

School Advocacy and Community Outreach: Barriers to the Implementation of Social Media Tools for
K-12 Principals

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
List of Tables	vi
Abstract.....	1
Chapter 1 - Introduction.....	2
Importance of Communication in the Role of the Principal.....	2
Social Media and the School.....	4
Social Media and the School Principal.....	5
Statement of the Problem.....	6
Purpose of the Study.....	7
Research Questions.....	8
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	9
Dramatic Growth of Social Media Usage in Public and Corporate Settings.....	9
Theoretical Perspectives for This Study.....	14
Principals as Autonomous Decision Makers.....	23
School Principals and Issues of Communication.....	25
Social Media as a Branding Tool.....	31
Social Media and Educational Leadership.....	39
Chapter 3– Methods.....	45
Research Design.....	45
Setting of the Study.....	46
Participants.....	47
Procedures.....	50

Data Analysis	54
Researcher’s Role	56
Summary	57
Chapter 4–Research Findings	59
Taxonomy Results	59
Interview Procedures	61
Themes	62
The Themes and the Theoretical Framework	80
Summary	85
Chapter 5–Discussion, Implications, Recommendations, and Further Research	86
Discussion of Research Questions	86
Implications for Practice	94
Recommendations for Practicing Principals	96
Limitations and Delimitations	99
Recommendations for Further Research	101
Conclusion	105
References	109
Appendices	119
Appendix A - Dearborn Institutional Review Board Approval	120
Appendix B - Research Introduction and Invitation to Participate	121
Appendix C - Questionnaire Items	122
Appendix D - Interview Questions	124

List of Tables

Table	Title	Page
1	Students by Racial Categories.....	45
2	2014 U. S. Census Data for Research Setting.....	46
3	Principal Code Description.....	47
4	Participant Demographic Data.....	48
5	Taxonomy of Interest in Social Media Use.....	58
6	Codes and Numbers of Principals at Building-level and Grades.....	61
7	Frequency and Distribution of Themes.....	62

Abstract

This qualitative study describes, analyzes, and interprets the perceptions and beliefs related to barriers of the use and efficacy of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach by principals in the kindergarten through 12th grade setting in one suburban district located outside of a major metropolitan center. School advocacy is the active process of communicating the vision, mission, and beliefs of the educational organization to the greater community that the school serves. Community outreach signifies the steps schools take to build and maintain strong partnerships with members of the community at large. To successfully advocate for the school and reach out to the community, principals must have strong communication skills and the tools to successfully convey their messages. Although a growing menu of social media tools are popular in modern society, and competition for students has increased with the proliferation of school choice, some practicing principals have reservations about implementing social media tools into their comprehensive communication plan. Four themes related to perceptions of barriers to implementation of social media tools emerged from semi-structured interviews with practicing principals. Issues of privacy, time and fidelity, choice of tools, and roles as school promoters were discussed as they related to the framework of social cognitive theory.

Keywords: school advocacy, community outreach, social media tools, barriers

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Decision-making is not new to K-12 principals across the United States who have been responsible for many decisions in the successful operation of their respective schools. Their decisions cover a wide variety of topics from the development of the school's mission and vision to the plan for dismissing a group of students from an assembly. Kellough (2008) stated that when a principal makes a decision, he or she "must remain focused, calm, sensible, and committed to the school's mission and vision" (p. 19). Most educational organizations grant the principal a certain level of autonomy to make appropriate decisions that further the mission of the school. Agasisti, Catalano, and Sibiano (2013) reported that a majority of principals surveyed were confident that they could effectively make autonomous decisions within their role. Principals are autonomous decision-makers who are responsible for the safe, efficient, and effective operation of schools.

Importance of Communication in the Role of the Principal

Decisions related to communication with stakeholders also fall under the responsibilities of the building principal (Daresh & Playko, 1997). Farrell and Collier (2010) stated that the primary reason principals communicate with the broader educational community is to promote family involvement, which in turn, predicts child outcomes. Effectively communicating with families and taking steps to ensure that messages sent by the school reach families increases the opportunity for collaboration. Plevyak and Heaston (2001) stated that parents who are more connected to the school are able to partner with the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

school, which can lead to higher levels of student achievement, lower dropout rates, and an overall higher level of success of the school (Farrell & Collier, 2010). Principals who successfully promote the quality of the teaching and learning that occurs in the school are more likely to sustain an effective educational organization (Ferriter, Ramsden, & Sheninger, 2011).

Communication is also an essential component of successful leadership styles and recognized leadership theories. The concept of servant leadership emphasizes the importance of listening skills in communication with constituents (Greenleaf, 1977). Northouse (2010) discussed various leadership styles and theories. He stated that principals who exhibit the characteristics of transformational and charismatic leadership theories also exhibit communication skills that are an essential part of their overall practice, and that leaders use these skills to motivate and inspire members of organizations. Northouse (2010) further explored connections between the leader-member exchange theory and effective communication. He asserted that communication is the foundation for useful exchanges between leaders and subordinates and that trust, respect, and commitment are built through effective communication.

Social media is one form of communication that has increased with more users and more frequent use in the past decade. Pikas and Sorrentino (2014) reported more than one billion Facebook users and more than 35 million Twitter users worldwide in 2012. People are now able to use social media to follow their favorite team, their favorite celebrity, even their favorite grocery store. Social Media has become a branding tool for businesses, community organizations, and other service industries that are looking to develop a group of followers (Ryan & Jones, 2009).

Social Media and the School

The growing popularity of social media presents issues related to the school's use of social media as a tool for communicating with parents and the community. Questions come to mind: Can a parent use social media to receive updates about the status of their child's school? Can a community member find out what is happening during the day while children are learning? Do parents want and expect this level of communication? Some would say that they do. "In today's connected world, members of a school community expect more than just open houses and photocopied newsletters. They want frequent updates. They want to give their feedback. They expect to collaborate" (Dixon, 2012, p. 1). Communication with parents, community members, and other stakeholders is becoming increasingly important in education.

"While establishing strong lines of communication within the schoolhouse has always been essential for maintaining focus and for building momentum toward shared objectives, communication beyond the schoolhouse has become more important than ever" (Ferriter et al., 2011, p. 5). Outreach to the community helps to build connections with families and increase public confidence in their schools. Ferriter et al. compared community outreach to the concept of branding in the business world. Just as a business hopes that a consumer will buy their product instead of a competitor's, schools communicate with the stakeholders in the community to exemplify the quality and level of education a child will receive when parents select that school. School advocacy and community outreach are both necessary for a school to build its brand and, to be successful in their role as the leader of the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

school, the principal is responsible to ensure that all stakeholders receive the essential communication.

Social Media and the School Principal

In the environment where school principals often have autonomy to make decisions, where communication is important to school success, and social media tools are increasingly popular, why are some principals not making a decision to use social media tools more frequently to communicate with their stakeholders? This is not the case in all schools; some school principals have embraced the wave of social media tools that now allow them to communicate with more people more frequently than they ever have before and, in turn, promote their brand through community outreach (Cox, 2014). “Social media tools are one method by which school principals could share with stakeholders their decision making processes and schools accomplishments on a regular basis using communication channels that those citizens prefer” (Cox & McLeod, 2014, p. 5). Principals who have adopted social media would tell others that the time has come that all schools should be using these tools (Cox & McLeod, 2014).

Principals who serve as leaders of educational organizations may have considered the use of social media in a comprehensive communication plan as part of their training and preparation for assuming the leadership role. The International Society for Technology in Education [ISTE], (2009) maintains standards for school administrators, which outline expectations for the use of technological tools for communication with the broader educational community. Books by McLeod and Lehmann (2012) and Dixon (2012) also assist principals and other school leaders and help them understand what they need to know about digital technologies and social media in schools.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Dixon (2012) suggested that principals' reluctance to implement social media stems from a fear of the technology, a lack of understanding of the technology, or because of district level policies. Much of the current research about the topic is based on the experience of principals who have already successfully implemented these tools into their communication plans. Little research has been conducted where principals are interviewed and asked about their reluctance surrounding social media tools. The voice of the principal who wants to communicate with today's social media tools but has not implemented that practice into their communication plan is missing. Further, principals considering the use of social media tools could benefit from the deliberative experience of principals who have more recently adopted new forms of communication. This study describes the barriers in the decision-making process that exist for reluctant principals and seeks possible steps to facilitate successful implementation of social media tools for communication.

Statement of the Problem

Significant and rapid increases in the use social media tools have occurred in the last decade by individuals and in the wider community in business, politics, and education (Safko, 2010). Hines, Edmonson, and Moore (2008) pointed to the increased need for school principals to communicate electronically as well. "School administrators (superintendent, principal, and so on) are in positions that necessitate communication with a wide variety of people about different situations, problems, and issues" (Young, Berube, & Perry, 2008, p. 81). In the electronically charged environment, principals must decide what messages to send and to choose the tool most likely to successfully communicate that message.

Barriers to the use of social media tools may deter school principals' desire for successful, comprehensive communication practices. A clear understanding of the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

perceptions of school principals has the potential to bring about increased effective and efficient stakeholder communication through the use of social media tools

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe, analyze, and interpret the barriers of practicing K-12 principals related to the use of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach. This study focuses on principals in the kindergarten through 12th grade setting in one suburban district located in the Midwest near the border of a major urban center. Themes that emerged in the responses of participants through semi-structured interviews identified barriers to successful implementation of social media tools. This research expanded the current body of research studies and literature that address principals who already use these tools. The research included the perceptions of those who wish to use social media tools in the future as well as those currently using these tools today. Data gathered in this study are also compared to the tenets of social cognitive theory to explore possible connections and correlations.

For the purposes of this study, the use of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach is a function in the role of the school principal who provides information about the school or school related events to the broader educational community. This definition does not include direct communication with individual parents regarding specific issues that occur and may be communicated through email or other communication technologies. These types of communications do not usually use social media and are often more directly student-specific in nature. This research is valuable to the field, as it will help to identify barriers that deter some educational leaders from the successful use of social media tools.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Research Questions

This qualitative study is framed by a primary question and a series of sub-questions, which are more specific in nature and help to explore this issue in greater detail.

Q. 1 What barriers do principals face in the implementation of social media tools related to school advocacy and community outreach in the kindergarten through 12th grade settings?

- a. How do principals feel they can effectively communicate using social media tools?
- b. Is there evidence of organizational motivation or outside influence to change practice and communicate with social media tools?
- c. What are the expected positive outcomes of social media use and how do they compare to any expected negative outcomes?

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

The review of literature in this chapter addressed issues related to the role of social media in educational leadership and the perceived barriers toward the use of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach by practicing k-12 principals. The emergence of social media and use in public and corporate settings is explored along with theories of behavior change and adaptation and cognitive learning. Leadership theories and the roles of school principals as decision-makers and communicators are examined as a backdrop to a discussion of the concept of branding using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach.

Dramatic Growth of Social Media Usage in Public and Corporate Settings

The term social media has been largely associated with mobile, electronic, interactive communication via channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. However, contrary to traditional means of getting information in home-delivered newspapers, land-line telephones, and face-to-face visits over the backyard fence, social media now offers the public and corporate sectors limitless access to give and receive web-based information, any time or location via a growing number of electronic devices (Cohen, 2011).

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) provided some perspective about the growth of social media.

The Internet started out as nothing more than a giant Bulletin Board System (BBS) that allowed users to exchange software, data, messages, and news with each other.

The late 1990s saw a popularity surge in homepages, whereby the Average Joe could

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

share information about his private life; today's equivalent would be the weblog, or blog. The era of corporate web pages and e-commerce started relatively recently with the launch of Amazon and eBay in 1995, and got a right ticking-off only 6 years later when the dot-com bubble burst in 2001. (p. 60)

According to national surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center, in 2000, the telephone in most homes was a landline. Not many people were engaged in social media, and there were no smartphones. Most online access was conducted in a specific place for a specific reason. In 2014, nearly two-thirds of adults used social networking sites – a nearly tenfold jump in the past decade from 2005 when Pew Research Center began systematically tracking social media usage. The trend is toward wireless communication, with fewer households retaining landlines, and mobile internet access is increasing. Pew statistics showed 90% of respondents reported access to any type of cell phone and more specifically smartphone usage by 58% of respondents and increasing every year (Smith, 2014).

Pew Research reports have documented in great detail how the rise of social media has affected such things as work, politics and political deliberation, communications patterns around the globe, as well as the way people get and share information about health, civic life, news consumption, communities, teenage life, parenting, dating, and even people's level of stress. (Perrin, 2015..n. p.)

The current trend toward the use of social media can be seen as an evolution back to the Internet's roots, since it retransforms the World Wide Web to what it was initially created for: a platform to facilitate information exchange between users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Although 90% of adults aged 18 to 29 use social media, Pew statistics indicated that the growth in the number of Americans aged 65 and older who use social media has

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

increased from 2% in 2005 to 35% in 2015. Among all adults, only 15% remain offline. Men and women showed little difference in the rates of usage. Consistently, higher education levels and household income correlated with higher usage of social media, although more than half of households in the lowest income and educational attainment levels used social media. Similar patterns of online usage were reported for White (65%), Hispanic (65%), and African-American adults (56%). Analysis by type of community showed that more than half of rural residents used social media compared to approximately two-thirds of suburban and urban residents (Perrin, 2015).

Social media use in business. Reiss-Davis (2013) reported that 100% of business decision-makers use social media for work purposes. The use of social media is beyond the experimental stage for business; business leaders want to know how their customers are using social media and want to establish an interactive relationship that benefits the business and the customer.

Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) confirmed that the concept of social media is an important interest for many business executives today. Decision-makers and consultants devote more time to identify ways in which firms can make profitable use of interactive applications such as Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, as opposed to the traditional one-way marketing techniques.

Social Media in Government. In the Washington Post's Capital Business section, Steven Overly (2010) noted that many government agencies, such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development of HUD, have recognized opportunities to engage people via Facebook and other social media. While the goal of a commercial establishment may be to attract new business, a government contractor may need to connect with a community of

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

key government allies or to communicate with the public about government issues. Overly reported comments made by Mark Drapeau, the Director of Innovative Social Engagement for Microsoft's U.S. Public Sector, to government social media enthusiasts, "People care about issues, he said. Pages related to issues like water conservation or carbon emissions might help an organization like the EPA better reach interested constituents and promote its mission" (n.p.).

Aaron Smith (2014), senior researcher for the Pew Research Center's Internet Project spoke at the Public Affairs Council in Washington DC about the state of social media and its impact on grassroots efforts and advocacy. Survey research has shown that people take more interest in civic issues that they encounter on social media but that politics is not a favorite topic of conversation and use of social media to promote candidates or push acceptance of specific ideas is more likely to generate frustration or annoyance. Findings showed that traditional methods such as direct mail and phone calls are more effective in moving a targeted constituency to act.

Social Media use in healthcare. Millions of people log onto social media websites daily, prompting the involvement of such varied entities as Gaithersburg-based MedImmune, the American Red Cross, healthcare providers and related product and services. Belbrey (2015) reported that, "As a regulated industry, many healthcare organizations have avoided the use of social media, and have even tried to squelch its use by their employees. However, some healthcare providers are beginning to realize that there are opportunities to serve the public, patients and physicians, all while building awareness and enhancing their brand" (p. 1).

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Consumers make healthcare decisions based on social media research and are more likely to trust and choose providers who are likewise engaged in social media communication. Physicians can network with professional colleagues and peers and share medical knowledge. Patients benefit from ease of scheduling procedures and timely reports, thus creating a more comfortable and personal connection to the highly diversified system of healthcare providers. "In short, social media is a platform where the public, patients and healthcare professionals can communicate about health issues and possibly improve health outcomes" (Belbrey, 2015, p. 1).

The Pew Internet Project has tracked the internet's role in decision-making, finding that many people use online resources to compare their options. Social media's influence is on the rise as more and more people look for advice from peers as well as experts. The idea is that, if people can pool knowledge and learn to track their own health metrics, such as their weight or cholesterol counts, they can make better choices and have better health outcomes. (Fox & Purcell, 2010, p. 1)

Social media use in education. The increasing use of social media by all segments of the population has presented opportunities and dilemmas for educators. Ferriter (2011) shared edWeb.net information that "Sixty-one percent of teachers, principals, and librarians are active in at least one social media space. Many use those spaces for professional development—attending webinars, watching YouTube videos, listening to podcasts, or participating on blogs" (p. 87). In general, however, school leaders block social media use in schools in attempt to avoid misuse, cyberbullying, and other inappropriate practices.

Ferriter (2011) cited Eric Sheninger, principal of New Milford High School in New Jersey, a proponent of the use of social media for communicating with the community in real

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

time via Facebook and Twitter. Outgoing messages about the school's programs generates interaction with parents and others with support or requests for further information. The principal pointed to the benefits of connecting with stakeholders and finding a way of sharing the thoughts and feelings of students. Sheninger suggested observing the process of using social media for communication with the community before adopting, establishing a clear purpose and goals and adopting policies to protect privacy. Integrating social media tools into a school's communication plan is an important step to build relationships with stakeholders and may be a tool for revising student instruction as well.

Theoretical Perspectives for This Study

How we face uncertainty and ultimately adapt is what drives us to design simple or complex tools to make our lives more efficient (Nemeth, 2012). This adaptation process for school principals includes methods and strategies to make communication efforts more effective and more efficient. Marteau, Hollands, & Fletcher (2012) observed that much of human behavior involves automatic responses to environmental stimuli resulting in actions that are largely unaccompanied by conscious reflection. Change encourages reflection on behaviors, a concept that is relevant to principals' implementation of social media tools, because new ways of working require a deliberate shift from automatic processes and propel the educational leader to reflect and grow in new behaviors affecting their practice. Madden, Ellen, and Ajzen (1992) stated that intended changes in behaviors are a function of beliefs about the likelihood that performing a behavior will lead to the outcome that the individual desires.

