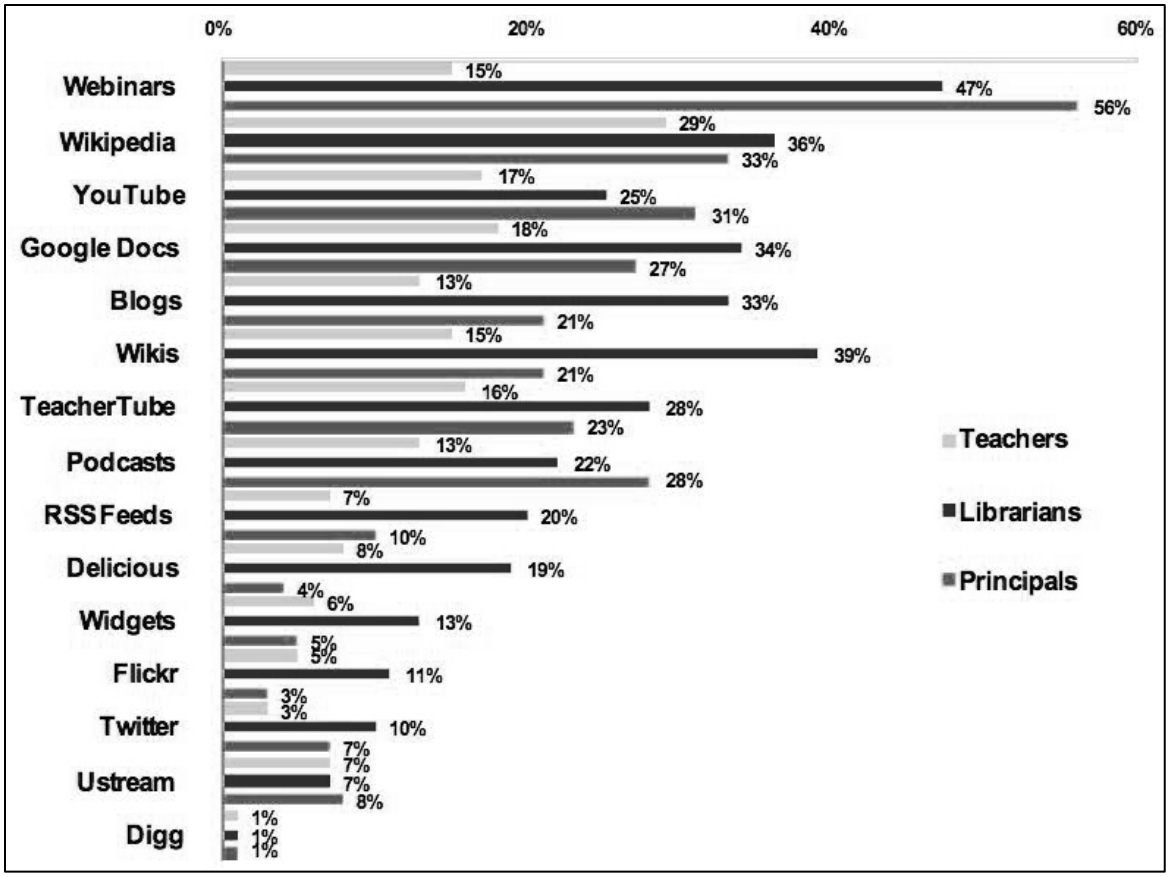


*Figure A-9. Principals are more active users of other collaborative technologies.*

