THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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A Thesis Presented to

The Faculty of Humboldt State University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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December 2019

ABSTRACT

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Literature suggests school administrator shortages worldwide. A number of factors are blamed for this trend, one of which is overall job dissatisfaction. This case study examines the effects of social media on the overall job satisfaction of five school administrators in small town America. Through semi-structured interviews, this research indicates that school administrators in the study avoid reading the comments section of online news media forums. Research participants share their strategies of working proactively with the press, and they reveal how social media has changed their job. Social media has altered the landscape of what it means to be a school administrator and has indeed adversely affected overall job satisfaction for these educators.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank Drs. Libbi Miller and Eric Van Duzer for their guidance and support throughout the arduous process of writing a thesis while a school principal and mother of four. I would also like to express my appreciation to the school administrators who took time from their ridiculously busy schedules to allow me to interview them regarding potentially painful parts of their career journey. Additionally, I would like to thank my staff for the trust they bestow in me as well as for the tireless service they provide to the children of our community. Lastly, thank you to my beautiful children, who are my inspiration for all that I do.

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INTRODUCTION

As a first-year principal and a graduate student, my first few months on the job were exceptionally stressful and all consuming. I started to second guess my career choice and began researching how school administrators cope with the vast responsibilities and excessive time commitment that come along with the job. It was then I discovered literature supporting a world-wide shortage of school administrators. Several reasons for the shortage were offered including overall job dissatisfaction. Multiple causes of job dissatisfaction were offered including negative portrayal in the media. I noted a gap in the literature in relation to more modern media sources such as online news forums. I became particularly interested in local online media sources and the impact of the comments section on school administrator morale. As multi-generational member of a small rural community, mother of four children, and wife, I quickly became acutely aware of the public scrutiny school administrators are under. I also observed the emotional toll vitriolic comments on local online news media sources take on school administrators and their families.

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the degree to which online portrayal, specifically the comments section of online media, affects the overall job satisfaction for school administrators in rural communities.

The limitations of the study include the willingness of school administrators who have been the source of scrutiny in online local media sources to consent to an interview. In fact, two administrators receiving some of the most aggressive and personal attacks did

not respond to multiple requests for an interview. One no longer appears on the district's staff directory and the other recently announced her resignation. Of the five administrators interviewed, one resigned from her principalship at the end of the school year and another has stated that this will be her last year in her current position.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Extant literature is teeming with studies supporting school administrator shortage trends worldwide (Barty, Thomson, Blackmore, & Sachs, 2005; Clifford & Chiang, 2016; Cunningham & Hardman, 1999; Pijanowski, Hewitt, & Brady, 2009; Potter, 2001; Stone-Johnson-2014; Viadero, 2009; Williams, 2001). The causes of the shortage are complex and require close examination of larger social issues at play. This study will review the literature in relation to administrator shortage in the following areas: overall job dissatisfaction, insufficient recruitment of prospective administrators, lack of access to training opportunities, and early retirement.

Overall Job Dissatisfaction Amongst School Administrators

Job dissatisfaction amongst school administrators can, in part, be traced to the ever-increasing workload they experience (Thomson, Blackmore, Sachs, & Tregenza, 2003; Sogunro, 2012; Williams, 2001). A principal's workload is more on the level of responsibilities given to an entire committee. The job could easily fill 24 hours a day, seven days a week (Wax, 2001). Time required at work was second only to stress in occupational deterrents for school leadership positions (Pijanowski, et al., 2009). In a 2007 survey done in the United Kingdom (UK), nearly half of all school administrators reported working between 49-59 hours each week. Forty percent of those survey reported working 60+ hours a week (French & Daniels, 2007). Female school administrators are

reported to work even longer hours than their male counterparts (Thomson, 2009). As reported on a PBS Newshour with Jim Lehrer: “Oh, horrendous paperwork. I don’t even think about paperwork until after 4 or 5 o’clock. I don’t even think about going home until around 6 or 7 o’clock at night and sometimes I don’t even go home at all. Many nights I’ve spent the night here-there’s just so much to do” (PBS Online Newshour with Jim Lehrer, 24 May, 2001; Thompson, et al., 2003).