The theory of reasoned action. First proposed by Fishbein and Ajzen in 1975, the theory of reasoned action (TRA) was one of the earliest theories to explain cognitive learning

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

of new behaviors and adaptive skills. The theory of reasoned action proposed that a person's behavior is determined by his/her intention to perform the behavior; and continuing research using the TRA model found that a person's attitudes and beliefs regarding the adaptation or behavior change are influenced by other people's opinions of what should be done (Ratten, 2011).

Perceived flaws in the TRA (Trafimow, 2009) contributed to revision of the theory by authors Ajzen and Fishbein (2010), who added the concept of perceived behavioral control, as it appeared that behavior was not always voluntary and under control. The revised theory of planned behavior (TPB) suggested that specific attitudes toward the behavior in question can be expected to predict that behavior, but that behavior is also influenced by an individual's beliefs about how people they care about will view the behavior in question. In terms of educational leaders' decisions about use of social media, change is more likely to occur when the individual is convinced of the value and stakeholders concur. The more resources and opportunities someone thinks they have to change a behavior or adapt, the more likely they are to succeed in that change or adaptation (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992).

Social cognitive theory. Bandura (1986) developed the social cognitive theory as a way to understand how the environment, the individual and motivation work together to change or adapt. “Bandura suggested that learning occurs through dynamic and multi-directional interactions between an individual's personal factors (i.e., knowledge, motivation, and self-efficacy), environment (i.e., home, work, school, and classroom) and behaviours (i.e., teaching strategies and/or inclusive practices)” (An & Meaney, 2015, p. 144). Ratten (2011) stated the widely used and accepted social cognitive theory that explains that an individual needs to have a sense that he or she will be able to be successful at the behavior

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

before the individual will try something new. In a comparison of change theories, Kritsonis (2004-2005) pointed out that self-efficacy is a key concept in cognitive learning theory. Self-efficacy is believed to be the most important characteristic that determines a person's behavioral change because expected outcomes are filtered through a person's expectations or perceptions of being able to perform the behavior.

Self-efficacy can be increased in several ways. Three methods to increase self-efficacy include: provide clear instructions, provide the opportunity for skill development or training, and model the desired behavior ("NewCity Institute," n.d.). To be effective, models must evoke trust, admiration, and respect from the observer. Conversely, models should not appear to represent a level of behavior that the observer is unable to visualize attaining (Robbins, 2003, p. 46).

Bandura (2001) based his theory on the premise that humans adapt using a variety of different influences and stimuli. "From the perspective of social cognitive theory, the initiation and persistence of an adaptive behavior depend on the person's beliefs regarding self-efficacy and outcome expectancies" (Goldie, 2007, p. 27). Principals who use social media tools need to feel like they can sustain the behavior and be effective with the social media tool they choose to adopt (Bandura, 2001).

Social cognitive theory provides the ideal framework for this research because the theory takes into account the social aspect of behaviors in concert with the psychological processing that humans go through before trying new things or adopting adaptive behaviors. In this case, principals need to look at the decision to implement social media tools through two lenses. The first being their professional role as the leader of the school, and the second as an individual who experiences success and failure as does any human. "Much of the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

knowledge and behaviors of organizational participants is generated from the organizational environment in which they operate; on the other hand, individual employees still process, and act upon, available information differently depending on their unique personal characteristics” (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998, p. 63). Nicolaidis and McCallum (2013) stated that all adults are required to adapt and change their behaviors to be successful in their chosen roles. The role of the principal, like other roles in today’s society, require that leaders adapt to the environment to be effective in their practice.

Humans create and use symbols. Delving deeper into the social cognitive theory, Bandura (1986) highlighted six concepts related to human learning and adaptation that have not been included in other models. The first is the capability for humans to create and use symbols. In the role of the K-12 principal, this ability to form representative symbols allows the individual to draw upon not only their own experiences and consequences, but also on the observed consequences of others (Bandura, 1986). They basically are able to mentally test the likelihood of success with a particular decision and begin to formulate whether the positive outcomes will outweigh the negative outcomes.

Forethought before adoption. A second capability of humans is the concept of forethought. Again, Bandura (1986) described humans as more complex beings who “do not simply react to their immediate environment, nor are they steered by implants from their past” (p. 19). Instead, they plan paths of action and attempt to envision the likely outcomes of those paths. Bandura (1986) noted that in most cases, individuals do not have to go through a painful experience of trial and error to find out that they could not be successful in a chosen behavior. Instead, they have the ability to think ahead and determine some of the potential pitfalls and develop a plan to avoid them. For principals, this suggests a period of

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

forethought to weigh the options, possible consequences, and pitfalls that may stand in the way of success before adopting a new practice or skill.

Learning vicariously. The third capability that Bandura (1986) included as a foundation of his social cognitive theory is the ability for humans to be vicarious. Earlier theories surrounding behavior change and adaptation put a strong emphasis on trial and error as the only way for a human to learn and adapt to a new behavior. Bandura theorized that humans are vicarious, and as such are able to not only learn from their own experiences but also through the experiences of others. In the case of school principals, early adopters who have already implemented the use of social media tools into their comprehensive communication plans provide observable experiences for new principals to monitor and study.

Self-regulated goals and aspirations. The fourth capability is self-regulation. Bandura (1986) noted that humans do not live their lives with the sole purpose to please others. Instead, they have a set of self-regulated goals and aspirations against which they measure decisions. Bandura (1986) stated that self-regulatory functions are often the result of outside influences, but the level and motivation to which an individual works at attaining these goals can vary. For principals, there is a self-determined and self-regulated standard that defines success in the role. According to the theory, principals should evaluate the adaptive behavior of using social media tools against self-regulated standards to see if adopting that behavior brings them closer to their definition of success in the role.

Self-reflection is uniquely human. Bandura (1986) described the 5th capability of self-reflection as the ability to reflect and think about varied experiences, to evaluate, gain understanding, and at times, alter their own thinking. School principals are likely to self-

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

reflect at various stages of deciding whether to adopt social media or selecting which social media tools best meet their needs.

Principals benefit from self-reflection in the multitude of decisions that they make in their role as instructional leaders. The act of looking back on the success of a particular decision holds value in future decision-making with the ability to see outcomes impacted by the initial decision. Following the choice to use social media tools, self-reflection will allow principals to refine their practices and ensure that they are using the tools in efficient and effective ways.

The nature of human nature. Bandura (1986) called the final capability in his social cognitive theory the nature of human nature. He said there is no set formula for the listed processes; that each individual will demonstrate a combination, often unique, of some or all of the capabilities together with motivating factors that will determine whether or not a human will adopt a particular behavior. In the case of principals, this means that no specific set of situational constraints or factors will cause all principals to act in the same manner; thus, the social cognitive theory may begin to account for different reactions related to the implementation of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach.

The individual must possess self-efficacy. The belief in one's ability to implement and sustain change and the perception that there is an incentive to do so are important characteristics of both the theory of planned behavior and social cognitive theory (Kritsonis, 2004-2005). This study will determine if elements outlined in the theories apply to the implementation of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach.

In addition to the theories of reasoned action and planned behavior and the social cognitive theory that are most applicable to this study, Kritsonis (2004-2005) discussed the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

characteristics of Lewin's (1951) three-step change theory, Lippitt, Watson, & Westley's (1958) phases of change theory, and Prochaska and DiClemente's (1983) change theory.

Lewin's three-step change theory. Kurt Lewin (1951) introduced the three-step change model that shows behavior as a dynamic balance of forces working in opposing directions. Analysis of driving forces that facilitate change and restraining forces that push in opposition can inform and guide decisions about the planned behavior or action. Steps in Lewin's model indicate that the status quo must first be addressed to overcome resistance by individuals or groups increasing the driving forces, decreasing the restraining forces or a combination of the methods. The second step in the process of changing behavior generally involves arriving at a new level of equilibrium by introducing new information or convincing evidence to encourage decision-makers to support the change. Finally, the third step of Lewin's three-step change model needs to take place after the change has been implemented to ensure integration of the change over time (Kritsonis (2004-2005). "One action that can be used to implement Lewin's third step is to reinforce new patterns and institutionalize them through formal and informal mechanisms including policies and procedures" (Robbins, p. 564-65).

Lewin's change theory offers some insight that may be relevant to the use of social media tools, however the theory is more broadly applicable to organizational change. The current research study looks to explore the barriers that exist for principals using social media tools, which is more individual rather than organizational.

Lippitt's Phases of Change Theory. Lippitt, Watson, and Westley (1958) extended Lewin's three-step change theory. Their seven-step theory that focused more on the role and

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

responsibility of the change agent than on the evolution of the change itself. Information is continuously exchanged throughout the seven step process, which includes:

1. Diagnose the problem.
2. Assess the motivation and capacity for change.
3. Assess the resources and motivation of the change agent. This includes the change agent's commitment to change, power, and stamina.
4. Choose progressive change objects. In this step, action plans are developed and strategies are established.
5. The role of the change agents should be selected and clearly understood by all parties so that expectations are clear. Examples of roles are: cheerleader, facilitator, and expert.
6. Maintain the change. Communication, feedback, and group coordination are essential elements in this step of the change process.
7. Gradually terminate from the helping relationship. The change agent should gradually withdraw from their role over time. This will occur when the change becomes part of the organizational culture. The more widespread imitation becomes, the more the behavior is regarded as normal. (p. 58-59)

Lippitt's Phases of Change Theory once again provides stages or steps that impact an organization change. Stated another way, Lippitt and Lewin discussed changes that one individual would impose on another individual or group of individuals. The researcher was searching for a theory that looks more at individual change within one's own practice rather than changing the practice of others. The review of all of these theories was important to focus on the intent of the theory for this research.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Prochaska and DiClemente's change theory. The initial purpose of Prochaska and DiClemente's (1983) model of change behavior was aimed at behaviors of patients in healthcare settings, but has evolved to address other audiences. Prochaska and DiClemente modeled a series of stages when change occurs: pre-contemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance. Progression through the stages is cyclical, not linear. In the pre-contemplation phase, individuals are unaware of the need for change or resist change. Raised consciousness in the contemplation phase brings the issues to mind but fails to achieve commitment.

The next stage of Prochaska and DiClemente's change theory is preparation. In the preparation phase, the individual is willing to change and planning to implement the adaptive behavior at a designated time. Support and assistance in the preparation phase leads to the action stage that is demonstrated by the beginning of a change in activities. Finally, maintenance reinforces the change and establishes a new normal of behavior (Kritsonis, 2004-2005).

This change theory creates a stronger connection to the research than other cited research by Kristsonis (2004-2005). The stages outlined appear to have possible relevance and connection to principals contemplating the use of social media tools. Yet the cyclical nature of the theory creates challenges for the researcher when interviewing multiple principals sharing barriers to the implementation of the practice or behavior. While each principal could be identified within a various stage in the theory, connections leading to the next steps could prove problematic. The researcher decided to focus on the tenets of social cognitive theory to explore situational factors that may explain barriers for others in the field.

Principals as Autonomous Decision Makers

Principals make many decisions in the course of a school day. Some of the main areas of decision making relate to instructional leadership, school safety, and the efficient operation of services including custodial, transportation, and food services (Daresh & Playko, 1997). Many of the areas of decision making have impactful results on a school or school system and require thoughtful consideration. Kellough (2008) emphasized the need for principals to “remain focused, calm, sensible and committed to the school’s mission and vision” (p. 19). Principals who follow this guidance are more likely to make successful decisions that move the organization forward. Principals are human and not all of the decisions he or she will make in the role will always be the correct ones or the most effective for the particular situation. Kellough (2008) goes on to stress the importance of being up front and honest when making decisions and being prepared to admit when he or she has made a mistake. The characteristics outlined above help to describe decision making in the principal role.

Decision-making is a task that separates highly effective principals from those who are less successful. Effective principals use a process of shared decision making and governance to display and build trust within their educational organizations (Gray & Streshly, 2008). The authors cited evidence of improved student achievement, improved climate, and decreased dropout rates when principals included teacher voice in the decision making process. LaPointe and Davis (2006) claimed that principals influence student achievement in two major ways, which include the support and development of teachers and effective organizational processes. Doud and Keller (1998) reported an increase in efforts by principals to include teachers and parents more directly in school based decision making.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Kellough (2008) dedicated an entire chapter to the working with the off-site community to build partnerships, seeking community participation, and engaging parents. Agasisti, Catalano, and Sibiano (2013) stated that principals “should have a high-level capacity for strategic planning and for marketing” (p.293). However, Kellough (2008) made it clear that there will still be circumstances where principals need to make tough decisions that may not be popular. Yet exercising a process of shared decision making whenever possible builds trust and moves the organization forward. Principals employ this method to ensure that the decisions they make align with the organization’s mission and values.

. Gawlik (2008), in a researched-based comparison reported that traditional public school principals appeared to have less overall autonomy than charter school principals. Yet both groups of principals report a sense of autonomy when describing the role. Gawlik (2008) went on to stress the negative impact of too much organizational control in school reforms and how a lack of flexibility can hinder the ability for a principal to do their job effectively. Chang, Leach, and Anderman (2015) studied perceived autonomy and job satisfaction for school principals as a factor of the amount of autonomy a superintendent provides. They reported that “principals are more likely to report being emotionally attached to their school and more satisfied with their jobs when they perceive superintendents as more autonomy supportive” (Chang et al., 2015, p. 332). The authors concluded that perceived autonomy generally increases with more experience in the role. Chang et al. (2015) stressed the importance of autonomy support with new or less experienced principals to build the connection and commitment to the role and to the educational community. They also compared urban districts to suburban districts, with higher levels of autonomy reported in the suburban schools. Both of the studies reviewed support the idea that principals feel a

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

substantial level of autonomy in their roles and that this autonomy builds connections and capacity within the leader.

Principals are autonomous decision-makers who work within larger educational systems to serve the community. Principals, in most cases, work in schools that are tied to larger educational systems, and due to this do not have full autonomy over all decisions. Agasisti et al. (2013) noted that school and principal autonomy does not necessarily restrict or exclude regulation from a central entity such as a school district or board. Goldring and Rallis (1993) described the role of the principal as a constant mediation between central office and his or her school and that the principal must always remain focused on the bigger picture by keeping everything moving and working. There are many aspects of the role that grant principals the ability to make decisions that they see fit in the effective operation of schools. These ideas support the claim that principals are able to make autonomous decisions surrounding communications they send out to stakeholders.

School Principals and Issues of Communication

The role of the principal emerged in the early 1900s when one-room school houses became multi-grade educational institutions. Principals were initially middle-level managers assigned to tasks once held by head teachers in buildings. Rousmaniere (2007) described the early days of the principal in detail. The assigned roles varied depended on the size of the school and the wishes of the governing school board. Rousmaniere confirmed that little of the principal's time was spent on community communications. It wasn't until the latter half of the 20th century that the role of the principal evolved into a stronger leadership position that required principals to communicate with a variety of stakeholders. Daresh and Playko (1997) outlined a series of communication tasks required of the beginning principal,

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

including communications with staff members, parents, students, and outside community agencies and businesses. These tasks emphasized the need for strong communication skills that allowed a principal to communicate efficiently and effectively.

Goldring and Rallis (1993) described principals of dynamic schools as those who manage the external environment through the communication and negotiation of the school mission with the outside community. The principal not only needs to actively communicate with stakeholders, but also to identify and eliminate communication gaps that may exist between people or groups of people within the organization (Bellamy, Fulmer, Murphy, & Muth, 2007). The identification of gaps requires principals to have a sense of tension within the organization and to use active listening skills, which are vital components of servant leadership.

Principals are accountable to the outside community in which they serve (Bellamy et al., 2007). The students who occupy the classrooms each day belong to families living in the community. Those families have ties to the businesses and other organizations that make up the fabric of the community. All are stakeholders with expectations of the schools.

Hess (2005) highlighted three key areas in which schools need to succeed. Schools need to achieve excellence, to run efficiently, and be equitable. Hess described these three expectations as the triangle of tension due to the time and effort principals must devote to these goals. Community outreach through communication can reduce or calm tensions by helping the outside community more clearly understand the dynamics of school leadership and governance. Gray and Streshly (2008) outlined strong communication skills and accountability to the greater community as a key characteristic of highly successful principals.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Kowalski (2000) pointed out the importance of communication content and delivery on the effectiveness of the school. According to Kowalski, communication skills shape the culture of the school and should be taught as part of successful administrator preparation programs. Culture and communication are reciprocal and today's leaders need to hone dynamic communication skills that have not been required in the past (Kowalski, 2000). Wentz (1998) stated that communication skills could be the difference between success and failure in the role of the principal. "Effective communication includes written, verbal, and nonverbal communication; listening skills; the use of technology to assist in efficient communication; and methods of evaluating whether the communications are effective" (p. 113).

Principals must have the skills to use a variety of technologies to assist in the communication process and to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of their use of these technologies by means of feedback received. Richardson, Short, and Prickett (1993) discussed the development of good public relations related to effective schools. Although the authors noted that everyone from the custodian to the chairperson of the school board is responsible for the positive promotion of a school, they also acknowledged that building principals carry a large portion of the responsibility. It is also the role and responsibility of the principal to acquaint all staff to their roles and to continually evaluate the effectiveness of the overall plan. Through the steps of researching, planning, communicating, and evaluating principals are able to effectively manage public relations and, in turn, build stakeholders' confidence in the effectiveness of their school (Richardson, Short, & Prickett, 1993).