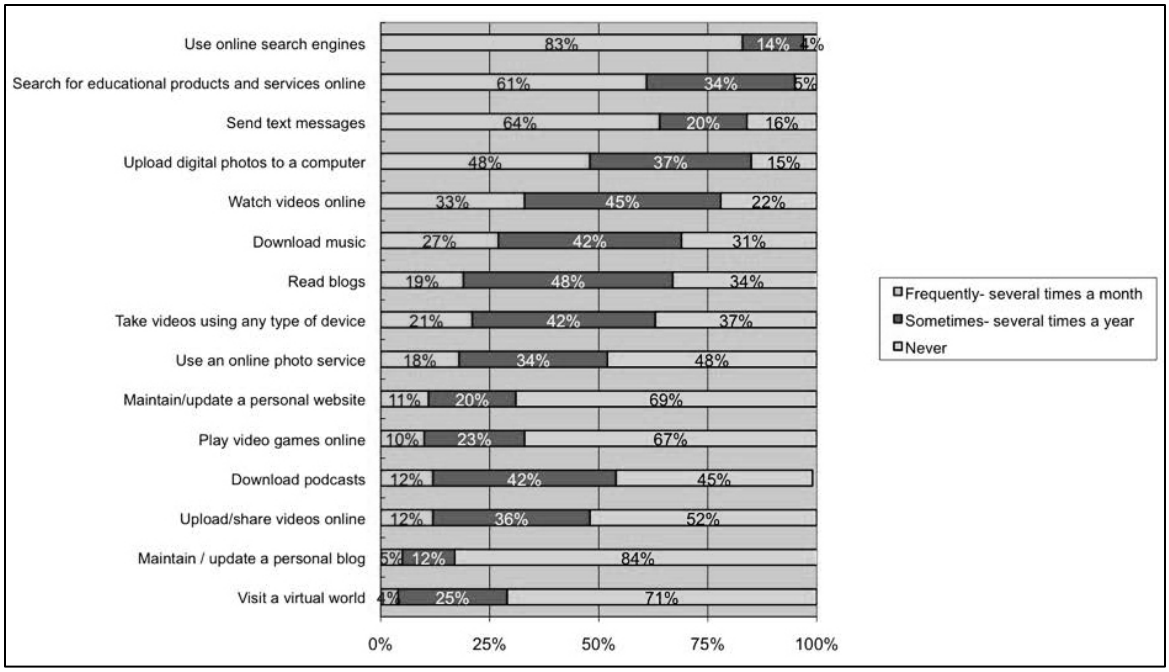


*Figure A-10. An overview of principals' participation in other online activities.*

Appendix B

Survey Questions

1) What is your age?

   Choose your age from the drop down menu. (Ages ranged from 25–65)

2) Does your school have a social media policy?

   Yes

   No

3) How many years have you been serving as an elementary school principal?

   1–5

   6–10

   11–15

   16 or more

4) What is your gender?

   Male

   Female

5) What is the setting of your school?

   Urban

   Rural

   Suburban

6) How large is your student population?

   0–500 students

   501–1000 students

   1001–1500 students

More than 1500 students

7) What percentage of your student enrollment meets the criteria for free/reduced lunch?

0–25%

26–50%

51–75%

76–100%

8) Communication is being increasingly delivered through social media. Are you currently an active participant with any form of social media including, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Google+, Pinterest, Vimeo, or Blogger?

Yes

No

9) For each of the following social media tools, please indicate whether you are currently a member, familiar with the tool, not a member, or have never heard of the site.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Facebook | Current Member | Familiar but not a member | Unfamiliar with the tool |
| Twitter | Current Member | Familiar but not a member | Unfamiliar with the tool |
| Pinterest | Current Member | Familiar but not a member | Unfamiliar with the tool |
| YouTube | Current Member | Familiar but not a member | Unfamiliar with the tool |
| Vimeo | Current Member | Familiar but not a member | Unfamiliar with the tool |
| Blogger | Current Member | Familiar but not a member | Unfamiliar with the tool |
| WordPress | Current Member | Familiar but not a member | Unfamiliar with the tool |
| Google+ | Current Member | Familiar but not a member | Unfamiliar with the tool |
| LinkedIn | Current Member | Familiar but not a member | Unfamiliar with the tool |

10) How are you using social media tools? Click all that apply.

Facebook

To connect personally with friends and family; To connect professionally with peers and colleagues; To learn about current technologies; To communicate with community members; To communicate with staff members; To promote your students to parents and prospective students; To make money; Other; I don't use this social media tool.

Twitter

To connect personally with friends and family; To connect professionally with peers and colleagues; To learn about current technologies; To communicate with community members; To communicate with staff members; To promote your students to parents and prospective students; To make money; Other; I don't use this social media tool.

Pinterest

To connect personally with friends and family; To connect professionally with peers and colleagues; To learn about current technologies; To communicate with community members; To communicate with staff members; To promote your students to parents and prospective students; To make money; Other; I don't use this social media tool.