Aside from the insatiable hours required to adequately complete the tasks associated with leading a school, the job of a principal has grown too large to be managed by one person (Viadero, 2009). A shortlist of duties includes school budget, discipline, teacher evaluations, scheduling and supervision of athletics, school safety, and managing standardized testing, not to mention instructional leader for all teaching staff. Fewer teachers aspire to be principals as the job is simply too big and unattractive (Barty, et al, 2005).

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and Race to the Top of 2009 are two pieces of legislation that have drastically affected the workload of school administrators and thereby added to the stress of the job (Klocko & Wells, 2015). These acts designed to assess student proficiency also outline accountability measures, sanctions, and incentives for schools; and, as a result, these acts make student performance high stakes. Coupled with other mandates, these two acts alone can become the tipping point for an already taxed school administrators (Draper & McMichael, 1996; Klocko & Wells, 2015; Stone-Johnson; 2014; Viadero, 2009; Williams, 2001).

According a recent study, being a school administrator is one of the most dangerous jobs in the country due to the chronic stress encountered on a daily basis (Sogunro, 2012). Principals experience stress at a rate 1.7 times higher than the general population (Fischetti & Imig, 2015). Adverse health effects such as cumulative occupational stress tend to sneak up on unsuspecting leaders, making it difficult to appropriately respond proactively (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). Chronic stress levels experienced by school administrators can cause health problems such as anxiety, depression, and high blood pressure. Other adverse symptoms of stress include low productivity, absenteeism, and relationship challenges both in the workplace and interpersonally (Sorenson, 2007).

Due to the constant barrage of crises, school administrators may succumb to what Boyatzis and McKee (2005) refer to as "sacrifice syndrome" (p. 41), a characteristic of ineffective leadership. According to Boyatzis and McKee, sacrifice syndrome occurs when a once effective leader has given so much of him/herself to the job while under continual threat and stress, that they begin to employ defensive strategies to cope with further strife. These strategies may include blaming others, overreacting, or reacting uncharacteristically unprofessional in high stress situations (Boyatzis & McKee, 2005). In addition to the ever increasing workload, a second factor that adds to the overall job dissatisfaction in the role of principal is an inadequate salary increase to compensate for the increased time requirement for the job (Newman, 2012; Stone-Johnson, 2014; Williams, 2001). According to the Educational Research Service (2011) as well as the Association of California State Administrators (2001), principals not only earn less per

hour than teachers, they earn less than those in the private sector with equal qualifications, experience, and education. It is suggested that uncompetitive salaries contribute to difficulties in filling principal positions, especially in inner city schools, rural schools, and regions with high costs of living (Thomson, et al. 2003; Williams, 2001).

According to Tran (2016) little research is available that examines principals' job dissatisfaction to pay. Turnover in leadership has also been shown to negatively affect teacher morale and student performance (Loeb, Kalogrides, & Beteille, 2012). It is estimated that positive school reform takes about five to seven years (Mascall & Leithwood, 2010), but the average tenure of a principal in the United States is 3.38 years for a high school principal, 4.48 years for a middle school principal, and 4.96 years for an elementary school principal (Viadero, 2009). Principals remain in their current positions for longer periods of time often have higher salaries than those of their colleagues in neighboring districts (Viadero, 2009).

It is not just a dollar amount that influences job satisfaction; principals who are earning less than their peers in other districts and beyond, feel less satisfied with their salary, no matter its actual amount. It follows that those earning less become less satisfied with their position overall. Salary relative to that of colleagues strongly correlates to principal retention (Tran, 2017).