Efficiency of communication is a partner of effective principal communication. Before Facebook and Twitter were considered tools of communication in schools, Strickland

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

and Chan (2001) recognized that principals needed to understand technology to help them communicate across all mediums in a more efficient manner. Strickland and Chan shared that the most successful leaders are those who communicate adeptly and operate their schools in an efficient manner. Thirty years earlier, Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) stated that principals have a special responsibility to manage time well and look for ways to increase efficiency in communication by means such as dialogs with teachers about best practices, disseminating information to the community about school mission and beliefs, and connections with outside organizations to foster partnerships that benefit the educational system. Improvements in efficiency in communications hold the potential to increase the connection and relationships with parents and caregivers within the educational community. Kellough (2008) stated that an increase in the connections with caregivers often yields improved student attendance, behavior, and learning outcomes. The more efficiently a principal can communicate with his or her educational community, the stronger the connections can become.

Communication skills and leadership models. Effective and efficient communication skills are also characteristics of successful transformational leaders. In a collection of insights from successful transformational leaders, Murphy and Lewis (1994) outlined some of the changes that have occurred in leadership style and communication. The days of sole authority over the decisions of the school are long passed. Now, to implement a shared leadership model, principals need to synthesize input from a number of different voices, including community members, in the governance of schools.

Northouse (2010) described the ability for transformational leaders to serve as change agents who are able to clearly articulate their vision. He described the necessity to

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

understand and adapt to the needs and motivations of the followers. Each of these characteristics are inherently linked to the ability to communicate effectively and efficiently. This concept closely ties into school advocacy and community outreach and the branding process outlined in this chapter.

The importance of communication skills was also linked to early trait and skill theories of leadership. The trait approach, according to Northouse (2010), focused on personal characteristics of successful leaders. Effective leaders exhibit positive traits to their subordinates through verbal, non-verbal, and written communications. The closely aligned skill approach suggested that the necessary characteristics of leadership could be taught as skills. Northouse noted that the skills approach opened the opportunity for all people to be leaders. Thus, communication skills set effective leaders apart from those less successful.

Servant leadership, a term introduced by Greenleaf (1977), described a way of leading by serving first. Although listening was a major component, the concept of servant leadership acknowledged the importance of an exchange of communication, wherein the leader can give and gain valuable information and insight into the issues to further the development of the organization and achieve common goals.

Strickland and Chan (2001) elaborated on the exchange of effective communication as it relates to conflict. "School leaders must eliminate barriers to effective communication and interpersonal relationships by promoting and modeling a communication style that encourages listening, invites and welcomes comments, and respects and appreciates feedback, even if it is negative" (p. 81). The authors opined that conflict is going to happen, regardless of anyone's best efforts to avoid it. What principals can do is work to minimize conflicts through effective and efficient communication that eliminates misunderstandings.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Communication skills, school advocacy, and outreach. Goldring and Rallis (1993) described school advocacy and community outreach as a breaking down of the boundaries that once separated the school community from the rest of the outside world. They articulated the need for the principal to be a symbolic leader who builds a bridge between the school and the outside community through families, businesses, and other organizations and then carries the school flag across that bridge. The symbolic flag represents the positive things that happen within a school and that potentially become topics of social media posts designed to reach the broader community.

In a meta-analysis, *School Leadership That Works*, Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) identified common practices by principals. One of the most relevant responsibilities described addresses community outreach, defined by the authors as the responsibility of the school leader to be an advocate for the school and to make sure that positive messages reach all of the stakeholders in the educational community. Kellough (2008) said that contact and communication with the outside community is a key factor in the success of many schools, especially those in lower socio-economic areas or with limited resources. School advocacy and community outreach builds those vital connections that provide additional resources and give principals valuable feedback about success criteria. Bellamy et. al. (2007) described success criteria as the identification of values and beliefs about schools that the community members value. In some cases success criteria may be a competitive environment where the highest achievers are rewarded for their success, and in other communities it may be more about tolerance and acceptance. Each represents different success criteria. Through the process of community outreach and valuable feedback, a principal can identify the criteria that are most important in their particular school environment.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Daresh and Playko (1997) talked about the need for new principals to go out and introduce themselves to members of the community, influential organizations and people, as well as police and fire agencies. Using social media for community outreach can yield similar results. Community Outreach and School Advocacy have been a focus of the principal for many years. Only recently have the tools available for this purpose evolved and expanded to include the current social media phenomenon (Dixon, 2012). Social media tools provide an additional avenue to reach out to the community and advocate for the needs of the school.

Social Media as a Branding Tool

Consumers associate various products and services by brand name. Branding, by definition, is the process of promoting the name, symbol, or design that people use to recognize and identify the goods or services that producers offer to consumers (Rowley, 2004). Rowley emphasized three aspects of a successful brand: All brands are dependent on the perceptions of the customer, that the determining perception is influenced by characteristics that add value, and that the value needs to be sustainable. The literature offers information on the topic of social media use by businesses, health, and political organizations and insight into characteristics and tactics that can be of value to educators as well.

Social media marketing is a change from past marketing practices that were directed one-way towards the consumer. Kabani (2013) stated that in the past, companies talked at the consumers, not to them. She attributed this largely to the inability for the common broadcasting tools in newspapers, television and radio to work any other way. With technological advance, marketing practices adapted and grew but generally remained one-way until the emergence of social media tools.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Safko (2010) wrote what is known as the comprehensive guide to branding with social media in his *Social Media Bible*. He explained that the difference between traditional branding and the new era with social media tools is the reciprocal process where there is now two way interaction between the producer and the consumer. Traditionally massaging was top down with little feedback from the consumer. Mangini (2002) called branding the most misused term in marketing. She described branding as a promise that an institution will deliver products and services beyond what the consumer desires. O'Reilly (2009) outlined an opportunity to build strength and confidence in a brand by the thoughtful responses to feedback provided by the community. Each of these authors discussed the importance of a reciprocal approach to the development of a brand and a following of consumers.

In an alternate approach, Rowley (2004) introduced an interesting argument in support of and against branding. She described branding efforts as a productive endeavor that helps consumers make decisions in a more complex and product-saturated market; however, she also shared an alternate point of view that today's consumer no longer needs to rely on the trust of a brand and can easily gather the data necessary to make their own determinations. Public sector organizations embrace the marketing and branding process due to a growing awareness that branding is important.

A characteristic noticed by experts in the field of social media marketing is the change in the audience. Authors Ryan and Jones (2009) and Goodman (2012) remembered previous generations of consumers who were more content to sit in front of a particular media and have messages directed to them about what products to buy or what services to hire. New consumers are more tech savvy and will investigate a product or service more carefully before making a decision (Goodman, 2012). Safko (2010) talked about trust, and

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

how the present generation of consumer is less likely to trust messages direct from the producer but would rather hear from other consumers who are willing to share their experiences. Bottles and Sherlock (2011) also discussed trust in their work outlining the identification of the proper people to manage online and social media-based branding efforts. The authors noted the importance of selecting a trustworthy person who will not put consumer trust in jeopardy. Kabani (2013) supported this thought of maintaining consumer trust and said that today's consumer is more jaded than past generations.

Credibility of social media information. Credibility of information communicated through social media tools relates to how people receive information and the impacts of those methods on validity. Ismail and Latif (2013) discussed the departure in the way people select their information. In the past, individuals selected their source first, such as a particular newspaper, television station, or magazine. It was then the responsibility of the provider to provide credible and valid information to their audience or run the risk of losing followers. Within social media sites today, such as Facebook and Twitter, individuals pick the content of the story first, often based on information from other people in their network. For some, the fact that a friend or acquaintance posted something is enough to read it and accept it as valid. Spence, Lachlan, Westerman, & Spates (2013) expanded on this idea when they reported that a growing number of people also use this method for health information. Rather than seeking out a reliable source for medical advice, many often rely on the recommendations of people within their social networks to locate the information that they believe to be valid. This can be problematic as more information is posted and communicated everyday that is not accurate or substantially reviewed before publication (Spence et. al. , 2013).

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Mangini (2002) also reported a similar change in patients in the health care industry, as consumers no longer rely on location, word of mouth, or outside rankings to choose their hospital. Consumers today are less likely to believe corporate advertisements and would like to gather more information themselves. Weinberg (2009) concurred that consumers want to hear reviews from actual customers, even when they have never met these individuals.

Weber (2009) shared that social media branding does not require leaders to forget all that they have already learned about marketing, but instead learn a new way to communicate with an audience online. An interesting concept about branding with social media is that it is less about the tool and more about the people. According to Safko (2010), the goal of any branding effort is to reach more people, and that has not changed over the years. What has changed are the tools that are most effective for reaching those people.

One of the key things to remember if you're new to digital marketing is this: digital marketing isn't actually about technology at all; it's about people. In that sense it is similar to traditional marketing: it's about people (marketers) connecting with other people (consumers) to build relationships and ultimately drive sales. (Ryan & Jones, 2009, p. 12)

Marketing and public relations issues have carried over to educational systems as well, as school leaders desire to create a connection between the school system and the outside community. Utilizing the reciprocal features of social media create opportunities for members of the school community to share their thoughts about positive events within the school. This exposure to others in the community creates an opportunity for a school system to promote its brand to a wider audience. Safko (2010) said that there is a need for those focused on customer service to engage in social media. He shared that the average person

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

will share a negative experience with close to twenty people, and that same person will share a positive experience with around nine to twelve people. Social media offers schools and principals the opportunity to utilize those statistics and increase a person's likelihood to share positive school experiences with others in the community. When discussing the school principal using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach, this is an important concept to consider. It strengthens the argument that the information posted from the school should come from a source that can ensure a level of validity for the readers. Principals also need to be aware of the sites in which school information is posted, and monitor these sites to ensure that information shared about the school is accurate and valid.

The idea of valid information within a multitude of other posts is directly relevant to the effective use of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach. Principals will need to be thoughtful about the content they post and whether it is worthy of their intended goal. This may mean that principals who post irrelevant topics or share information from other sites that are not of significance to the audience could potentially cause followers to move away from the belief that the social media tools of the school are productive and efficient places to get information.

Timing and frequency of posting information is another issue that has significant impact on perceived levels of validity in social media networks. Westermann, Spence, and Van Der Heide (2014) discussed how individuals use the frequency of posts to help determine if the information is valid. Visiting sites where information is not posted frequently or recently can have an effect on a reader's opinion about validity of information from that source. The more recent the posts are on social networking sites, the more reliable users perceive the source of the information to be. The study of Westermann et al. concluded

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

that although the timing of posts didn't have a strong effect on validity, timing did affect people's perceptions of validity. Frequency of posting is an important concept to consider before implementing social media tools into a principal's comprehensive communication plan. Failure to post regularly and frequently may result in a loss of confidence in the information by the followers of the social media (Westerman et al., 2014). This is especially true in a school setting where community members may be looking for meeting dates or other pertinent information that needs to be reliable and up to date.

The decision to engage in branding strategies that use social media tools generally follows a pattern of implementation. An agreed upon first step in the process of branding using social media tools is to observe and develop a plan outlining an online presence. Weber (2009) discussed the importance of this initial step. He stated that it is important to review a number of different communication platforms to determine the location of the largest concentrations of the intended audience. Safko (2010) referred to this as an identification of the social media trinity, determining the three most productive and impactful platforms to build your brand. The observation and decision making step is critical because "social media marketers still need to understand the rules of engagement, participate in communities on a regular basis, and capitalize on emerging trends" (Weinberg, 2009, p. 7). This step is equally important to principals looking to engage in social media for similar reasons. McLeod and Lehmann (2012) supported similar steps as they outlined the specifics for each tool that exists today. Principals will need to understand the formal and informal rules of using the particular platform; there are slight differences between communities engaged in the use of different tools. The ability to continue the use of the tool and participate in the community engaged in the social media platform is also something to

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

consider and account for along with all of the other duties and responsibilities of the principal.

The next step in the process of marketing and branding using social media tools is to recruit members of the online community to help spread the word and build the brand. Goodman (2012), who focused on engagement strategies for small businesses, recommended reaching out to a small number of trusted friends to review the online presence and suggest feedback. She then suggested that the same trusted core of individuals begin to share and recommend the business to others in their own social networks. Weber (2009) emphasized that it is not enough to recruit members. Those members also have to be willing to talk about your brand and share their thoughts with others. Safko (2010) discussed the importance of trust in the recruitment process. Not only does the person trying to develop the brand need to trust his or her network, the network of people also needs to trust the brand.

Principals should look to build a core group of individuals to begin the branding experience when the decision to engage in social media is complete. Weber (2010) suggested candid conversations with members of this core group related to the goals of the endeavor. Principals can engage in conversations with members of their parent organizations and with community leaders to express their desired outcome for social media use. The successful recruitment and development of the core group can be a catalyst to a well developed brand and a strong following (Goodman, 2012). Safko (2010) emphasized that it is important to maintain the trust reciprocally to guard against posting content that is frivolous or that works to serve an agenda that is different than that which is communicated by the principal to the core group. Principals are able to gather a lot of valuable insight from this important step.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Presence and relevant content are paramount to the next step in the branding process, (Weber, 2009). Safko (2010) maintained that posts must remain relevant to the consumer if the consumer is expected to follow the brand. Weber (2009) highlighted the importance of content that will “get people coming, talking, responding” (p. 67). This step appears relevant to the role of the principal when discussing social media use for school advocacy and community outreach. Principals need to make sure that the content they are posting will generate these types of conversations within the educational community. Posting a picture of an empty hallway or the new drinking fountain will not draw the interest or the conversation that enlarges the following or builds the brand. The content that the principal decides to post needs to spark broader conversations or compel members to share and link to their own networks. Dixon (2012) suggested promoting a school wide event to create as much connection as possible. This could be a well-promoted sporting event, the school play, or an activity that includes the majority of the student body.

Safko (2010), Kabani (2013), and Weinberg (2009) all discussed the next step in the branding process as they instruct producers to use promotional tools to expand their current message. Safko (2010) specifically discussed many of the fee-based promotions that social media sites offer. This is an important part of the process for business, health care, and political candidates who do not have a confined audience. However, depending on their goal for using social media, the use of promotional tools may not be as relevant for public schools.

According to Weinberg (2009), most of the current promotional qualities of social media would expand the message beyond the desired and targeted audience. This could actually be counter-productive by increasing concerns related to privacy. The balance for

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

principals is working to engage as many of the appropriate community members as possible without inviting too many people outside of the community to the conversation.

The final step in the branding process is to monitor and make adjustments necessary to stay current and relevant (Safko, 2010). This process of monitoring is important to make sure that the tools used continue to target the correct audiences. Principals can achieve this by monitoring responses to posts and determining whether the content is being shared with a broader group of people. Principals should review their current strategies periodically and check for the number of followers and signs of activity on the site. The tools that are underutilized may need to be phased out, depending on the time and effort put forth by the principal to use these tools.

Social Media and Educational Leadership

The body of research related to the use of social media tools to reach community members in a school system is not as robust as it is in the corporate and business world. However, the use of communication technologies to strengthen school community relationships is a growing area of research. Cox and McLeod (2014) said that “Very little peer-reviewed literature exists which illustrates the experiences of school principals who have been using myriad social media tools as part of their comprehensive communication efforts with employees, students, parents, and community members” (p. 9).

Cox and McLeod (2014) conducted a qualitative study to document the experiences of a select group of principals across the United States and Canada who were highly engaged in the use of social media tools as a part of their overall communication plan. Findings indicated that school leaders, like leaders in other organizations, need to take a more proactive approach to reaching their stakeholders. Their research supported the idea that the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

time for schools and school leaders to start using social media tools is now, which led to the development of the research questions that are posed in this study and a search for the reasons why all principals are not using social media tools.

Cox and McLeod (2014) highlighted the potential benefits that could come from principals using social media tools. One of these benefits would be to tell the school's story to the community. "The ideas and stories that school principals could convey through social media tools could attract, motivate, enhance, and/or retain existing or potential relationships among all stakeholders, including students"(p. 8). This concept parallels the literature on branding that was reviewed for this study.

Ferriter et al. (2011) elaborated further on the concept of education as a product and parents as the consumers. Parents have the opportunity to choose a number of different schooling options for their children. If the opportunity for connection is not there or the school does not successfully communicate the positive attributes of their organization to these potential clients, they run the risk of losing students to other schools. Dixon (2012) took this a step further and stated that the role of the principal is shifting from a site administrator to a community engagement specialist. A common theme seen throughout the literature is that the work of promoting the accolades of the schools is a responsibility that principals need to consider. Schools are becoming organizations that need to communicate the benefits of their brand to the consumer in hopes that parents will enroll their children.

Sharing decision-making. A key feature and benefit of the use of social media tools exists in the potential for sharing the decision-making process with a greater audience. School leaders can not only share their decision-making process with stakeholders, but also invite input into certain decisions. Cox and McCleod (2014) discussed how involvement in

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

the decision-making process can strengthen the connections of the community to the school. Linking this to research around the positive impacts of connected families, Plevyak & Heaston (2001) said that using social media tools can increase student achievement, reduce behavior problems, and enhance the success of a school. Ferriter et al. (2011) discussed the far-reaching decisions that schools and districts frequently make and how those decisions have the potential for positive or negative outcomes. Of particular interest is the emphasis on success stories that start with angry stakeholders complaining about a decision or action of the school. Through the acceptance of feedback, no matter how critical, schools are able to turn tough situations into success. By using social media tools and connecting with the parents who are disgruntled, the literature highlighted how connections can be strengthened, and how care and concern for the community can be articulated using these tools.

Positive outcomes. An important benefit of the use of these tools is the cost associated with them. Dixon (2012) stated that most of the social media tools available today are of little or no cost to the user. In an environment where schools have limited funding to support community outreach and school advocacy, social media tools provide an economical resource to schools. “Frequent blog posts, tweets, updates to social networking sites, and the like could allow employees, students, parents, and community members to access information about the school at little or no cost at times that are convenient to stakeholders” (Cox & McLeod, 2014, p. 6).