YouTube

To connect personally with friends and family; To connect professionally with peers and colleagues; To learn about current technologies; To communicate with community members; To communicate with staff members; To promote your students to parents and prospective students; To make money; Other; I don't use this social media tool.

Vimeo

To connect personally with friends and family; To connect professionally with peers

and colleagues; To learn about current technologies; To communicate with community members; To communicate with staff members; To promote your students to parents and prospective students; To make money; Other; I don't use this social media tool.

Blogger

To connect personally with friends and family; To connect professionally with peers and colleagues; To learn about current technologies; To communicate with community members; To communicate with staff members; To promote your students to parents and prospective students; To make money; Other; I don't use this social media tool.

WordPress

To connect personally with friends and family; To connect professionally with peers and colleagues; To learn about current technologies; To communicate with community members; To communicate with staff members; To promote your students to parents and prospective students; To make money; Other; I don't use this social media tool.

LinkedIn

To connect personally with friends and family; To connect professionally with peers and colleagues; To learn about current technologies; To communicate with community members; To communicate with staff members; To promote your students to parents and prospective students; To make money; Other; I don't use this social media tool.

Google+

To connect personally with friends and family; To connect professionally with peers and colleagues; To learn about current technologies; To communicate with community members; To communicate with staff members; To promote your students to parents and prospective students; To make money; Other; I don't use this social media tool.

11) Please share how you are using social media tools in innovative ways as an administrator.

12) Please rate whether the concern listed is:

Not a concern, A Minor Concern, or a major Concern.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Personal Privacy | Not a Concern | Minor Concern | Major Concern |
| Already too busy and don't have time | Not a Concern | Minor Concern | Major Concern |
| I already receive too many emails and other online communications | Not a Concern | Minor Concern | Major Concern |
| My school district does not allow me to access these sites | Not a Concern | Minor Concern | Major Concern |
| I do not see the value for me personally | Not a Concern | Minor Concern | Major Concern |
| I do not see the value for me professionally | Not a Concern | Minor Concern | Major Concern |
| My principals' association advises against it | Not a Concern | Minor Concern | Major Concern |
| Other | Not a Concern | Minor Concern | Major Concern |

13) If you chose *other*, please list why you made this choice.

Appendix C

Email to Principals

Greetings,

You are being invited to participate in a research study among elementary school principals in the state of Minnesota. This study is being conducted by Jenny Hill, as part of a doctoral dissertation from the Department of Educational Leadership at Bethel University.

Survey Link: https://bethel.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_e9fRfnaYuQmISH3

There are no known risks if you decide to participate in this research study. There are no costs to you for participating in this study. The information you provide will be used to provide a better understanding of *social media between elementary school principals* in the state of Minnesota. The survey will take approximately *5 minutes* to complete. The information learned in this study will provide general benefits in the study of social media among principals and may provide global benefits for principal preparations.

This survey is anonymous. No identifying information including names, e-mail addresses, or computer IP addresses will be collected; however absolute anonymity cannot be guaranteed through the use of the Internet. Your answers or identity will not be able to be identified in this survey. In addition, your participation or non-participation in this survey will also not be identified. Individuals from the Institutional Review Board may inspect these records. Should the data be published, no individual information will be disclosed.

Please follow the link to participate in this study:

Your participation in this study is voluntary and *extremely appreciated!* By completing the survey, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate.

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Jenny Hill at jch93249@bethel.edu.

Your participation is sincerely appreciated!

Sincerely,

Jenny Hill

Jenny Hill
St. Michael Elementary Media Specialist
Bethel University Doctoral Candidate

Appendix D

Follow-up Email to Principals

Greetings,

Thank you to the administrators who already participated in the survey regarding the use of social media tools and elementary school principals in Minnesota. Your quick response was greatly appreciated!

If you haven't yet completed this survey, don't miss out!

Join the many administrators on sharing your experience with social media. The link will be active for the remainder of this week. Please use the link below to complete the survey.