Principals also compare their salary with other principals in neighboring districts and throughout their state. According to Fuller and Young (2009), principals are more apt to compare their salary to that of teachers and principals within their district, presumably

because of easier access to such data. As with Tran (2017), it was found that relative pay is more important than an actual dollar amount when it comes to overall pay satisfaction. It should also be noted that pay satisfaction is often multifaceted. Employees may have different reactions to different aspects of their compensation including: pay rate, pay raises-frequency and amount, benefits, and structure of the pay system (Tran, 2017). When unfairness is perceived, pay dissatisfaction and overall job dissatisfaction may follow. Both of these correlates to job turnover amongst school administrators, which is detrimental to student achievement, teacher morale, and overall school climate (Tran, 2017).

There are adequate numbers of people with the needed experience and skills to become school leaders, however a shortage of applicants still exists (Jacobson, 2005). The hesitation of teachers to move from the classroom to positions of leadership is often blamed on the job requirements of a principal. Stone-Johnson (2011, 2014) suggest that the focus on shortages of administrative applicants would be more appropriately focused on the changing principal applicant, rather than on the changing job of a principal.

There is no shortage of literature examining Generational Theory and the differences in values of Baby Boomers, Generation X, and now Millennials (Stone-Johnson, 2011). It is only logical to conclude that different motivational factors determine career decisions made by people in these generational categories. Those presently in school leadership positions are predominantly members of the Baby Boomer generation, 1946-1964 (Stone-Johnson, 2011). The leadership values of this generation typically include a strong desire to prove themselves, willingness to work long hours, high

expectations of colleagues, and being less flexible with change. Mid-career teachers, those who have taught 7-15 years, are typically from Generation X. Their leadership values are reflected in striving for balance, freedom, and flexibility. They reject rigid structure, bureaucracy, and ladder climbing behavior. Gen Xers are drawn to leadership not for power or prestige, but by altruism. (Stone-Johnson, 2014).

In Stone-Johnson's (2014) study of the mid-career teachers (all members of Generation X), 75% intended to leave their current position, some for other teaching positions and others for a new field entirely. Not one teacher planned to go into school administration. This supports the notion that Baby Boomers value job security, while Generation Xers value employability skills (Stone-Johnson, 2014).

Of the participants in Stone-Johnson's (2014) study, reasons for not wanting to pursue administration included giving up professional freedoms, the perception that every administrator is unhappy, overstressed, hates kids, and is hated by teachers, and a lack of attraction to the bureaucratic aspects of the job. It was not the changing demands of the role of a school administrator that was unattractive to mid-career teachers, it was the fact that role was fundamentally different from the teachers' social ideals and desired working conditions (Stone-Johnson, 2014).

Other social changes that could be influencing the shortage of school administrators are changes in family life and society as a whole (Williams, 2001). More traditionally, men were able to move into an administrative position, potentially in a new town or district, without a major disruption to his family. However, it is much more common now for both male and female teachers to have a partner with their own career,

thereby decreasing job mobility (Barty, et al., 2005; Williams, 2001). Sacrificing the security of two jobs is increasingly more risky and undesirable than simply remaining satisfied with one's current employment status (Barty, et al., 2005; Williams 2001). Many today, including teachers, are more cognizant of the health of their lifestyle and are acutely aware of time spent away from home. (Sogunro, 2012; Williams, 2001).

While once a coveted place to raise a family, rural areas are struggling to attract administrators (Barty, et al., 2005; Williams, 2001). In today's society, varied educational opportunities for children, modern health facilities, and access to arts and entertainment, take precedence over country living when school administrators are engaging in a job search (Barty, et al., 2005).

Another social change adversely affecting school administrators is negative portrayal in the media (Braney, Gaines, Kline, Peltier, Potter, & Williams, n. d.). Even if an administrator handles an emergency situation flawlessly, unless it is well communicated to the news media, an administrator's competence may be questioned and leadership effectiveness challenged (Trump, 2012).

Increasingly, click-bait headlines focus on negativity when it comes to school staff (Trump, 2012). Whether it is dress-code enforcement, bullying prevention, alleged mistreatment of a student with special needs, or inappropriate conduct with students, the court of public opinion most often convicts school administrators regardless of their actual involvement in the situation (Braney, et al., n. d.; Trump, 2012). The principal should have done more to prevent this is a common sentiment echoed across the Internet

(Trump, 2012). Fierce media scrutiny coupled with social media trolls are just some of the challenges faced by school administrators today (Ghezzi, 2008).