Conclusions reached in the study of Cox and McLeod (2014) were most relevant to the present study. The researchers discovered four emergent themes regarding the use of social media tools.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

1. Social media tools allow for greater interactions between school principals and their stakeholders.
2. Social media tools provide stronger connections to local stakeholders, fellow educators, and to the world.
3. Social media use can have a significant impact on a school principal's personal and professional growth.
4. Social media use is an expectation, it is no longer optional. (p. 12)

An article authored by Chairatchatakul, Jantaburom, & Kanarkard (2012) explored the connection between parental involvement and student achievement and how social media can help. Many of the parents in the study worked and daytime opportunities for parental involvement were limited. "Parents are more likely to become involved if they know they are wanted and feel like they are making important contributions. One of the biggest aspects of successful parent involvement in this research project is communication between the school and parents. The world of education is more open. Parents no longer need to wonder what administrators are thinking, because it can share continuously in an open way" (p. 381). The participants in this study reported that the content they viewed on social media led to stronger connections with the school despite their conflicting schedules and inability to be physically present during the school day.

Broadening the field of literature, an article authored by Young, Berube, and Perry (2008) brought together literature surrounding the influence of technology for school leaders. "Email and websites have become standard communication methods in many school districts. Other methods, such as handheld computers and video conferencing may be less prevalent at the present time" (p. 82). While the statements made in this article are true, it may not be for

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

the reasons that the authors may have had in mind at the time. Handheld computers have come and gone, now the computing capabilities of cell phones far exceed any traditional handheld computer. Teleconferencing has never become a staple in the education field; the necessity for viewing the other person while speaking with them has not been critical in most applications.

Wherry (2009) discussed the importance of choosing the right communication tool for particular school situations. Although the article addresses mass communication, the date the article was written was before the widespread emergence of today's social media tools. The underlying message still holds value in today's communication strategies regarding school advocacy and community outreach. It emphasized the importance of interpersonal communication and suggested that mass media tools would best be used to invite people to a face-to-face conversation rather than addressing an issue with the tool. "While a memo (mass media) declaring that "Our Lunch Program Provides Healthy Meals" will reassure those who already believe the school lunches are healthy, a better use of mass media would be to send a memo, mass e-mail, or newsletter to parents announcing a meeting (interpersonal communication) to address concerns that have been raised about the school lunch program" (p. 6). Although memos are a thing of the past, the concept of not relying on mass media tools as a sole form of communication is an important issue to keep in mind when deciding to implement social media tools.

Standards for the use of technological tools. Recommendations from the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE, 2009) outlined the expected outcomes when it comes to technology and school administrators. These standards do not explicitly say that principals should be using social media tools for school advocacy and

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

community outreach but they do have certain standards that could be interpreted as relating to the adoption of social media tools. The benchmarks that most strongly support such changes in practice fall under four of the five broad categories listed in the standards. The first being visionary leadership, “inspire and facilitate among all stakeholders a shared vision of purposeful change that maximizes use of digital-age resources to meet and exceed learning goals, support effective instructional practice, and maximize performance of district and school leaders” (International Society for Technology in Education (p. 1).

The digital-age resources mentioned in the standard could include tools such as social media sites, electronic newsletters, and other communication technologies. Under the second standard of digital age learning culture, a principal should “model and promote the frequent and effective use of technology for learning” (p. 1). Although it expressly stated “for learning,” modeling and promotion are two of the key actions of this standard. This could support the concept that principals should model the use of communication technologies in their own practice. The third category of excellence in professional practice is to “promote and model effective communication and collaboration among stakeholders using digital age tools” (p. 1). Herein lies the most direct standard that encourages the use of social media tools as a part of a principals overall communication plan. The final relevant standard falls under digital citizenship, “promote and model responsible social interactions related to the use of technology and information” (p. 2). Principals are afforded an opportunity to model and promote these responsible social interactions when they engage in the use of a tool that is also used by a growing percentage of the population.

Chapter 3– Methods

Research Design

A phenomenological strategy was employed in the qualitative design of this study. Marshall and Rossman (2011) stated that phenomenological studies emphasize interpretation and understanding of the lived experience of selected individuals or groups and that the phenomenological approach offers an articulation of the thoughts, beliefs, and perceptions of those in the field that may have value for others in similar circumstances. Marshall and Rossman (2011) also discussed the “essence” that exists through shared experience (p. 19). The researcher chose this design to explore the essence that exists between principals when it comes to using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach. Each principal who has considered or implemented social media tools shares a possible connection to others who have encountered a similar experience. Creswell (2014) described qualitative research as a method to explore a social or human problem through the experiences of individuals. “A special interest of qualitative researchers lies in the perspectives of the subjects of the study. Qualitative researchers want to know what the participants in the study are thinking and why they think what they do” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 432).

Qualitative research, in general, captures the views and perspectives of participants and can represent the meanings given to real-world events by the people who live them. Further, qualitative studies consider the political, historical, and socio-cultural contexts surrounding the topic, which may help to explain social behavior and thinking (Yin, 2016). Johnson and Christensen (2008) stated that qualitative research looks at the overall problem

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

and individual struggles by exploring broad views as well as more detailed and focused analysis.

Setting of the Study

The setting for this research study is a suburban public school district in the Midwest. Approximately 10,838 students were enrolled in the school district during the 2014 school year according to the district school improvement plan (*District Improvement Plan*, 2014, p. 4). The district provides a general curriculum in grades K through 12 and offers many courses in fine arts as well as extracurricular and athletic programs. A racial breakdown of students served by the district is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1

Students by Racial Categories

Race	Number of Students	Percentage
African American	2,895	26.7%
Asian	1,381	12.7%
Caucasian	6,259	57.8%
Hispanic	273	2.5%
Multi-Racial	13	<1%
Native American	17	<1%

(*District Improvement Plan*, 2014, p. 4)

The community in which the district is located comprises 36 square miles and includes manufacturing, retail, food, and other service industries. (*Census Demographics*, 2014). Descriptive data relative to the community that the district serves is included in Table 2.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Table 2

2014 U. S. Census Data for Research Setting

Population estimates, July 1, 2014	
Population	91,989
Residents age 25 or higher with a high school diploma 2010-2014	94%
State average of residents aged 25 or higher with a high school diploma 2010-2014	89%
Residents aged 25 or higher with a bachelor's degree or higher 2010-2014	50%
State average of residents aged 25 or higher with a bachelor's degree or higher 2010-2014	26%

(Census Demographics, 2014)

Participants

The participants are practicing school principals in a public suburban school district in the Midwest. The school district comprises nine kindergarten through grade 4 elementary schools, two upper elementary schools serving grades 5 and 6, two middle schools serving grades 7 and 8, three comprehensive high schools serving grades 9 through 12, and one alternative high school serving grades 10 through 12. Not included in the study were two tuition-based preschool programs and one special education building serving students in kindergarten through the age of 26. A principal is assigned to each of the 20 schools, with the exception of the preschool programs that are served by one principal for both buildings. Principals in the 16 schools that serve students in kindergarten through grade 12 were invited to participate.

Each of the principals interviewed serve community members with similar access to technology and internet connectivity. Within the selected district, 16 of the 17 building

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

principals were selected for the study. The researcher represents the 17th building principal; thus, those responses were not included in this study. A code was assigned to each principal in the study to ensure anonymity. Table 3 outlines the codes for each level within the study.

Table 3

Principal Code Descriptions

Position within the district	Code
Lower Elementary Principal (K-4)	LE
Upper Elementary Principal (5-6)	UE
Middle School Principal (7-8)	MS
High School Principal (9-12)	HS
Alternative High School Principal (10-12)	AHS

Demographic data collected for each of the participants includes gender, age, and years of service as a school principal. To ensure continuity of the data, only time served as the principal was collected. Data relative to time as an assistant principal or other administrative roles was not included in the collection. The demographic data for each of the participants is shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Participant Demographic Data

Code	Gender	Age	Years as Principal
LE-1	Female	50-54	9
LE-2	Female	40-44	3
LE-3	Male	45-49	10
LE-4	Male	40-44	2
LE-5	Male	50-54	5
LE-6	Female	40-44	5

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

LE-7	Female	55-60	7
LE-8	Female	45-49	1
LE-9	Female	40-44	1
UE-1	Female	35-39	1
UE-2	Male	40-44	13
MS-1	Male	50-54	14
MS-2	Male	50-54	12
HS -1	Female	40-44	7
HS -2	Male	40-44	5
AHS - 1	Female	45-59	1

Purposive sampling. A process of purposive sampling was applied in this research. “Purposive sampling is different from convenience sampling in that researchers do not simply study whoever is available, but use their judgment to select a sample that they believe, based on prior information, will provide the data that they need” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003, p. 104). Purposive sampling was used to identify the principals employed in the target district rather than various districts across the state. Each of the participants is employed in schools in the same community; thus, variables of technology access and community acceptance to social media tools are constant and consistent from one school to another. The benefit to this type of sampling is that it allowed for a more focused approach to the perceived barriers within a specific group of principals. An additional benefit of a purposeful sample was the ability for the researcher to ask follow up questions and gather additional correspondence if warranted. However this was not a determining reason that purposive sampling was selected for this research.

While purposive sampling was used in the selection of participants, it was only done so at the district level. The purposeful decision of the researcher was to select one particular

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

school district. All of the principals within the district who serve students in kindergarten through grade 12 were invited to participate. This decision was made because principals have a unique role in school advocacy and student outreach that is different than many other administrative roles within a school district. Through the use of purposive sampling the researcher was able to ensure that the responses were based upon participants who have the opportunity to address school advocacy and community outreach in their role.

The most prevalent concerns with the use of purposive sampling are researcher bias and increased difficulty in defending the collected data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2003). There is increased risk of bias because the researcher is also an employee within the district. To control for this, semi-structured interviews with guiding questions were used. The researcher also took extra care to stay within the role of the researcher during the time of the interviews to ensure that side conversations did not interfere with the collection of the data.

Procedures

Permission was secured from the university human subjects review committee to carry out this research. (See Appendix A). Email addresses of 16 potential participants available on the school district website facilitated distribution of an introductory letter and invitation for all principals to participate in the study (See Appendix B). Principals were assured of anonymity for themselves, their school and district as well as ethical procedures in the gathering, security, and publication of shared information.

Electronic questionnaire. Principals in the selected school district were asked to respond to an electronic questionnaire that measured their interest in implementing social media tools for the purpose of school advocacy and community outreach (See Appendix C). Principals who were interested in participating in the study followed the link through

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Qualtrics, an online survey tool provided in the introductory letter, to complete the initial questionnaire. Administration of the online questionnaire, with access through the university, was chosen for ease of use for participants and available data reporting tools.

A taxonomy, developed by reflecting on possible perspectives related to social media use, allowed participants to self-select a rating of their interest in implementing social media for the purposes of school advocacy and community outreach. The taxonomy was developed with the input of the researcher's dissertation committee and through the review of a taxonomy used in previous research (Cox, 2012). The intent of the taxonomy was to provide an accurate description of all participants, regardless of their current level or stage of implementation of social media tools. To ensure that all of the possible scenarios that might describe each participant were covered, the researcher started with a description of someone who would be a regular user and then attempted to determine possible levels down to participants who are not implementing social media tools and have no desire to. Participants from each category of the taxonomy were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews based upon the following responses regarding use of social media tools:

- a. I frequently use social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach.
- b. I occasionally use social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach but would like to use them more.
- c. I am not currently using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach but would like to begin to use these tools.
- d. I am not currently using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach and do not care to start using them at this time.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

e. Other (Based upon participant responses)

The first statement was intended to represent frequent users, early adopters who have already implemented social media into their communication plan and perhaps did not have many reservations about making this move. The researcher was seeking to gather the perceived and experienced barriers that this group of participants experienced in their implementation process. The second and third responses described the principals who were interested in knowing more about social media to increase or begin to use the technology. The researcher was interested in understanding their desires to implement social media tools and why they have not moved toward full implementation. The fourth statement described the principals who indicated no desire to add social media to their communication tools. It was determined that this group may provide valuable insight to share and specific reasons for their decision not to use social media that should be included in the research. The final response category ensured an opportunity for principals to describe their position in their own words.

All 16 of the principals in the selected school district responded to the initial questionnaire. The returned responses were sorted by demographic data and categorized into the self-selected choices surrounding the implementation of social media tools. All 16 participants, who had at least 1 representative in each category of implementation, were contacted to schedule a semi-structured interview. Correspondence was conducted by email, telephone, and face-to-face conversations.

Interviews. Based upon the preference of the participant, interviews took place in-person, by telephone, teleconferencing or through other electronic communication tools. The interviews ranged in length from 15 minutes to one hour, depending on the depth of

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

responses provided by each participant. At the request of some participants an email-centered interview was conducted. Some participating principals requested that they be able to answer the questions in email. Through a series of email exchanges, questions and responses were carried out as they would in a face-to-face or phone interview. When this form of interview was completed, the researcher met briefly with the participant to review the conversation and ensure accuracy.

A semi-structured interview format allowed the researcher to probe more deeply into responses provided by each participant. Following the concepts shared by Yin (2016), the researcher worked to ensure that the interviews were conversational in nature, while working to account for increased comfort and familiarity that can be present in cases when the researcher knows the respondents. Weiss (1994) noted important distinctions between casual conversation and a qualitative interview; in the interview, one person is responsible for the direction of the conversation and the other is responsible for the content. The researcher ensured that he maintained the responsibility for the direction of the interview which in turn allowed each participant to focus on the content relative to their lived experiences. Each interview was guided by a protocol of questions shown in Appendix D to keep the content of the interview on course. The interview protocol was flexible; questions did not always follow the same order or exact wording, which encouraged participants to express experiences, feelings, and beliefs as Yin (2016) outlined as a key factor in qualitative interviewing.

Preparation of the data. All interviews were recorded and transcribed or, if conducted electronically, printed verbatim with the expressed permission of the participant. Yin (2016) pointed to the benefit of focusing on verbatim responses as a means of capturing

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

specific terms or phrases used by the interviewee that provide insight into their experience with social media.

The researcher played back the recording and re-read the printed text to compare it to the original source to verify that the data gathered accurately reflected the conversation that took place in the interview. Hand written notes were also used during the interviews as a backup in case there were any technical difficulties with the recording devices.

Data Analysis

Collected data were analyzed and coded to identify key themes relative to the perceived barriers to the use of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach. Due to the nature of qualitative research there is not a specific formula for data analysis that consistently produces the best results.

The coding process. Yin (2016) recommended that interviews be compiled, disassembled, reassembled, and interpreted. The researcher utilized this strategy in the analysis of the collected data. Creswell (2014) offered guidelines for the process of coding to identify patterns, categories, and themes to interpret gathered data. Each interview transcript was reviewed to identify statements of information relative to each of the questions used in the semi-structured interview. These statements were pasted into a single document and coded to correspond to a participant's response. When statements from other transcripts were similar in nature, a tally mark was placed next to the statement to help the researcher account for the frequency of each response.

The document containing the collected coded statements was cut into strips with one statement on each strip. Distinct piles emerged when the strips were sorted into categories of like themes. A two to three word description was assigned to each pile. The individual

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

statements in each pile were reviewed to ensure that they fit under the description. When inconsistencies existed between a statement and the group heading, the process was repeated to find a more accurate description. Finally, when all of the descriptors fit the statements included within the group, emergent themes were identified. Color-coded highlighting was used to match the interview responses to the emergent themes. Researcher created notes in the margins of interview responses also helped to process thoughts that would be relevant to the analysis of the data during review at a later time. Though time-consuming, reviewing and rechecking data are critical steps to ensure validity in qualitative research.

Yin (2016) also discussed some underlying steps that must occur when analyzing data from qualitative research. “No matter what specific analytic strategy or techniques have been chosen, you must do everything to make sure that your analysis is of the highest quality” (Yin, 2014, p. 168). The first of the steps was to attend to all evidence; second, account for plausible rival interpretation; and third, to remain focused on the research questions throughout the analysis stage.

The researcher made it a priority to attend to all of the data that was collected in the 16 qualitative interviews. The interviews varied in length as well as format. Some of the interviews needed to be transcribed by hand while others were submitted electronically. The researcher continually cross-referenced the interviews with the master list of participants to ensure that each interview was addressed through each step of the process. Failure to continually check opened the possibility for responses to be missed in the analysis process.

Rival interpretations were an important step in the analysis process as well. The researcher looked to develop as many interpretations related to the responses as possible. In some cases where the contextual clues from the entire body of the response did not lead to a

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

singular conclusion, the researcher would reach out to the participant and clarify their intention by sharing possible explanations and asking for clarification from the participant. This did not occur often, but was a useful strategy when clarifying questions were not addressed during the initial interview session. The researcher discovered that as he conducted more interviews he accounted for rival interpretations more readily and worked to clarify the intent of statements as they occurred. The researcher recognized that the skill of interviewing is something that improves with frequent practice.

Finally, the researcher took care to attend to the research questions through every step of the data collection and analysis process. The research questions maintained a connection to the theoretical perspective of the research and provided the researcher with a focus throughout the process of analyzing the data.

Researcher's Role

Creswell (2014) affirmed that, in qualitative phenomenological research, the researcher is typically closely involved in the environment and experience of the participants, and must disclose biases and personal connections to offset liabilities in reporting the data. Yin (2014), acknowledged that the researcher needs to know all there is about the topic from previous literature and empirical research and also needs to use his/her own prior, expert knowledge in the conduct of the study. The researcher is also a practicing principal in the selected school district and currently using most of the highlighted social media tools.

The position of the researcher within the school district allowed access to participants, and knowledge of the system was an asset in gaining cooperation of the principals. Familiarity with participants required follow up conversations when the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

researcher allowed a tangent or line of questioning to pull the interview away from the intended purpose.