Survey Link: https://bethel.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_e9fRfnaYuQmISH3

Sincerely,

Jenny Hill

Jenny Hill
St. Michael Elementary Media Specialist
Bethel University Doctoral Candidate
jch93249@bethel.edu

Appendix E

Consent to Participate in Research

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a study of elementary school principals and their use of social media. I hope to learn what factors influence a principal's decision to utilize these communication tools. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are a public elementary principal working in Minnesota and your e-mail address was on file at the Minnesota Department of Education. This research is part of a dissertation study at Bethel University.

If you decide to participate, I will ask you to complete a 13 question survey. It should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. You may choose not to participate without penalty. There are no risks for participating in this study, nor will there be any compensation.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. None of this study's participants will be identified or identifiable in any written reports or publications.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relationship with Bethel University in any way. If you decide to participate, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

This research project has been reviewed and approved in accordance with Bethel University's Levels of Review for Research with Humans. If you have any questions about the research and/or research participants' rights or wish to report a research related injury, please call Dr. Craig Paulson at 651-635-8025.

By completing and returning the survey, you are granting consent to participate in this research.

Appendix F

Permission to Use National Survey

**Jennifer Hill** <jch93249@bethel.edu> Tue, Nov 25, 2014 at 7:23 PM

To: smeell@mmseducation.com, lisa@edweb.net, JohnH@mchdata.com

Cc: Tracy Reimer <t-reimer@bethel.edu>

Good Evening,

I am working on my Ed. D., and I am writing a dissertation on elementary school principals and their use of social media in schools. While collecting information for my literature review, I can across three articles you have written:

Schmucki, L., Hood, J., & Meell, S. (2010). Final report: A survey of K–12 educators on social networking and content-sharing tools.

edWeb.net, IESD, Inc., MCH, Inc., & MMS Education. (2010). School principals and social networking in education: Practices, policies, and realities in 2010. Princeton, NJ: Author. Retrieved from http://www.edWeb.net

Schmucki, L. Hood, J., & Meell, S. (2012). 2012 survey of k–12 educators on social networking, online communities, and Web 2.0 tools. Retrieved from http://www.mmseducation.com/Educators-and SocialNetworking_FinalReport_MMSEducation.pdf

I would like to seek permission not to duplicate your 2010 study in its entirety, but to use your survey questions as a basis for my research in the state of Minnesota. Thank you so much for your time.

Sincerely,

Jenny Hill

---

**Lisa Schmucki** <lisa@edweb.net> Wed, Nov 26, 2014 at 8:33 AM

To: Jennifer Hill <jch93249@bethel.edu>

Cc: Susan Keipper Meell <smeell@mmseducation.com>, John Hood <JohnH@mchdata.com>, Tracy Reimer <t-reimer@bethel.edu>

Hi Jennifer,
Yes, you have our permission to use the same survey questions.

Good luck with your research.

Lisa
—

Lisa Schmucki
Founder & CEO
**edWeb.net**

---

**Susan Meell** <SMeell@mmseducation.com> Wed, Nov 26, 2014 at 12:29 PM

To: Jennifer Hill <jch93249@bethel.edu>

Cc: John Hood <JohnH@mchdata.com>, Tracy Reimer <t-reimer@bethel.edu>, Lisa Schmucki <lisa@edweb.net>

Hi Jennifer –

Yes, agree with Lisa that it is fine to use the questions but request that if you use the questions exactly as they were written for our studies, that you give credit to the three organizations in your research report. Thanks and good luck with your research.

Susan

Susan Meell
CEO
MMS Education
Direct: 215-579-5956
800-523-5948, ext. 3142
smeell@mmseducation.com
www.mmseducation.com