Being scrutinized by the media may seem to come with the territory of being a school official, but few administrators are equipped to deal with effects this can have on loved ones (Carr, 2012). With social media use at epidemic rates, school leaders and their loved ones easily become targets of hearsay and other forms of misinformation (Carr, 2012). Everything from their child's participation in athletics to sexual orientation are fair game for public discussion, thanks to comment sections of new stories, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and blogs (Carr, 2012).

School administrators and their families living and working in rural areas may be even more adversely affected by negative portrayal in the media (Carr, 2012). Stories of skipping graduation ceremonies, moving children to neighboring school districts, and dissolution of marriage due to continual familial strains are made worse by a lack of social norms around the inappropriateness of online slandering (Carr 2012).

While news media and social media outlets can be cruel, they are not alone in taking aim at school administrators (Glanz, 1997; Hershey-Freeman, 2008; Wolfram, 2010). Entertainment media can be equally as damaging to the image of educational leaders. Glanz (1997) found that movies from 1950 to 1996 typically depicted school principals as insecure autocrats, petty bureaucrats, or classic buffoons. Wolfrom (2010) examined movies from 1997-2009 to see if stereotypical characterizations of school administrators had changed. Wolfrom's study found no significant change in the portrayal during this time frame. Wolfrom (2010) suggested that this is, in part, due to the

teen movie genre which is written from the students' point of view where the principal is the authority figure that students must rally against. The fact that writers, directors, and producers of movies are typically from a generation in which school administrators focused more on facilities management than student learning outcomes may also be a contributing factor in the negative cinematic portrayal of school principals, according to Wolfrom (2010).

In addition to movies, television programs notoriously characterize school administrators unflatteringly (Glanz, 1997). Mr. Woodman in the popular 70s TV series *Welcome Back, Kotter* and Mr. Belding from the NBC series *Saved by the Bell* fit the typical dimwit principal stereotype. Mr. Conklin from the 50s series *Our Miss Brooks* is the classic autocrat/bureaucrat with a hint of buffoonery. Several later TV sitcoms such as *Nick Freno: Licensed Teacher*, *Lab Rats, Ant Farm* as well as the made for TV movie *Kidz in the Woods*, and even several episodes of *Scooby Doo* portray principals as a power-hungry, rules obsessed doofus (Glanz 1997).

Children's books are another form of media to take aim at the role of school administrator. Mr. Krupp, the overweight antagonist of Dav Pilkey's series *Captain Underpants* is a cruel, blackmailing, bully frequently outsmarted by two fourth grade protagonists (Engel, 2013). Roald Dahl's classic *Matilda,* the headmistress, Ms. Agatha Trunchbull, is not necessarily a buffoon, but a malicious monster who pleasures in terrorizing children and deserves all of the awful things that happen to her (Pope & Round 2015). Dolores Umbridge, the short-time headmistress in the Harry Potter series

certainly fits the bill of a cruel, bureaucratic school leader, despised by students and professors alike.

While there are hundreds of popular songs about school and teachers (Wikipedia contributors, 2017), songs about school administrators are much less common (Internet Search, 2017). Some songs merely make mention of the principal's office as an unpleasant place to be sent as is the case with Young MC's Principal's Office (Young and Dike, 1989), others spew outright contempt for educational leaders. The Headmaster Ritual, by the Smiths (1985), refers to the headmaster as a belligerent ghoul who is jealous of youth, amongst other unsavory personality traits. Hey Headmaster, by the Pet Shop Boys (1993) has a tone more of pity than contempt and portrays the headmaster as one who is serious, blue, and used to hit boys with rulers.

Lastly, poor school culture and climate have been cited as factors influencing overall job dissatisfaction amongst school administrators (Braney, et al., n. d.; Williams, 2001). Strong union presence can sharply impact school culture and climate (Thomson, et al., 2003). Williams (2001) notes that managing teacher-union contracts has a negative effect on the relationship between the principal and the teachers. It is also time consuming, thereby adding to the school administrator's workload (Williams, 2001).