The familiarity with the system as well as with the participants also created potential biases that the researcher worked to minimize during the research period. Potential biases exist with knowing each of the participants in the professional setting. Each of the principals is a colleague of the researcher, and although there is no administrative hierarchy between the researcher and the participants there still exists the potential for participants to answer in a manner that they feel may support the researcher's beliefs. The researcher also used social media tools for the purpose of school advocacy and community outreach, and the possibility exists that participants may not comment as openly if their beliefs about the use of these tools are different than what they perceive the researcher's beliefs to be. The researcher worked to ensure that each participant did not feel pressure when responding in the interview protocol through constant and frequent reminders that the goal of the research was to explore the lived experience. Another potential downfall of the familiarity between the researcher and the participants is shifting away from the interview protocol and going off on tangents during interviews. The researcher worked to minimize tangents through the utilization of the interview protocol for each of the interviews. This allowed the researcher to stay on point and clearly stay within the role during the interview process.

Summary

This chapter was devoted to the methods used to gather information from school principals in one Midwestern suburban school district about the perceived barriers to the successful implementation of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach. The chapter included discussion of the research design including the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

phenomenological strategy employed in the qualitative study. Further topics in this chapter included the setting for the study and the selection of participants, research procedures, and data analysis. Findings of the data gathered are the focus of Chapter 4.

Chapter 4—Research Findings

Taxonomy information and interview data collected from 16 selected principals who participated in this study are presented in this chapter. The purpose of this qualitative study is to describe, analyze, and interpret the beliefs and perceptions of participants regarding barriers to the use of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach. Emergent themes from the interviews are discussed in relation to the taxonomy of social media use.

Taxonomy Results

Table 5 shows participants' responses related to the taxonomy of interest in implementing social media tools. The categories were self-selected by each participant through the use of an electronic questionnaire (Appendix C).

Table 5

Taxonomy of Interest in Social Media Use

Taxonomy Categories	Number of Participants N= 16
• I frequently use social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach.	5
• I occasionally use social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach but would like to use them more.	8
• I am not currently using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach but would like to begin using these tools.	1
• I am not currently using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach and do not care to start	2

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

using them at this time.

- Other

None

Responses of the participants were distributed across the categories of the taxonomy. In the nine lower elementary schools, grades K-4, four principals frequently use social media tools to advocate for their schools and to reach out to the community; three principals reported that they occasionally use these tools but would like to use them more often; one principal does not currently use them but would like to begin to use social media tools in the future; and one principal in the lower elementary schools does not use them and does not have a desire to start. Thus, the full range of responses is demonstrated among the group of nine principals who serve the lower elementary schools in the same community.

Two buildings serve the upper elementary grades 5 and 6, and two middle schools serve grades 7 and 8. Each principal at the upper elementary level reported that they occasionally use social media tools, and both would like to use them more. At the middle school level, one of the two principals frequently uses social media and the other reported occasional use. Variation is shown in responses of the two comprehensive high school principals, including the alternative high school principal. Two of the three principals reported occasional use of social media tools. One of the traditional high school principals is the second principal to report no use of social media and no desire to start. Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses across the sample.

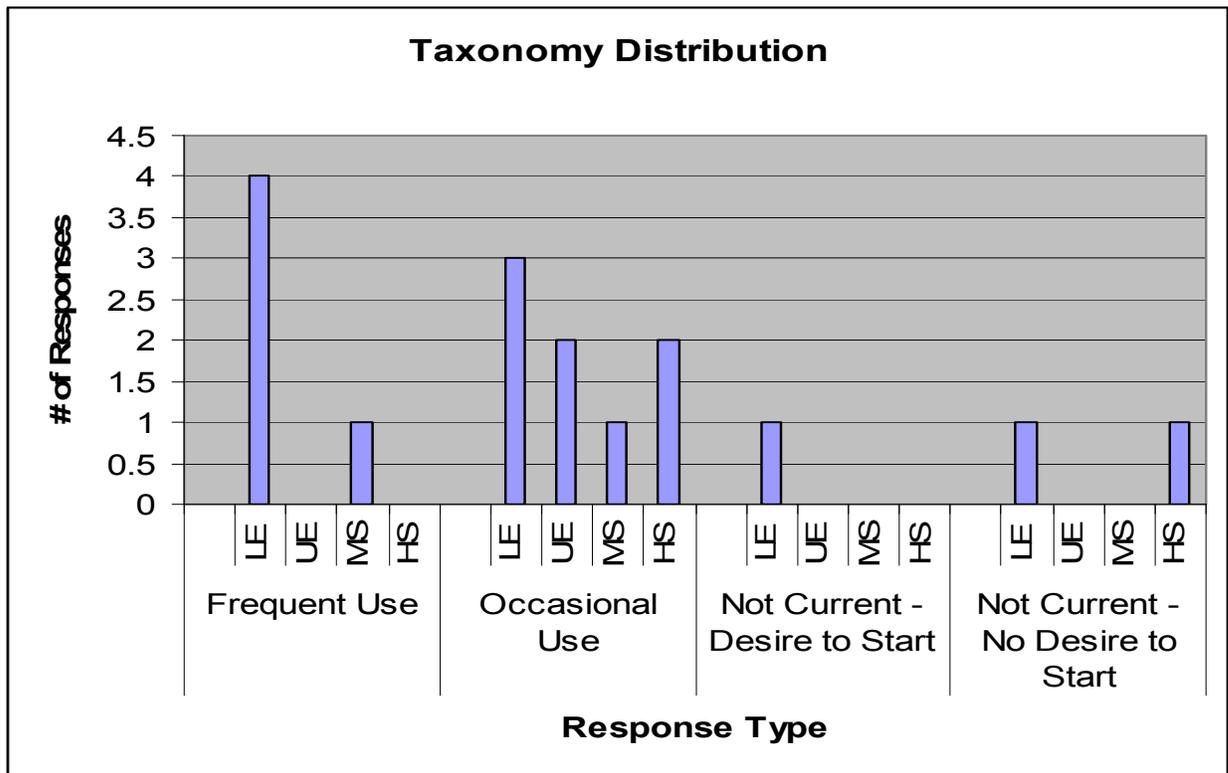


Figure 1. Taxonomy Distribution

The methods section in chapter three outlined the use of semi-structured interview. Wording and order of the questions found in Appendix D potentially differed and were revised to maintain the conversational manner of each interview. The researcher knows each of the participating principals, so some questions were asked in less formal ways to ensure open and honest response from each of the participants and to maintain the conversational nature of qualitative interviewing practices.

Interview Procedures

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each of the 16 principals. Through careful analysis of the data collected, emergent themes were identified. Telephone interviews were recorded, transcribed by the researcher, and reviewed for accuracy. A similar

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

process of transcription and verification was used for face-to-face interviews. Hand written notes were also used during the interviews as a backup in case of any technical difficulties with the recording device. No problems were encountered with the recording of interviews. An online, economically feasible phone recording application with transcription services was considered, but the quality of the transcribed conversation was not acceptable and the time needed to edit the initial transcription was longer than simply transcribing by hand.

Some participating principals requested to answer the interview questions via email. Questions and responses were exchanged as they would in a face-to-face or phone interview. At completion of the interview, the researcher met briefly with the participant to review the conversation and ensure accuracy. Email conversations were archived and printed for later analysis.

Themes

Table 6 shows the number of principals at each of the building levels and the code by which the responses in each theme are discussed.

Table 6

Codes and Numbers of Principals at Building-Level and Grades

Building Level-grades	Number of Principals	Code
Lower Elementary (K-4)	9	LE
Upper Elementary 1 (5-6)	2	UE
Middle School (7-8)	2	MS
High School Principal (9-12)	2	HS
Alternative High School (10-12)	1	AHS

Four themes related to the implementation of social media emerged from the interview responses of the 16 participants: 1) privacy of the subjects included in a social

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

media posting, 2) time and ability to implement the tool consistently and correctly, 3). choosing the correct tool for the desired outcome, and 4) personal responsibility of a principal to be the voice of branding one's school to establish a strong connection to the community.

Distribution of themes. The four themes with the inclusion of personal bias statements by individual principals presented represent characteristics that the principals in the suburban school district in this study perceived as barriers to implementation of the use of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach. Although some principals reported multiple barriers to the implementation process, others only had one or two major points that they perceived as barriers. Table 7 represents the distribution of the themes identified in the data collection process.

Table 7

Frequency and Distribution of Themes

Participants	Subject Privacy	Time and Fidelity	Choice of Tool	Principals as Promoters	Personal Bias
LE-1	X	X	X		
LE-2	X		X		
LE-3		X		X	
LE-4		X	X		
LE-5	X	X	X		
LE-6	X	X	X	X	
LE-7	X	X			
LE-8	X			X	
LE-9	X	X			X
UE-1	X		X		X
UE-2		X			
MS-1		X		X	X
MS-2		X			X
HS-1					X
HS-2		X	X	X	X
AHS-1		X	X		

Totals	8	12	8	6	6
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Theme 1. Subject privacy. Participants feared that using social media tools could in some way compromise the privacy of the subjects included within a post. Specifically related to the purpose of school advocacy and community outreach, principals looked to social media tools to highlight the positive things that happen in a school building; in many cases, activities and events include students. Depending on the platform and the accessibility of the tool to people outside of the educational setting, posting pictures of students engaged in activities suggests a risk that student privacy may be jeopardized. One principal, who occasionally uses social media tools for school advocacy, experienced parental concerns early in the experience with social media tools.

This issue started with a parent who emailed me at the beginning of the year and cc'd the superintendent expressing her concern over the fact that her daughter's teacher was posting pictures of her on her closed Twitter account. She hadn't given permission and considered this a violation. (UE-1)

Since that time, this principal has not continued with the use of her selected social media tools, although the accounts have been created. The principal said that she was seeking more clarity into the issue of permissions before moving forward. Because the issue was brought to the principal's attention based upon a teacher's classroom social media account, the principal requested that other teachers in the building suspend their use of social media tools as well. The principal reported that the timing of the parent complaint and that the parent also included the district superintendent in the communication about the concerns created a barrier for the implementation of social media tools.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Strategies for ensuring privacy for students. Intrigued by this situation that was encountered early in the interview process, a follow up question was addressed to each of the other respondents who expressed privacy as a concern to determine whether any other principals had been contacted by a parent about their student's privacy. The other respondents who shared a concern around privacy in their interviews had not experienced similar encounters and had moved forward with implementing social media tools. Some principals could not offer a strategy to avoid a violation of privacy, but others believed that proactive approaches to limit the identity of students in pictures and posts averted parental concerns. The following excerpt highlighted some of the concerns related to privacy in the use of social media tools:

Yep, I try to be real conscious of that, you know, with unique situations that sometimes we have, like custody issues, safety issues, and families who are needing to keep their child's school community private. I just have made it a practice since I have started this quest to be extremely careful with those situations, just because it is new to me and I think I might be doing something that compromises a student's safety. (LE-6)

When asked how this principal exercises extreme care, she shared that she only takes pictures of the backs of students' heads, or if they do have their face in a picture, she will call home and ask for permission before posting the picture to social media. Following the line of questioning on parental resistance to their children being a part of social media posts, the principal was asked whether anyone had ever denied such permission; the principal shared that it has occurred on a few occasions. The principal who experienced the initial complaint shared that she had looked to other principals for advice and guidance.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

No one had a strong answer, in terms of privacy and posting, and I was advised to post pictures of the backs of kids' heads to avoid any issues. That's fine in some situations, but I don't want all of my posts to be a bunch of hair! (UE-1)

The concept of privacy remains a barrier and is an unresolved concern for principals in their decision to implement social media tools into their comprehensive communication plan. In the case of the participants in this study, a clear process to obtain permission from parents does not exist at this time, and the challenge to avoid identifying characteristics in all pictures posted may deter the use and the effectiveness of the tool for the intent of school advocacy and community outreach.

Management of permission. Management of parental permission is another barrier related to the issue of permission. If particular students are excluded from being included in posts from school, principals will have an added responsibility to ensure that pictures taken and posts created do not accidentally include those students. Principal UE-1 shared that she was developing an opt-out form to use, and was asked how she planned to manage these forms.

In terms of opt-out forms, I am first hoping that we can write the permission slips in such a way that it will reduce enough concerns so that parents will be more likely to sign them. For example, the fact that this will be a closed site, the fact that I will be the only one posting, etc. I honestly don't have any idea how many opt-out forms will come in, so my reaction will depend on that. If it is a small amount, I might make phone calls home. I am also planning to put out a listserv beforehand that will hopefully address some of the questions that parents might have and will lay out the purpose for the social media. (UE-1)

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Concern surrounding the management of permission forms to address privacy is also on the minds of other principals. Principal LE-5 shared his top concern of “keeping track of students that aren’t allowed to have their picture or name on the internet.” The concerns around student privacy are two-fold: 1) how does a school principal ensure that they don’t inadvertently post content that violates the privacy of the students in the school and 2) how does a principal manage which students can and cannot be included in these posts? Although this study describes privacy as one of the most common barriers principals experience today, it is also one of the most difficult to manage. For some members of the study, such as principal UE-1, it has halted the implementation of social media use in her practice. For other principals, it has created a restriction about what and how they post the content to advocate for their school and connect with the community; if nothing else, the privacy-permission issue has limited the efficiency of using the tool.

It is important to note that some principals did not express student privacy as a concern, nor has this issue come up as they have implemented social media tools into their practice. The interviews conducted in this research study revealed that the principals who expressed concerns around student privacy work with students in the lower grade levels. Reviewing the responses and looking for patterns, no principal in the middle school or high school setting shared student privacy as a concern. This may be because many students in the higher grade levels also engage in social media tools, and posting may not be a significant concern of parents.

Principals’ privacy. The concept of privacy for various people remains a concern. Some principals at the elementary level expressed concern about the privacy of the children in their posts; for some secondary-level principals, it was their own privacy at issue. One

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

high school principal (HS-1) who does not use social media and does not care to use it said, “While I get social media is the trend, I just don’t want to be found online. I am not fond of social media and feel it is something else to do when I already have plenty to keep me busy.” The principal shared that she does not have an interest for social media use in her personal or professional life. She described herself as a private person and the thought of being present online was not something that appealed to her. Even for a principal, like HS-2, who now uses social media tools in her personal life and professional practice, the concern with students and parents finding out private information about her personal life was a concern.

I was very hesitant to use Facebook and establish a professional account linked to my personal account. I had to struggle and really let go of that huge fear of personal information somehow being accessible if I had a professional online presence.

Additionally, I am not a native social media-user and tend to be a very private person when it comes to sharing information online. (HS-2).

Social media posts become broadcast. Social media posts can be shared with people outside of the intended audience. Tools linked to an internet platform, as social media tools are today, mean that the creator of a post cannot control who accesses the post. Even in more highly controlled environments such as Facebook, followers can repost content and expose the content to an entirely different group of viewers. If a principal opens his or her Twitter account to the public to increase the audience within the school community, the ability to control who sees the content is lost, and any person can follow the activities of the school or principal. If the principal creates an account with the tightest of restrictions, the number of people who can view their posts is limited. Privacy is a concern, and problems that are

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

highlighted through broadcast media coverage or personal accounts only increase the magnitude of the barriers that privacy issues create for skeptical principals.

Theme 2. Time and fidelity. “Not enough time” emerged as a theme from the interviews. Although this response was anticipated, there was a clear distinction that the factor most influenced by time was the ability to implement the tool with fidelity and to use the tool consistently and correctly. Implementation with fidelity held different meaning for various participants in the study. Seven of the 16 respondents shared concerns related to the content that would be posted and how the community would perceive it. They were concerned that the informal nature of social media might create situations where the text included in a particular social media post might not be fully edited or appropriate. “I also wanted to make sure messages were edited and professional,” was a concern shared by principal LE-7, who is a frequent user of social media tools. This concern was mirrored in the responses of other participants as well. Principals expressed a high level of pride and a commitment to avoid sending messages to the public on any platform that had spelling or grammatical errors. They also indicated a desire to make sure that the writing style used in the messages followed the same professional language used with other school communications. This is a limitation with Twitter and other social media tools where the author of a post is allowed only a limited number of characters to express his or her thoughts.

A consistent presence. Another meaning of fidelity reported by participants addressed the idea of maintaining a consistent presence with the chosen social media tool. Consistent presence was defined as principals making sure they were adding content or posts to the social media tool on a regular and consistent basis. This was the most frequent concern shared by participants when asked about barriers to implementing social media tools.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

“Once you start using it, and the community expects it, it becomes an expectation that it is used” (MS-1). Principals distinctly did not want to start something that they could not continue in their regular and consistent professional practice. For some, this was a fear of not utilizing the tool continuously at a later time and what that might mean to the community; for others, the concern stemmed from watching others try new and innovative forms of communication only to later discontinue their use or not follow through.

Many principals started blogs a few years ago, but very few have maintained them over the years and months since they started. There is not enough time to do the newsletters, teacher evaluations, deal with individual situations, show up at events, and take on the job of a writer as well. (HS-2)

From the responses provided, the underlying motivation does not appear to be that principals are looking for less work to do, but rather an assurance that they can commit to and complete something that they start and that they can use the tool in a productive way. Principals expressed the idea of not only using a social media tool accurately and with professionalism, but they also reported that it was important that their presence with the tool was frequent and consistent enough that audience members saw new posts regularly to make the tool effective.