Appendix G

Qualitative Analysis Themes

| Theme: SCHOOL PROMOTION |
| --- |
| Facebook to promote our school |
| Parent and community information sharing with pictures and short video. * |
| Share the great things going on within our school. To bring the school into the homes of our students. |
| Communication and PR |
| Facebook as the 'new' newsletter provides an opportunity to create and build culture and tell a school story (mission/vision connections with programming). |
| We put our fundraising links on Twitter and Facebook. We also have a Twitter feed on our school webpage. |
| The school has a Facebook site but I don't personally manage it. It is overseen by the Office/Communications Manager as well as a member of the board with marketing background. Each teach keeps a "Classroom Page" on our school's website, which includes a weekly newsletter as well as details on homework, often times with actual copies of handouts. * |
| I have delegated staff to upload pictures on the school facebook page to showcase learning. I have tried to send out a couple of tweets but do not regularly use it. I use weekly email blasts to parents who have signed up. * |
| We use social media to send out announcements, to keep our community informed about exciting things that are taking place in our school. |
| Looking at how to rebrand my school with the community. Determining a consistent twitter hashtag! |
| parent communication, promote school events, share school successes. |
| I just started to use Facebook and Twitter this year to share and promote information about my school. I wouldn't say I've done anything innovative or new yet. |
| I use Twitter as the main way to share about all the good things at our school. I also use it personally to learn professionally. |
| Using twitter to record and publish positive happenings in our school. |

Theme: SHARING INFORMATION WITH STUDENTS' FAMILIES

I use youtube and touchcaset to create web casts for staff, students and families. Using this more in place of the traditional newsletter. Also using facebook and twitter to communicate, brand and showcase our school.

Parent and community information sharing with pictures and short video.

We use Facebook and Twitter to communicate happenings in the elementary and high school. Twitter is also used for school closings and cancellations.

We have a school twitter account and Facebook account that is updated daily.

Support teachers in flipped classroom, schoology communication with parents, staff and students.

Not sure it is new, but I use Twitter to connect in real time with parents about things happening in school, news items, and to promote what is happening at school.

I use You Tube to create videos to communicate with parents. Has not been overly affective.

I try to use twitter 1–2 days a week to let others know what's happening in our school.

Mass texts to families

The school has a Facebook site but I don't personally manage it. It is overseen by the Office/Communications Manager as well as a member of the board with marketing background. Each teach keeps a "Classroom Page" on our school's website, which includes a weekly newsletter as well as details on homework, often times with actual copies of handouts. *

I have delegated staff to upload pictures on the school facebook page to showcase learning. I have tried to send out a couple of tweets but do not regularly use it. I use weekly email blasts to parents who have signed up. *

Posting of information and news about our school, PTO, etc.

We use facebook and youtube as a school to communicate with parents and to advertise current events; nothing innovative or new.

touchcast is being used to share current info with publics

I find putting the info into the parents hands is important. Any tool I can use that makes it go to the parent without having them have to go someplace else is my key.

I use Facebook and Twitter to share school happenings and reminders with parents.

Using a school Twitter account to update parents and community members of the daily activity in the school.

---

Theme: STAFF/DISTRICT CONTACT OR MEETINGS

---

Host Twitter staff meetings and professional development.*

I use youTube for video upload of teacher walk throughs for teacher to review before our observation conversation.

We are using Twitter and Google to respond during staff meetings. I am also trying to do a Tweet a week as a PR message about our school.

We have google doc we created for PLCs for data

I use Google docs to collect teaching evidence in the classroom. Google+ for meetings with admin in other buildings. Facebook to brag about my school.

hangout meeting

Training, staff meeting motivation, ideas outside the box for staff/students/community.*

---

Theme: TRAINING/STAFF DEVELOPMENT

---

Host Twitter staff meetings and professional development.*

I use them to connect with friends colleagues and others personally and professionally.

I use Twitter to host and moderate educational conversations (PD) and to collect/share innovative ideas to enhance the student learning experience. (i.e., get the latest information and perspectives on current best practice, innovative tools, modular robotics, 3D printing, to crowd-source funding for digital technologies, etc.)

Twitter is probably the biggest change as I use it to both connect with colleagues, but also for viewing current articles. Our school just started with Facebook to promote our school.

Personal professional development.

I am using Twitter to participate in weekly education and leadership forums.

I don't think twitter chats are new or innovative, but participating in a variety of chats and getting connected to others beyond my district has been a learning experience. I use it for PD for sure!

Twitter is hands down one of the best PD forums on the market today. It is heavily utilized.

Schoology for professional development, book studies, etc.

I am using the to build my PLN.

Training, staff meeting motivation, ideas outside the box for staff/students/community.*

---

* Indicates that there was inconsistency in coding between the researcher and the objective analyzer. In each case, statements are recorded under both categories.