Poor leadership and financial support at the district level can have adverse effects on school culture and climate (Draper & McMichael, 1996; Williams, 2001). Budget constraints have forced the elimination of secretarial, clerical, and even administrative support staff leaving principals with an ever-greater workload. It is argued that this is a shortsighted approach in that it is more expensive to pay principals to do clerical tasks

(Williams, 2001). Additionally, this prevents principals from getting to more important jobs such as leading curriculum changes (Williams, 2001).

Another detrimental effect to school culture and climate is strained relations with the school board (Ghezzi, 2008). School administrators are under continual pressure from school boards to do more with less (Potter, 2001). The public nature of these strained relations adds to scrutiny principals feel (Ghezzi, 2008).

Insufficient Recruitment of Prospective Administrators

A second factor affecting recent shortage trends of school administrators is insufficient recruitment of prospective administrators; there is simply a decline in interest of young teachers eager to pursue careers in administration (Stone-Johnson, 2014; Williams, 2001). Second only to effective teachers, strong principals are one of the most important influences of student learning (Viadero, 2009; Brown, Finch, MacGregor, & Watson, 2012). It is only logical then to encourage the best teachers to advance to school administrators if student engagement and achievement are the desired outcomes of public education.

Teachers are most often drawn to the profession by their desire to make a difference in the lives of children (Marsh, 2015). “Today, however, the belief that a principal can directly affect the lives of children is bogged down by the reality of reports, federal and local mandates, and increasing criticism of public education” (Potter, 2001, p.34). The perception is that principals are forced to focus on irrelevant mandates instead of on students (Stone-Johnson, 2014).

Tenure laws are another element in the lack of desirability of principalships for teachers. While teachers enjoy the security of tenure (Gonzales, 2016), no such safety net exists for principals. The opponents of tenure for school administrators contend that having the ability to remove ineffective principals strengthens accountability and school reform efforts (Portner, 1993). The proponents of tenure for school administrators argue that a lack of tenure hinders innovation, creativity, and the freedom to take risks, making administrators especially vulnerable to school boards (Portner, 1993). Teachers used to the protections of tenure may think twice before taking on a position of administrative leadership without such a safety net (Portner, 1993).

Along with a lack of tenure, high attrition rates also factor into poor recruitment of prospective administrators (Blackmore & Sachs, 2005). Half of all principals leave their post in their first three years on the job. This is especially concerning considering that school performance often declines the year after a principal leaves (Clifford & Chiang, 2017). Statistically speaking, school administration is not a sound career choice for those who value stability.

A lack of financial incentive is another reason teachers are disinterested in pursuing careers in administration (Potter, 2001; Thomson, et al., 2003; Williams, 2001). Salaries of teachers with years of experience who have also participated in formal professional development are about the same or even more than that of a first-year principal. Couple this with the increased length of the work year and increased responsibilities, and there is little draw to the notoriously stressful position (Potter, 2001; Thomson, et al., 2003; Williams, 2001).

Finally, an oft unspoken deterrent for teachers to pursue administrative positions is the words and actions of those in positions of leadership (Blackmore & Sachs, 2005; Ghezzi, 2008). The shift in emphasis on educational leadership to management is often the source of frustration of outspoken principals and teachers are taking note. Stone-Johnson (2014) interviewed 12 mid-career teachers regarding their perceptions of school administration- notable comments included "every administrator I know is unhappy," "our administrators, they had virtually sacrificed their lives for the job," and "I'm not cut out to be an administrator. . .my focus is really on kids" (p. 616).

Teachers are not the only source for prospective principals. Assistant principals frequently use their position as a rung in the ladder for upward mobility (Potter, 2001). School districts would do well to provide additional training, both formally and on the job, to staff members in entry level leadership positions.