I think it is a priority and in many ways could actually make my job easier but it is getting the routine going. Routine is another key word, I know that like my weekly agenda I have been doing for 20 years and the listserv that I have done for at least 5 years, I just have to get the routine going. (UE-2)

A routine task. This principal discussed other job pressures upon his implementation of social media tools. He shared that he believed that taking this step could lead to positive outcomes for his school and for his leadership, but since beginning his implementation, he

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

has struggled with remaining consistent in the use of his selected social media tools. In the quote above, he highlighted the importance of routine and building the use of social media tools into that routine. When he discussed this challenge, he was saying that building routine is necessary for success. The two other tasks, his weekly note to his staff and his weekly listserv to this community, are now automatic components of his communication plan. He recognized that if he can get the use of social media tools to that level, time will not be as much of a constraint for him.

Setting personal goals. Three of the participating principals, who are currently implementing at least one social media tool, have set goals to account for the barrier of maintaining frequent and consistent use.

So, my thing is that I wanted to take a baby step first and try something new and really get comfortable with that and do that well. So I set a goal for myself that I would try to have one post a week. And I feel like once I master that, then I would be ready to try another avenue in addition. (LE-6)

Setting personal goals is a strategy that some of the principals in the study have used to insure successful implementation of social media into their communication plan. From these respondents, there appears to be an awareness that a new practice of advocating to the community with social media is something that may take time to become a part of their routine practice.

Mastering the technology. A third concern directly related to fidelity and time was mastering the technical aspects of the social media tools and understanding how to use them most effectively and appropriately. The only principal in this study who was not currently using social media tools but wanted to begin to use these tools (LE-1) described the technical

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

aspects of the tool as the greatest barrier to implementation of Twitter into practice. “Finding the time and resource tutorial to learn how to use the social media” was her response when asked about hesitation in getting started with social media. When asked specifically what was holding her back, she replied “a lack of motivation, little time, and finding a training tool. I am not on Facebook either. I wonder if a new social tool would give me more work and take me away from classrooms or it would actually save me time” (LE-1). For this principal, an assurance of self-efficacy was important before beginning a new practice with social media tools. She expressed a desire to engage in some type of formal training on the tool before using it. More than one of the principals in this category were self-taught on the use of these tools, either through previous personal use or through trial and error in their practice. Another principal echoed these thoughts by saying “I am also learning how to use Twitter and do not know all of the functions” (LE-5). There are different technical aspects with each new social media tool and, for some principals, the technical use of the tool may be a barrier. Those who expressed concern about the technical aspects of the tools generally also shared that they do not use social media in their personal lives, as was the case with principals LE-1, HS-2, and LE-7. This possible correlation may be an area of future study.

Equity in choice of content. Another aspect of time that was mentioned more than once was the time that it takes for principals to ensure they are accessing all areas of the school and providing a level of equity in the content that they post. A high school administrator and an elementary administrator mentioned this as a concern. They both expressed a strong desire to make sure that no group or organization within the school felt left out when they started posting things on social media.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

I realized that once I started posting pictures of certain classrooms, I really needed to include all of the classrooms. The same went for clubs; when I took a picture of the chess club, I thought I had better make sure that I get a picture of student council, safeties, and all of the other things in the school. I have never had anyone complain, but I was worried about it, so it became an additional stress for me when I was getting started. In some ways, it still is during the beginning of the year until I have a chance to post something for every group. (LE-3)

The same type of issue is present, and maybe even amplified, at the high school level.

However, as principal HS-3 described, it can have some benefits as well.

I also use FB and Twitter to post information about sporting events, scores, encouragement, pics, etc., to make it look like I am everywhere all the time. As a high school principal, you simply cannot be everywhere all the time, but you can show your support to the freshman girls' basketball team by tweeting scores and pics that your athletic director sends you, so people know you care while you are having dinner with your kids or you are at another school event. (HS-3)

Both of these principals voiced the concept of equity as a concern when implementing social media tools. Although it is not certain that this concern existed before they implemented social media, it was clear to them when they began to use the tools. Equity in the choice of content is a significant part of time and fidelity as an aspect of using social media.

Theme 3. Choosing the right tool. Participating principals noted that another barrier to the use of social media was how to choose the correct tool for the desired outcome. Authors O'Reilly (2009), Dixon (2012), and Safko (2010) all discussed the rapid expansion of social media in society in recent years. They not only discussed the large increases in the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

number of users, but also the number of different social media tools available to reach audiences. The large menu of tools from which to choose is a very real barrier to implementation for principals today. Principal MS-1 previously cautioned against implementing too many tools, because that would become the expectation. The same problem exists for principals who implement the wrong tool or a tool that does not have the preferred audience. Principal LE-2 shared this experience when she decided to implement Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram all at the same time.

When I answered, it was for Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. But I don't feel that Instagram and Twitter really hit the parent population. There are more Facebook users. As for positive effects, it is too early to determine. The Facebook page has 100 likes, so I would guess that is a start in the positive direction. As an elementary, I am not sure if we would really need Instagram or Twitter. Facebook really seems to be the parent connection I was seeking. If I were at a middle or high school level, I would use Twitter and/or Instagram to engage students as well. (LE-2)

For this principal, only a handful of parents utilize two of the three chosen social media tools. The principal is now faced with the decision to continue the task of posting to these tools with a limited audience or scaling back to focus on one platform.

Reaching the preferred audience. Another factor that principals must consider is the audience that uses the tool and the percentage of the overall school community the tool reaches. Some of the principals interviewed have limited the content that they post to particular social media tools, because the content does not reach a broad enough audience. One of the middle school principals who occasionally uses social media tools said,

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

I started using the Facebook page upon invitation from my PTSA. It is not the main communication tool that I use, which is listserv email. The Facebook page does not have as many community members as listserv. This is the main concern that I have, so I don't solely use it to share important dates. I use it more as a place to post pictures of events than a communication tool. (MS-1)

A follow up question to each of the participants asked why principals chose the tools they did. The overwhelming response was the ability for the tool to reach as many community members as possible. All participants relied heavily on the district- provided listserv system as their main tool to communicate with parents and community members. However, some principals expressed frustration with a limitation of the system that does not allow users to send pictures or attachments. Principals shared this as a primary motivation for adding other tools such as Twitter and Facebook.

A lower elementary principal shared thoughtful insight related to choosing tools for school advocacy and community outreach.

The advice I would give is to ask yourself what is the purpose or intent of the communication and then check to see if that is how your community wants to receive it. Then always monitor to see if it is effective. As a teacher I had a classroom website and thought it was great. I spent hours updating it each week. Then halfway through the year, I learned how to check how many people went to it and, sad to say, on average only five people a week. My parent population at that time didn't use the internet and preferred a hardcopy. (LE-5)

The continuous use of one particular tool can also be problematic in an ever-changing landscape. One principal feared that once she finally mastered one tool, the audience may

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

move on to something else. Tool choice, much like the theme of privacy, can be different for different grade levels. If the intended audience is parents, it can be somewhat less challenging to find appropriate tools. However, if the audience is students, especially high school students, the task may be more difficult.

It is hard to keep up with the high school students; they use so many new apps and programs, they actually laugh when I tell them we are on Facebook, because they say that Facebook is for old people. (HS-2)

The researcher was unable to find a comprehensive and up to date source that could guide principals to which of the many social media tools is the best for a particular application. For principals who responded in this study, the selection of the appropriate tool is made based on their past experiences, personal comfort levels, or following the lead of colleagues. Knowing the preferences of the audience is an important factor to consider, as the goal is to send messages with social media platforms already used by parents and community members. If the audience is broad, and a principal is looking to reach both students and parents, more than one social media tool may be necessary. Principals must also account for the rapid change that can occur with social media tools and continually monitor to ensure that the goals set by the principal are still being met as time goes on.

Theme 4. Principals as promoters. Principals expressed an uncertainty about branding one's school to establish a strong connection to the community and about the personal responsibility to be the voice of that promotion. The theme that emerged as a barrier highlighted the task rather than the tool of sharing positive school programs in such a direct and public way. Kellough (2008) stated that the development of a close relationship with the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

off-site community does play an integral part of the principal role; however, it still feels foreign and unfamiliar to some in the field.

Exploring this concept more deeply, a high school principal, who described herself as an occasional user of social media tools, expressed that using these tools required a change in her thinking and in her practice.

I am not by nature a self-marketer. And social media is about marketing, branding, and messaging, which feels different to me as an educator. I was always very focused about working IN my school and taking care of students and staff as a servant leader. I have shifted that view somewhat in my current job, simply because the school is too big to be everywhere personally all the time. I have to develop a greater online presence to be seen working ON my school as the leader. (HS-2)

This principal is developing the task of being a promoter in her role. This theme is a potential barrier because the overall concept of branding in the school setting is still somewhat new to public education. While geographic boundaries dictate much of the enrollment for the two participating comprehensive high schools in this study, both principals are aware that public perceptions of schools can impact the overall success of the organization.

This issue is relevant to elementary as well as high school principals. For one of the lower elementary principals who recently started using Facebook as a tool, the motivation to act as a promoter came from members of the staff. “Our staff thought it would be a nice way to communicate positive happenings within our school” (LE-6). In this case, the staff members who work closely with this principal decided that highlighting positive events would be in the best interest of the school. Although this case does not indicate that the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

principal lacked the skills to promote the happenings within her school, it shows that motivation from her staff ultimately moved her to that next step.

Parents and community learn more about the school. That all but two principals are currently using or looking to begin using social media tools could reflect a growing desire of parents and community members to see more about the school today than in the past. One of the elementary schools currently working toward specialty certification in math and science praised social media as a means to help promote the school. When asked about the potential benefits, a principal stated, “to show more snapshots or feel good moments for parents to see our STEAM program. We just created a STEAM YouTube channel to share with parents, too” (LE-1). The use of social media for this principal has allowed her to connect with her outside community and to gather support for a new initiative undertaken by the school.

Personal bias. Two of the participating principals touched on personal biases of social media tools. Although the topic did not constitute enough interest to qualify as a theme, it is relative to the context of implementation of social media tools. The concept of bias was evident in the statements of principals who did not currently use social media tools and had no desire to start. Although personal biases impact most decisions made by individuals, it appears that biases related to social media tools come from personal rather than professional experiences or from perceptions from outside of the educational setting. The two principals who did not use social media tools and did not wish to begin using them also did not use social media in their personal lives and found it to be too public for their personal beliefs. They both expressed concerns that social media has too many negative aspects and that the negative aspects would potentially outweigh any positive aspects of their use. “For me, I just hear about too many bad things that happen because of things like

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Facebook” (LE-9). They both expressed feelings that social media is best left as a personal tool for individuals and that they would prefer their school not be associated with these platforms. Personal biases against particular social media tools were also evident with a principal who does use social media tools.

I have a personal vendetta against Facebook. It is like this. Twitter is reading things I care about from people I do not care about. Facebook is reading about things I do not care about from people I do care about. (MS-2)

For this particular principal, this personal belief was a barrier to the implementation of Facebook. Although the principal readily incorporated Twitter into his practice, and has for some time, he initially rejected the idea of Facebook as a viable social media tool to use with his school. It wasn't until he discovered a way to link Facebook to his existing Twitter account that he began to use it. In this situation the principal reported rarely checking Facebook but more diligently monitoring the Twitter page. The linking of the two tools allowed the principal to create a post on Twitter and have it copy the post over to Facebook.

Autonomy for use of social media tools. The popularity for using social media tools in their personal lives offers the possibility of a personal bias that principals carry over in their roles as educational leaders. The building principal is granted a certain level of autonomy to carry out the role, and although there are a number of duties and expectations that principals must carry out, how they accomplish these tasks may vary from one principal to the next. Communication with the community is one of those tasks, wherein the district expects communication to occur, but has set no expectations about frequency or how the messages are delivered. If there are certain expectations, as in testing schedules and other important information, the district will often send that communication from the central office.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

When autonomy for the principal exists, personal feelings on different methods of communication have a greater impact on their use.

Sometimes it is the principal's previous professional experiences that cause apprehension, as was the case with one principal in the upper elementary schools. One principal, new to the role, was previously an assistant principal at the high school level. Past experiences with social media in this case impacted the principal's current decision to implement social media into her everyday practice.

I come to social media through the eyes of a high school assistant principal, where the majority of my job was spent dealing with problems online. I've gone to court over content online and on phones, so I want to be very careful about how I am posting.

Maybe if I had started out in another role, where social media isn't so controversial, I might not be going through all of these steps. (UE-1)

Clearly in this case, past experience dictates future decision-making. Regardless of the origin of individual experiences, the situations can lead to bias that has the potential to impact practice. There may be as many different reasons for the support or resistance against social media as there are individuals. Life experiences are important to consider when assessing the barriers to social media use for school advocacy and community outreach. In the absence of a district directive or expectation, biases can be a barrier to implementation. If a principal is not comfortable with the tool or does not believe that the tool has more positive outcomes than negative outcomes, the likelihood of implementation decreases.

The Themes and the Theoretical Framework

Each of the four key themes represents barriers that have been communicated by principals who have participated in this qualitative study; however, the themes are

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

representative only of this particular population. The social cognitive theory regarding self-efficacy developed by Bandura (1986) established that for an individual to engage in an adaptive behavior, three things must be present. The first is that the individual needs to believe that they can be successful at the given task; second, there needs to be some type of external pressure or motivation for the individual to engage in the adaptive behavior; and finally, the individual has to believe that positive outcomes of engaging in the adaptive behavior will outweigh the negative outcomes. The themes representing perceived barriers to principals' implementation of social media tools were analyzed through the lens of social cognitive theory.

Subject privacy. Participants in the study expressed concerns that privacy of students or the principal might be violated. In both cases, the participants highlighted a concern that aligns most closely with the first tenet of social cognitive theory, which addresses an individual's ability to perform the adaptive behavior effectively. Principals who articulated privacy as a concern in their interviews were concerned that their use of the tools in an ineffective manner might cause privacy violations to occur. The principals in the study communicated a strong desire for effective use of social media tools. Another tenet of the theory that may be present with the theme of subject privacy is the third tenet, which weighs positive and negative outcomes. The idea of violating the privacy of a family within a school could be considered a negative outcome. If the effects of the negative outcome outweigh any expected gains the principal hoped to experience through positive outcomes, it may result in an imbalance between the good versus negative equation and stop the implementation of the adapted behavior. Thus, the theme of student privacy directly relates to two of the three tenets of social cognitive theory; it calls into question the ability for the principal to be

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

effective with the tool and the possibility that negative outcomes outweigh positive outcomes.

Time and fidelity. In the responses collected during this study, the majority expressed concern over technical aspects of social media tools directly related to time. The first tenet of Bandura's theory does not specify whether the feeling of self-efficacy is related to time, but it appeared that the principals believed that technical aspects, development of routine, equitable exposure with the tool, or any other aspect of fidelity was possible to overcome given enough time. Whereas more complex talents or skills may be difficult to master no matter how much time is given, this does not appear to be the case with social media. Thus, while fidelity relates to the first tenet of social cognitive theory, it also relates to time. Although not a question asked of respondents in this study, it would be interesting to know if more time would change participants' thoughts on self-efficacy. If given enough time to learn the tool and to use the tool in their already full schedules, would the principals have had the concern about effective use? This component may be missing from the original theory.

Choosing the right tool. The theme of tool selection appears to fit the first component of social cognitive theory regarding self-efficacy. Principals expressed caution and concern that any tool added to their comprehensive communication plan had to be something that they could use in an effective manner and maintain over the course of their tenure in the role. Those principals who already implemented social media tools into their practice provided evidence that it can be done, but concerns remain for principals who have not yet made their selection about which social media tool is the best for their practice. The practicing principals interviewed in this study have carefully considered selection of tools

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

that they felt they could use effectively and maintain long term. None of the principals interviewed expressed the use of blogs as an example; one respondent even stated it as a tool that was too difficult to maintain.

Ease of use surrounding today's tools seems to be a positive factor in their use by school principals. The fact that the tools can be linked to mobile devices and that they do not need a lot of time to create new posts, work as a benefit for principals. Yet for some, that ease of use and ability to send quickly also works as a barrier, because they are concerned that the formal editing and professionalism given to other communication tools is not present. As it relates to the first tenet of social cognitive theory, evidence supports that the theory is true when it comes to all three of the components of the theory. First, principals are likely to choose tools that they believe they can use successfully in their practice and forego others. Second, the practices of their colleagues and others in the field serve as a possible example of outside motivation that creates a desire for the individual to adapt the behavior. And third, principals are careful to select tools that they believe will provide the most positive outcomes while limiting negative outcomes to the best of their ability.

Principals as promoters. The fourth and final theme that emerged as a barrier to principals' use of social media tools shifted emphasis from an instructional leader focused on the school to a leader who communicates positive aspects of the school to the outside community as a promoter of the school. Self-efficacy was not a concern about the principals' ability to be an effective promoter of the school. Some statements described the task as unfamiliar and new but not something that a principal could not do effectively. Further, positive versus negative outcomes also did not appear to be related to this theme. The strongest connection of this theme to Bandura's (1986) theory is related to outside

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

motivation. The changes that have taken place in public education over the years likely account for at least some of the motivation and pressure for principals to feel that they need to promote their schools more actively than ever before. Every school outside of the district that competes to gain the enrollment of students serves as motivation to promote the school's brand and market the positive aspects of the school through advocacy efforts on social media.

Personal bias. Although not identified as a theme in this study, statements indicating personal biases against social media emerged in interview responses. The personal feelings and beliefs that individuals develop through lived experiences can play a role in the decision whether to adopt a new behavior. Elements of social cognitive theory relate to this characteristic of decision-making to be able to carry out the behavior successfully. Social cognitive theory is based on beliefs surrounding self-efficacy, motivation, and outcomes.

Bias has the potential to influence self-efficacy of individuals. The high school principal who did not wish to start using social media tools discussed the inability to manage another task in her already busy day. She did not believe that she would be able to be efficient in the use of these tools, which created a barrier to adopting them into her communication plan. The importance of societal influence played a role in personal responses in this study, even though no formal organizational motivation was present. Bias has the potential to influence an individual into believing that motivation may not exist when it does, yet bias also has the potential to lead an individual to believe that motivation is present when it is really not. Finally, biases can tip the scales one way or another as individuals are inclined to believe in positive or negative outcomes.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Summary

Findings discussed in this chapter reflect the behavior and opinions of school principals at all program levels of one school district toward the use of social media tools as a means of outreach to the community. Responses to semi-structured, in-depth interviews also revealed cultural insight of attitudes and factors contributing to decision-making behavior into the impact of the phenomenon of social media and the growing competitive nature of educational institutions upon traditional practice of school principals. Characteristic of qualitative studies, the intent was not to generalize beyond the individuals or site of the study but to establish value in description of a phenomenon and development of themes in the context of a specific site (Creswell, 2014). Themes that emerged from analysis of interview data provided an understanding of the perceptions of barriers to implementation of social media tools by the selected school principals and offered avenues for further research to explore the topic through extension to other educators, parents, community stakeholders, and policy-makers.

Chapter 5–Discussion, Implications, Recommendations, and Further Research

A discussion of the findings as they relate to the research questions is followed by implications for practice, recommendations for practicing principals, and suggestions for future research related to the use of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach. The goal of this chapter is to tie together the content from the literature review with the data collected. A comprehensive analysis of these two sources of information will provide valuable insight and guidance to practicing principals in the field today.

Discussion of Research Questions

This study was conducted to answer a primary question and to explore three related sub-questions: What barriers do principals face in the implementation of social media tools related to school advocacy and community outreach in the kindergarten through 12th grade settings?

- a. How do principals feel they can effectively communicate using social media tools?
- b. Is there evidence of organizational motivation or outside influence to change practice and communicate with social media tools?
- c. What are the expected positive outcomes of social media use and how do they compare to any expected negative outcomes?

Discussion of themes. Interviews were conducted with 16 principals serving in a suburban district outside of a major urban center in the Midwest. From these interviews, four barriers were identified. These barriers emerged as themes throughout the responses of the individual principals who were interviewed during the study. Similarities between responses

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

were analyzed and classified into definable barriers to the implementation of social media tools for the purpose of school advocacy and community outreach. The discussion of each of these barriers is connected back to the research questions in the sections that follow.

Subject privacy: The first barrier addressed privacy violations for both students and principals. Some social media posts include photographs; principals expressed concerns that a student's privacy may be jeopardized if his or her image or identifying information was included in those posts. The issue of privacy is a barrier that limits the implementation of social media tools in communication plans of some principals; however, others who have moved forward with implementation have altered some of the ways in which they utilize these tools. Avoiding pictures of students' heads and phone calls to ensure parental permission before posting an image to social media, and an opt-out sheet were some of the strategies suggested as means to manage the use of student images in posts.

Compared to the principal who frequently takes pictures of events around the school and posts with less concern for privacy, the principal who takes extra steps to address privacy issues can be at a disadvantage. Additional steps to obtain permission before sharing each post may limit the amount of posts created and the frequency of posts shared with the community. More than one principal shared concern that using social media tools in their professional practice may in some way jeopardize the privacy of their personal social media accounts. The concern served as enough of a barrier for some principals to withhold their implementation or diminish their desire to begin using social media tools.

Time and fidelity: The second barrier to implementation of social media tools centered on time constraints and the impact of time on fidelity. Although all participants expressed a strong desire to ensure professional communications and effective and efficient

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

use of social media tools, time was named a major factor in limiting achievement of those goals. Time is required to understand and learn all of the technical aspects of the tools and may limit implementation in light of other tasks required of the principal. Steps necessary to ensure professional content, such as peer editing and proofreading, further compete against time and other tasks.

Fidelity in the use of social media tools included a regular and consistent presence on the selected new form of the communication with the community. The participants expressed a desire to control the implementation process to develop routine and consistent practices. Some of the principals interviewed also recognized the need for equity in the items posted on social media. Time is required to ensure equitable exposure of various classrooms, clubs, and student activities that are worthy of highlighting when it comes to school advocacy.

Choice of tool: The third barrier to implementation of social media tools involved the choice of the actual tools. Principals reported little guidance on which tool is the most effective or offers the best feature for the purpose of school advocacy and community outreach. Dixon (2012) highlighted a rapid expansion of social media tools and social media use by society that only further complicates this issue. Related to the barrier of time and fidelity, management of time to learn and use multiple tools is problematic and increases the possibility that one or all of these tools may be dropped at a later time if they prove to be ineffective for the intended purposes.

Some principals described a process for surveying their parent communities before selecting a particular form of social media. The features of particular social media tools were

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

the deciding factors in the choice of other participants. But most of the participants speculated or assumed that one tool would be more effective than another.

The choice of tool is complicated by the ever-changing landscape of social media. A high school principal expressed concern that when trying to engage the students on social media, the tools that students use evolve at a faster rate than those of their parents. When principals finally master the use of one social media tool they often need to immediately move to a different tool.

Principals as promoters: The final barrier to implementing social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach was rooted in the change in the principal's role from educational leader to school promoter. Historically a school's enrollment has been dictated more by geographic attendance areas than active marketing. Recently with the change in school funding, the competition created by charter schools, and increased marketing of private and parochial institutions, the need for public school principals to market and promote their schools has increased. This role is unfamiliar to some principals. Understanding the need for school advocacy and community outreach does not always indicate a desire to do so.

Discussion of sub-questions. Three interview sub-questions elicited extended information related to the theoretical frame of this research.

Question 1. How do principals feel they can effectively communicate using social media tools?

With the exception of two principals who do not have a desire to begin using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach, the majority of the respondents indicated that they did feel that they would ultimately be able to effectively use these tools.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Some principals discussed sharing photographs of positive aspects of their school communities while others discussed using social media tools to promote clubs and organizations within the school. Intention to change is a fundamental concept in Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action (TRA). Some principals felt that they have already accomplished their self defined level of success and will easily be able to continue to effectively use the tools for the intended purpose. Other principals expressed concerns with barriers and constraints but were confident that they would eventually be able to reach the desired point of effectiveness that they have set for themselves.

When asked why the principals believed that they would be able to effectively communicate using social media tools, Bandura's (2001) concept of self-efficacy was paramount. Participants cited the ease of use and the ability to post content to social media sites easily, given their applications on a mobile device. A principal communicated that she has been able to quickly and efficiently take a picture of an event she happened to witness within the school and quickly post it to social media without having to return to the office and go through a series of specific steps to make the post. Another principal, at an earlier stage of implementation, stated that while she does not post content quickly, she has found it to be an effective way to share the positive happenings around the school, with the added advantage of the ability to post pictures in addition to text.

Fishbein and Ajzen's (2010) revision to the TRA theory claimed that planned behavior is influenced by the acceptance of others. This scenario was demonstrated by one principal who built self-efficacy by trying to gather feedback about the chosen social media tool. She monitored posts for the number of "likes" received to help her determine the type of content she should include in her future communications with the tool. She found the work

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

of student groups and organizations within the school produced a more favorable response than posts communicating calendar dates and other school-related information. Her attitude confirmed Fishbein and Ajzen's idea that change is more likely when the individual is convinced of the value and the stakeholders concur.

Although the majority of responses were positive about the use of social media tools, limiting factors were also mentioned, indicating that some principals were at an early point in Lewin's (1951) three-step change theory wherein the status quo is challenged. One principal at the middle school level pointed out that social media tools do not reach the majority of his current school community and, because of this, he still relies most heavily on the district provided listserv message system. Frustrations with the limitations of the listserv message did not convince him that social media tools could be his only or primary method of communication.

Question 2. Is there evidence of organizational motivation or outside influence to change practice and communicate with social media tools?

Although no formal influence or direction from the district was reported during this research study, principals found motivation to begin the use of social media tools from observing the practices of colleagues. Bandura (1986) theorized that humans not only learn from their own experiences but also through the experiences of others. In the case of the school principals in this study, early adopters who had already integrated social media tools into their comprehensive communication plans provided observable experiences for principals who are new to the role to monitor and study.

Lewin's (1951) three-step change theory spoke to the pressure to change as demonstrated in the dynamic balance of forces working in opposing directions. Forces that

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

both drive or oppose change can inform and guide decisions about the planned behavior or action. One principal expressed a recognition that the times have changed, school promotion is necessary, and that schools need to be present on social media, especially if other schools already are actively involved. When asked specifically about outside influences, principals within the sample reported feeling pressure from the community to communicate more of what happens during a school day. One principal shared that a parent highlighted a competing school that was on social media when his school was not. The principal interpreted this as outside influence to further explore the practice of social media use and ultimately begin to use it in his communications with the community.

Lippitt, Watson, and Westley (1958) and Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) developed theories that extended Lewin's (1951) process of change and defined specific phases leading to change in behavior and institutional practice. In a cyclical manner, information is continuously exchanged, filtered, and analyzed by individuals in the process of change. Principals who participated in this study identified with the various stages of change, from the pre-contemplation and contemplation steps described by Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) to the implementation and maintenance of a comprehensive communication plan. In this study, the choice of social media tools and implementation appears to be highly individualized in the absence of district-wide policy.

Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory accounted for this phenomenon as a way to understand how the environment, the individual, and motivation work together to change or adapt. The interactions between an individual's characteristics, which include knowledge, motivation, and self-efficacy; the environment of workplace, community, and home; and the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

acquired behavioral approaches to life situations are factors of self-efficacy that is fundamental to successful change.

Question 3. What are the expected positive outcomes of social media use and how do they compare to any expected negative outcomes?

Related to this question, a majority of principals felt that the expected positive outcomes of implementing social media use for school advocacy outweighed the expected negative outcomes. The potential to promote a positive image about their school and students' accomplishments was a strong motivation to use social media. Fishbein and Ajzen's (2010) theory of planned behavior emphasized that attitude toward a change could be expected to predict the outcome. In terms of Lewin's (1951) theory of the balance of pros and cons in the decision-making phase, the optimistic attitudes of many of the participants in this study added further weight to influence decisions to implement social media. One principal liked the idea of being able to post information from a variety of events around the school and to show more support for all of the various groups within the school. Other principals discussed the ability to get into classrooms and acknowledge many of the great things that happen with students and teachers on a daily basis. The ability to easily and quickly capture moments on mobile devices was seen as a positive outcome of the implementation of social media tools.

Privacy and time constraints surfaced as the most mentioned, potential negative outcomes and were discussed as barriers to implementation. Participants agreed that the positive outcomes were worth the effort and time it would require to resolve these concerns and to create and maintain the use of the social media tool. Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory determined that an individual's self-efficacy is rooted in the belief in the

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

success of the desired behavior. Thinking and planning ahead to avoid potential problems and find solutions aids in reducing concerns and increases the sense of self-efficacy.

Principals in this study reported steps to address the concerns around privacy, which in turn strengthened their belief that the positive outcomes would outweigh the negative outcomes.

Implications for Practice

The greatest value of this research is seen in the implications for practice. Across the state and the country principals weigh the possible positive and negative outcomes for social media use. This research began to shed light on barriers perceived by principals in the field who have implemented social media tools or are in the process of deciding whether to implement these tools. The research provided a resource for a practicing principal to obtain information about barriers that they may have already considered or barriers that they may not have thought about. By becoming knowledgeable about these barriers, a principal may weigh the factors and decide if they are ready to begin the implementation process.

Applying the tenets of social cognitive theory to the decision-making process, principals need to consider whether they believe that they can be effective with the use of social media tools. Self-efficacy, as described by Bandura (2001), is enhanced as principals acquire a broad vision of the potential of social media, learn the technical aspects of the tools, and develop routines for use or assign time to create a positive and consistent online presence. Effectiveness will depend upon proper choice of social media tools to reach the intended target. Choosing a tool solely based on comfort or ease of use may not result in the social media platform preferred by the expected audience.

As early as 1951, Lewin's theory described the dynamics of opposing forces related to change processes. In practice, principals weigh the benefits of adopting new methods of

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

communication against the status quo, which provides the comfort of familiar practices.

Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) and Bandura (2001) noted the influence of others' as motivation to change. As public education has become increasingly competitive, the public's desire to receive more information from schools and to receive this information via technology that is convenient has increased. This research confirms there is an incentive from peers for an increased presence on social media by school principals. School principals who have embraced the competitive market also embrace the need for utilizing social media tools to market and brand the school in a positive light to the extended school community and general public. The data describes potential shifts in the role of school principal from an internal building focus to an external focus to the community about the positive events that occur in the school.

Social cognitive theory suggests that a belief that positive outcomes will outweigh the negative outcomes needs to be present in the successful adoption of a behavior. The majority of the participants believed that positive outcomes of social media use ultimately outweigh the negative outcomes, which aligns with social cognitive theory. Consistent with the theories of Lippitt, Watson, and Westley (1958) and Prochaska and DiClenente (1983), the data also revealed principals were in the continuum process of change with a range of thoughts relative to social media tools. These findings have implications for practice by offering principals a foundation for continuing the discussion with colleagues about a consistent presence with social media tools in each principal's communication practices. These discussions can focus on the development of possible positive and negative outcomes. Using the human capability of forethought in the development of these comprehensive lists

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

can assist principals in developing action plans. This process of planning can reduce the occurrence of negative outcomes while increasing the opportunity for positive outcomes.

Identifying theories on adaptive behavioral change and developing this study with that theoretical framework, supports practicing principals in their decision-making process. By defining the components of the theories and applying them to the topic of social media use, a blueprint is developed for principals to reflect, apply the relative tenets of the chosen theory, review barriers experienced by others in the field, and ultimately make a decision that will hopefully lead to successful and sustained implementation of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach.

Recommendations for Practicing Principals

Bandura (1986) outlined human capabilities that supported his social cognitive theory. These same capabilities serve as a framework for a series of recommendations for practicing principals who are looking to implement social media tools into their comprehensive communication plans. These steps may offer guidance to overcome or avoid potential barriers and increase the likelihood for success.

Draw upon the experiences of others. A practicing principal who is unsure about using particular social media tools should observe and gather information from his or her peers who have already begun to use these tools. This was exemplified in the research by a principal who met with a colleague to learn how to use a particular social media tool before beginning her own use. She met with a fellow principal who had already implemented social media tools into his communication plan to gather information and guidance. This principal was then able to hear of challenges her colleague experienced along the way as well as learn technical aspects of the tool for her own use. She communicated to the researcher that this

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

was a valuable step in her learning. This type of observation and data collection should be carried out by other principals who are concerned with tool choice, technical aspects, privacy issues, or a number of other barriers a principal may encounter.

Discuss the issues of social media use as part of a regular professional development plan. Topics suggested by this research include follow-up of the identified themes of privacy, time and fidelity, and choice of social media tool. For a system that is looking to develop consistent use across their district or looking to develop a policy, this professional development will be an important step. Similar to the work an individual principal may carry out to observe and gather data from a colleague; this would happen on a broader scale. Professional development can be created to list potential negative outcomes of social media use by principals and offer guidance and suggestions on how to avoid these negative outcomes. Professional development can also highlight positive outcomes to convince principals who are skeptical of social media use. Focus on technical aspects of each tool and steps toward successful implementation have the potential to increase feelings of self-efficacy.

Utilize the vicarious nature that we possess as humans. A principal could simply begin to use social media tools through trial and error, but the likelihood of success would decrease. Instead a principal can observe others in the field, as well as people in other fields, and learn from their experiences. Principals can observe which tools are used consistently and which are no longer utilized by colleagues. More than one principal in the study referenced the practices of colleagues in the field when deciding to avoid a particular tool. An example of this is the use of blogs, which one principal observed others try and later

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

abandon. The principal provided an example of utilizing the vicarious nature of human beings to allow the failure of someone else to guide her planning and implementation.

Envision the outcomes of the use of social media tools. Use that vision to help choose the best tool, develop a plan for using the tool, and maintain its use consistently. Forethought, the ability to think ahead and plan an implementation strategy could be especially useful in the implementation of social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach. A principal should spend time developing a vision of what positive outcomes the tool will bring when fully implemented. The desired state that is developed will assist a principal in the formation of incremental and attainable goals along the way, which are discussed in the following recommendation.

Set goals related to the use of social media tools to aid in the implementation process. A principal in this study discussed how she set goals to use the tool a certain number of times per week. She then established the goal of increased use over time. Principals can combine goal-setting with forethought to map out a plan if they are unsure how they plan to use a particular tool.

Engage in self-reflection as an opportunity to gather data and assess progress toward goals. Principals should engage in frequent and regular self-checks throughout the process of implementation to measure success in his or her use of social media tools. Self-reflection allows a principal to anticipate issues and to make adjustments to his or her practice to correct these issues and increase the likelihood of success.

Initiate a process for gathering feedback from the target audience to maintain relevancy and effectiveness. Evidence in this study pointed to the evolving nature of social media tools and patterns of acceptance by various segments of the audience. An advisory

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

group of parent and community representatives could provide the means for school principals to stay current in the midst of change.

Recognize the tendency of human nature. Described by Bandura (1986), the tendency of human nature allows an individual to combine the varied capabilities of human beings to create the necessary pathways to success. The successful implementation of social media tools does not depend on a chronological series of steps to implementation. School principals can link their unique capabilities to determine the appropriate steps to create a plan, assess the plan, reflect on the plan, and successfully implement the plan. This was evident in the research when principals were at different steps in the change process and creating different pathways to adopt the new behavior and initiate change. Principals should allow themselves the flexibility to use any of the aforementioned steps in varying combinations to achieve success.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations. Limitations exist in all research and are defined as circumstances beyond the control of the research limit of the study. The choice of a qualitative, interview research design limits the kind of data to be gathered, the statistical methods applied, and the expectations of replication. The nature of the interview process includes an assumption that participants give true and honest accounts of their lived experiences. While the data provided are believed to be accurate to the best of each principal's knowledge, the data represents the perceived barriers to the implementation of social media use. These beliefs are formulated through personal and professional experiences as well as the experiences of others in the lives of the participant sample. Therefore, the barriers may not be the same for every principal in the field today. Although the identified common themes helped to

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

organize and present data gathered in interviews of the participants, the transference of these themes to a broader audience remains a limitation of research indicative of the broad implementation of social media tools by school personnel because the data set only represents one district in one community in one section of the United States.