Lack of Access to Training Opportunities

Another potential cause of the shortage trends of school administrators is a lack of access to quality training opportunities (Lynch, 2012; Pijanoski, et al., 2009; Wagner, 2012; Williams, 2001). In the past, many university's educational leadership training programs have been criticized for being too theoretical and for not providing the necessary preparation to deal with the real demands of the job (Potter, 2001). In response to this concern, the Council for Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) have recently led efforts to revise standards that guide preparation and practice for educational leaders in the United States.

These standards, called the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP), are designed to provide guidance and continuity in the area of education leader preparation. They specifically address the issues of program design, accreditation review, and state program approval (University Council for Education Administration, n. d.).

Formal educational leadership training opportunities at the university level have also been criticized for being cost prohibitive for teachers interested in pursuing careers in school administration (Miller, 2012; Stone-Johnson, 2014; Williams, 2001). A recent search of administrative credential coursework programs in California returned results of $8,928 in tuition and fees for a midlevel state university program, just for the preliminary credential coursework (Humboldt State University Financial Services, 2017). Once the coursework has been completed, the candidate must apply for an administrative credential to the state of California Commission on Teacher Credentialing. In 2017, the fee for doing so cost $100 for the initial credential and $50 for the certificate of clearance (California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2017). Once hired, the new principal must then "clear" the administrative credential. This requires payment of $3,500 in coaching fees and $1,000 in program fees. As the credential 'clearing" process takes two years, a new administrator must pay $9,000. In California, a teacher can expect to pay over $18,000 to become a principal with a cleared credential.

Formal educational leadership training opportunities are time prohibitive as well (Barty, et al., 2005; Thomson, et al., 2003; Williams, 2001). According to Humboldt State University in California, their administrative credential program is "designed for educational professionals currently working in schools full time. Educational Leadership

Program (EDL) courses are offered on weekends and all coursework for each level is designed to be completed in one academic year" (Humboldt State University School of Education, 2017). However, in addition to the "ease" of weekend coursework, 270 hours of fieldwork is required, half at an elementary level and half at a secondary level (Humboldt State University School of Education, 2017). This means a candidate would be expected to put in over eight hours during the school week at their fieldwork placement; a difficult task for a teacher working in school full time.

In an effort to cut costs, many school districts have discontinued administrative support positions (Barty, et. al., 2005). A lack of entry level administration positions in schools has led to inadequate succession training in potential administrative candidates (Thomson, et al., 2003). One solution to solving principalship staffing issues is for districts to train and support candidates from within (Potter, 2001). This strategy combats the complexity of the application process and the perceived notion of "gate-keepers" in the hiring of administrative candidates (Barty, et al., 2005).

Early Retirement

The fourth and final factor affecting recent shortage trends of school administrators is early retirement (Potter, 2001; Terrell, 2016; Williams, 2001). Early retirement can be good business practice for school districts, by not only reducing the number of individuals on the bottom right-hand side of the salary scale but by adding dynamic new employees eager to begin their careers (Terrell, 2016). Common early retirement incentives include cash payments, payment of health insurance benefits, early

notification incentives, and changes to retirement programs. (Terrell, 2016). While enticing teachers and other school employees to retire early may be good business practice for school districts, early retirement amongst school administrators can have the opposite effect. It is one of many factors adding to recent shortage trends of school administrators that adversely affects school districts (Potter, 2001; Terrell, 2016; Williams, 2001). In 2001, it was reported that 40 percent of the nation's 93,200 principals were nearing retirement age thereby making hiring qualified replacements an even more difficult prospect (Potter, 2001).

Financial incentives, especially those pertaining to pension plans, may be inadvertently fueling school administrator shortages. Most public school teachers and administrators in the United States are enrolled in Defined Benefit (DB) pension plans. DB pensions provide retirees with a guaranteed lifetime benefit based upon the number of years of service and the average salary during the final years of service (Koedel, Ni, & Podgursky, 2013). Pension wealth for both teachers and administers tops out when the employees reach their mid-50s (Koedel, et al., 2013).