Delimitations. Boundaries established by the researcher narrow the scope and provide a detailed description of the study. This study is limited to school principals' perceptions and beliefs regarding the use of social media tools for the purpose of community outreach and school advocacy. The study focused on the possible barriers that may exist for school principals when using social media. A variety of other administrative positions may access or implement social media tools; however these positions may involve different interaction or expectations from the community regarding school advocacy and community outreach.

The most apparent and relevant limitation to the research was the size of the sample of school principals who participated in semi-structured interviews. The broader the sample in research the more universal the data will be to those practicing in the field. This study was limited to school principals who serve in one public school district located in a Midwest suburban school district. The limitation of principals serving in one school district allowed the researcher to more closely focus on the perceived barriers of participants that serve the same community. By focusing on one community, the researcher was seeking to control the variable of community acceptance of social media tools. This limitation excludes rural and urban school principals and principals employed by parochial, private, and public charter schools. With the variables of community expectation, access to technology, and district policy consistent in one community, the results more accurately reflected the personal

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

motivation and barriers for successful implementation of social media tools within that community. These delimitations serve as opportunities to develop recommendations for future research and strengthen the body of knowledge on social media use as it pertains to school advocacy and community outreach.

A further limitation existed in the relationship of the researcher to the sample and the district outlined in this study. The researcher is a fellow principal in the district and a colleague of the principals interviewed within the study. While great care was taken to ensure that the researcher gathered honest responses from each participant, a limitation could exist due to these circumstances. The researcher conducted interviews following the same series of guiding questions and to maintain the role of researcher throughout the entirety of each interview. Conversations of different topics did occur before and after each interview but this was controlled for as much as possible.

Recommendations for Further Research

The opportunities for further research are broad, as the use of social media continues to grow in our society. Extant studies related to the topic of social media use in schools are limited. Research that provides guidance related to principals' expanded role as educational and community outreach leaders would benefit practicing principals.

The research by Young et al., (2008) showed a trend toward increasing social media research and its role in the practice of school leaders. Much like Cox and McLeod (2014) later stated in their research, "there is a gap in the research on how school leaders use technology in communicating with their stakeholders" (p. 83). Although the article by Young et al. (2008) is less than ten years old, limitations in the research exist due to the rapid evolution of social media tools over the course of recent years. The information has quickly

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

become dated based on the perceptions relative to the technologies of the earlier era.

However, in the work that has been done, common themes may emerge relative to the barriers to implementation of new technologies, and those themes may link older research to recent and future attempts to understand the evolution of the use of social media for communication and advocacy of schools.

The tools will change. The limited body of research in the area of principal use of social media offers an opportunity to expand the research and data regarding this subject. Cox and McLeod (2014) used a small sample from two countries to explore perceptions about the use of social media; however, they targeted principals who were already established as leaders in the movement to implement social media tools in their practice. By comparing their definition of the ideal state, which the sample participants of the study more accurately describe, with the current beliefs and perceptions of other principals who may not have made that progress at this time, the research allows for a greater understanding of some of the potential barriers that may exist for school principals. Considering the findings in the Cox and McLeod (2014) study, why aren't more principals implementing social media tools into their communication plans? If the twelve principals in the Cox and McLeod study are doing what they claim all principals should be doing, then there needs to be a map to get there.

Research involving a more diverse sample may capture additional data related to the issues that impact a principal's decision to implement social media tools. The geographic location, socio-economic, and religious beliefs of the community, for example, may impact a principal's decision-making process. Expanding the sample to include participants from more communities may lead to broader generalizations from the research.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

A study to measure the current practices of principals in the field today could hold value. Although the demographic survey in this study asked principals to indicate the social media tools they currently use, this was not the primary intention of the study. Developing a method to collect data surrounding the frequency of the use of certain social media tools would be helpful for principals looking to decide which tools to try.

A qualitative or quantitative study comparing demographic differences of principals related to social media tools could be useful to the field. The gender of school principals and their practices with social media tools holds the possibility of uncovering some interesting results. Are there differences or similarities in the practices of social media use for men and women? Are there comparisons to be made regarding frequency, content posted, or the chosen social media platform? Social media is a relatively new phenomenon and some principals' roles precede the popularity of social media. Are there similarities or differences between groups of administrators based upon experience? This study could be accomplished through survey tools, although the researcher would need to account for those principals who do not participate in online data collection tools. They would be a valuable sample that may be missed without a well-developed approach.

A comparative study measuring the effectiveness of social media tools in different school settings has potential for a viable study. A quantitative study could be developed to measure the preferences of parents of school-aged children. Further, comparisons could be made between different school communities or different grade levels in a school setting. A researcher could compare communication through social media tools in parochial, private, public, and public charter school settings and a similar measurement tool could be developed

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

and applied to schools in rural, suburban, and urban settings to investigate if there are similarities or differences in those populations.

Legal issues stemming from social media use by school administrators have the potential for a valuable case study research. With subject privacy mentioned repeatedly as a barrier to the implementation of social media use in the current study, it would be helpful to know whether principals who have utilized social media tools have encountered legal issues regarding privacy. A researcher could examine U. S. case law to describe issues and court decisions and provide recommendations for practicing principals.

Measuring perceptions of parents and other stakeholders in the community about messages received through social media tools could be developed and administered by means of surveys or focus groups. This type of research could uncover community interest in social media posts as well as message impact on the reader. Data would apply to the effectiveness and methods of the communications and guide decision-making by school leaders. Which types of posts do community members prefer? What types of posts do they dislike?

Further research would help to inform the work of policy-makers at the district, region, state, and nation regarding the monitoring and regulation of school use of social media tools. Just as principals in this study expressed concerns about standards and fidelity in their comprehensive communication plans, it would seem that the issues of use of social media would be on the agendas of policy-makers at various levels. Leaving principals in a position to implement these tools without district support or guidance could prove problematic over the course of time. The current study uncovered very different practices for principals within the same district, yet little to no guidance or support in the form of policies or expectations on the use of these tools. A study exploring current policies and practices of

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

school districts who expect their principals to use these tools may uncover positive practices to help eliminate or reduce barriers that impact individual principals in this area.

Conclusion

In an ever-changing landscape of public education that has become infused with competition, the need to advocate for one's school and reach out to the community is imperative. Technology has made it possible to share the day-to-day happenings of today's schools with others in the community and has ushered in new problems and opportunities. Principals who are responsible for a variety of tasks in the successful leadership of a school building find that a focus on branding is increasing in its level of importance. To effectively communicate with the community, principals must choose communication tools carefully. These mediums of communication must be reviewed and considered as a part of the principal's comprehensive communication plan. All signs point to social media as an opportunity for principals to advocate for their schools and reach out to the community yet barriers are perceived by many in the field.

This study revealed four themes and personal bias statements shared by principals in one school district community that impacted their decision whether to implement social media tools into their practice. Principals reported privacy issues of parent concerns about student privacy as well as those of principals who were worried about their own privacy. Participants reported limitations with current social media tools that were barriers to implementation. Time required to implement a social media tool with fidelity also presented as a common barrier for principals. The increased responsibilities and demands on principals today coupled with technical aspects of learning new platforms and new tools combined to hold some principals back.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Personally for the researcher this study provided a small sense of the challenges and barriers that principals face in the role today. The extensive review of literature strengthened a belief that marketing and branding principles have made their way into the realm of the public schools. Literature supports the idea that principals should be focusing a portion of their time on school advocacy and outreach with the broader educational community. As a practicing principal, the researcher felt a stronger motivation to implement social media tools based on the data gathered in the study. Through the interviews with other principals in similar situations, the researcher was introduced to thought processes he did not come up with on his own. The data collection, analysis, and discussion led to a stronger sense of self-efficacy, more motivation from the broader community to continue this work, and confidence that the positive outcomes will outweigh the negative outcomes.

A strong sense of pride was demonstrated for principals to maintain current leadership practices, and principals wanted to know they could dedicate the time necessary to the successful implementation of any social media tool. Choosing the right tool is a barrier for practicing principals. Little guidance is available about which social media tool is best, and principals are left to decide on the best fit for their school. This barrier is enough to halt or limit the implementation of any particular tool, as the landscape for social media shows shifting popularity of preferences for tools accessed by the intended audience.

Public schools have traditionally not needed a lot of promotion to be successful. The role and responsibilities of principals continues to change, as principals are now expected to act as a promoter and to highlight the positive things that happen within their schools. The new task of school promotion serves as a barrier to some who may not be opposed to the use of social media but reluctant to assume an unfamiliar role as a promoter of the school. Each

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

person's belief system is based on the culmination of their past experiences. For some school principals, previous experiences with social media in any form impacted their willingness to incorporate the same tools or other social media tools into their practice. Personal bias was acknowledged by some participants in this study as a barrier to implementation of social media tools in this study.

Each of the four themes that emerged in interviews in this study supported the concepts in Bandura's (2001) social cognitive theory and the change theories developed by Lewin (1951), Lippitt, et al., (1958), Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), and Pochaska and DiClementi (1983). As a primary structure in the theoretical framework, Bandura's (2001) work was particularly applicable to the discussion of principals and social media use. Principals gave evidence of a strong connection between self-efficacy and implementing social media tools. Social cognitive theory established that an individual will initiate and persist in an adaptive behavior when that individual believes he or she can be effective in the behavior, that there is incentive to do so, and that the outcomes yield more positive outcomes than negative. In the case of principals, all of these factors were confirmed in this study. Principals are optimistic about their ability to be successful with this adaptive behavior. They are motivated by observing their peers, by the pervasive use of social media in society, and by the current competitive state of education. All who have implemented or care to implement social media tools believed that doing so would produce more positive outcomes than negative outcomes.

Social media appears to have established itself in today's information-rich society and principals must begin to engage in this new medium of information exchange. Understanding the barriers that principals face allows for thoughtful analysis and decision-

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

making for principals leading schools today.

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Appendices

Appendix A - Dearborn Institutional Review Board Approval



Dearborn Institutional Review Board • 4901 Evergreen Rd., 118 SB, Dearborn, MI 48128 • phone [\(313\)593-5468](tel:3135935468) • fax [\(313\)593-0526](tel:3135930526) • [irb-dearborn@umd.umich.edu](mailto: Dearborn@umd.umich.edu)

To: James Anderson

From:

Robert Hymes

Cc:

Bonnie Beyer,

Stein Brunvand

James Anderson

Subject: Notice of Exemption for [HUM00102732]

SUBMISSION INFORMATION:

Title: School Advocacy and Community Outreach: Barriers to the Implementation of Social Media Tools for K-12 Principals

Full Study Title (if applicable): School Advocacy and Community Outreach: Barriers to the Implementation of Social Media Tools for K-12 Principals

Study eResearch ID: [HUM00102732](#)

Date of this Notification from IRB: 8/11/2015

Date of IRB Exempt Determination: 8/11/2015

UM Federalwide Assurance: FWA00004969 (For the current FWA expiration date, please visit the [UM HRPP Webpage](#))

OHRP IRB Registration Number(s): IRB00000247

IRB EXEMPTION STATUS:

The IRB Dearborn has reviewed the study referenced above and determined that, as currently described, it is exempt from ongoing IRB review, per the following federal exemption category:

EXEMPTION #2 of the 45 CFR 46.101.(b):

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. Note that the study is considered exempt as long as any changes to the use of human subjects (including their data) remain within the scope of the exemption category above. Any proposed changes that may exceed the scope of this category, or the approval conditions of any other non-IRB reviewing committees, must be submitted as an amendment through eResearch.

Although an exemption determination eliminates the need for ongoing IRB review and approval, you still have an obligation to understand and abide by generally accepted principles of responsible and ethical conduct of research. Examples of these principles can be found in the Belmont Report as well as in guidance from professional societies and scientific organizations.

SUBMITTING AMENDMENTS VIA eRESEARCH: You can access the online forms for amendments in the eResearch workspace for this exempt study, referenced above.

ACCESSING EXEMPT STUDIES IN eRESEARCH:

Click the "Exempt and Not Regulated" tab in your eResearch home workspace to access this exempt study

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Robert Hymes'.

Robert Hymes Chair, IRB Dearborn

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Appendix B - Research Introduction and Invitation to Participate

Dear Principal,

My name is James Anderson, and I am a practicing principal as well as a doctoral student in the College of Education, Health, and Human Services at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. I am conducting research on the use of social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and Blogs as a method to advocate for a school and to reach out to the community that the school serves. Specifically, my research focuses on the barriers that may exist to using these tools. The timeframe of this study is from June 1st 2015 through December 1st 2015.

The design of this research is modeled after a research study conducted in 2012 where 12 principals who use social media as part of their comprehensive communication plan were interviewed from various locations across the United States and Canada. From this research, the following themes emerged:

- Social media tools allow for greater interactions between school principals and their stakeholders.
- Social media tools provide stronger connections to local stakeholders, to fellow educators, and to the world.
- Social media use can have a significant impact on a school principal's personal and professional growth.
- Social media use is an expectation; it is no longer optional.

Using these themes, my research seeks to explore the barriers principals face in the successful implementation of these communication technologies. If that is the desired state, what are the challenges principals face in getting there?

To conduct this research, I will be conducting face to face, telephone, or electronic interviews with selected respondents. Your participation in the interview will be completely voluntary and you may select to conclude at any time before or during the interview process. Our time together will not exceed one hour, and if there are questions that you would prefer not to answer you are able to do so at any time.

With your permission, I will record our interview conversation for transcription and keep those transcripts as data for this project. If you do not wish to be recorded, I will take notes instead. At the end of this study, I will retain any data for future use, but all identifying information will be eliminated. Additionally, all data that is collected will conceal your identity by use of a pseudonym. The data will be stored electronically on a password protected laptop, and I, along with my faculty advisor, Dr. Bonnie Beyer, will have access to your data.

There is no foreseeable risk in your participation in this study. If you are willing to participate in this study, please follow the link below and fill out a short questionnaire. This questionnaire will take less than 5 minutes to complete.

https://umich.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_da0K2S8Cee8FTet

Thank you for your time and I do hope you will consider participating in this research. The goal of this research is to provide practicing principals with insight into the possible barriers to the effective use of communication technologies so that successful implementation may occur.

Sincerely,

James Anderson
Doctoral Candidate
College of Education, Health, and Human Services
University of Michigan-Dearborn
jamesean@umich.edu

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

Appendix C - Questionnaire Items

Please confirm that you are the practicing principal in your school.

- I am the practicing principal in my school.

How many students does your school serve?

- Less than 100
- 100-299
- 300-499
- 500-699
- 700-899
- 900-1099
- 1100-1299
- 1300-1499
- 1500 or more

What grade levels does your school serve? (Check all that apply)

- Kindergarten
- 1st
- 2nd
- 3rd
- 4th
- 5th
- 6th
- 7th
- 8th
- 9th
- 10th
- 11th
- 12th

Which of the following categories best describes your school setting?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

Which of the following best describes your school type?

- Traditional Public School
- Parochial School
- Charter School
- Private School
- Other (Please Specify)

Which of the following statements best describes your feelings towards social media in the principal role?

- I frequently use social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach.
- I occasionally use social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach but would like to use them more.

SCHOOL ADVOCACY AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH: BARRIERS

- I am not currently using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach but would like to begin to use these tools.
- I am not currently using social media tools for school advocacy and community outreach and do not care to start using them at this time.
- Other (Please Specify)

Please indicate the social media tools you are CURRENTLY USING in your professional practice to communicate with your community:

- Listserv Messages or Electronic Newsletters
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Podcasts, Webinars, or Video Messages
- On-line Surveys
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Other (Please Specify)

Please indicate the social media tools you are INTERESTED IN BUT NOT CURRENTLY USING in your professional practice to communicate with your community:

- Listserv Messages or Electronic Newsletters
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Podcasts, Webinars, or Video Messages
- On-line Surveys
- Blogs
- Wikis
- Other (Please Specify)

Would you like to receive a summary of the study results via email once the study is complete?

- Yes
- No

If you are willing to participate in an interview lasting no more than one hour, please check the statement below and provide your name, school name, email address, and phone number. If you are not interested please click the arrow at the bottom of the page.

- I am willing to participate in an interview regarding social media use.

Name:

School Name:

Email Address:

Telephone Number:

Appendix D - Interview Questions

- Are you currently using any social media tools to advocate for your school or to reach out to the community? If so, what are those tools?
- Were there any stumbling blocks or problems when you started using social media tools?
- Does your district have a policy regarding social media use for employees or for school related purposes by staff members?
- Do you have a choice to implement social media tools into your comprehensive communication plan?
- Does your district utilize social media tools in their comprehensive communication plan?
- What do you see as the potential benefits of the social media tools you are currently using?
- What do you see as the potentially negative aspects of the social media tools you are currently using?
- Are there social media tools that you would like to use to advocate for your school or to reach out to the community? If so, what are those tools?
- What do you see as the potential benefits of the social media tools you would like to start using?
- What do you see as the potentially negative aspects of the social media tools you would like to start using?
- Do you feel that you will be able to effectively communicate using social media tools?
- Do you feel pressure from your community to start using social media tools for your school?
- Do you think the potential positive outcomes of using social media will outweigh the potential negative outcomes?