Final-average-salary DB pensions discourage leaving the education field after 10 or even 20 years of service due to miniscule amassment of pension wealth, and instead encourage longevity in the field (Koedel, et al., 2013). However, longevity is only encouraged up to a certain point after which educators are financially pressured into retirement, and those who work past the peak point on the pension wealth curve actually lose money in foregone pension despite their current income (Koedel, et al., 2013). With

little to no financial incentive to stay, coupled with a high stress position, the choice to retire from school administration after only a few years of service is no surprise. Because DB pensions use average salary during the final years of service as part of the pension calculation instead of an average of lifetime wages as does social security, there is little financial incentive to start the move into school administration from teaching early in one's career (Koedel, et al., 2013), especially when workload, and work hours are taken into consideration. This decreases the number of experienced and qualified teachers pursuing a long career as an administrator.

Early retirement in school administrators is not only caused by financial incentives; health related retirement is also a leading cause of early retirement in school administrators (Weber, Weltle, & Lederer, 2005). According to a 2005 study, 45% of school administrators deemed medically unfit for work, were diagnosed with psychiatric/psychosomatic disorders (Weber, et al., 2005). Fifty-seven percent of the psychiatric diagnoses were depressive disorders and exhaustion syndromes, also known as burnout (Weber, et. al., 2005). Burnout, therefore, was the leading medical cause of early retirement in school administrators.

Attracting and retaining strong school administrators has been identified as one of the most serious issues in education (Strauss, 2015), however burnout can overcome even the strongest of educational leaders. School administrators must be continually available to hundreds of students, staff members, parents, the community, the superintendent, and members of the school board. Public scrutiny and non-stop work leaves no time for

family, hobbies, or outside interests including basic self-care. These demands can quickly lead to burnout in a matter of a few short years (Strauss, 2015; Viadero, 2009).

Early retirement is one of a multitude of factors affecting the shortage of school administrators world-wide. A decision to retire early may simply be a response to overload. The perceived endless succession of paperwork and problems becomes more than one person can handle. The sense of being able to successfully do the job becomes too burdensome and burnout ensues, leaving early retirement as the only viable option (Draper & McMichael, 1996).

Conclusion

One of the more universally agreed upon factors influencing the shortage trends of school administrators is overall job dissatisfaction (Thomson, et al., 2003; Songunro, 2012; Williams 2001). Job dissatisfaction can be traced to an ever increasing workload, long hours, and unrealistic expectations of expertise in an increasing number of areas. Mediocre salary prospects and social changes such as a change in the values of the applicant coupled with negative media portrayal also add to overall job dissatisfaction for school administrators (Braney, et al., 2017; Stone-Johnson, 2014; Tran, 2016; Trump, 2012; Viadero, 2009). Finally, poor school climate caused by teachers' unions, resistance of staff to modern leadership, lack of support positions, poor support at the district level, poor relations with the school board, as well as testing and accountability also add to overall job dissatisfaction for school administrators (Williams, 2001).

A second factor contributing to shortage trends of school administrators is insufficient recruitment of prospective administrators, and one cause of insufficient recruitment is the declining interest of teachers in educational leadership (Stone-Johnson, 2014; Williams, 2001). Some elements in the lack of interest of teachers include a loss of tenure and high attrition. A second cause of insufficient recruitment is a lack of financial incentive to make the move from teaching to administration (Potter, 2001; Thomson et al., 2003; Williams, 2001). Other causes include the perception of teachers that the principalship is a highly undesirable position as evidenced by the words and actions of principals themselves (Blackmore & Sachs, 2005).

A third factor influencing shortage trends of school administrators is a lack of access to training opportunities for potential candidates (Pijanoski, et al., 2009; Williams, 2001). Ambitious teachers willing to pursue outside leadership training opportunities are often discouraged at the prospects. Educational leadership training programs are both time and cost prohibitive, enticing only the most motivated candidates and those willing and able to take financial risks (Barty, et al., 2005; Thomson, et al., 2003; Williams, 2001). Succession training has proven to be one of the most effective ways to staff entry level administration positions, but many districts fall short in providing this. A lack of entry level administration positions due to budget cuts further adds detriment to in-house training opportunities, while also increasing the burden of the principal's workload (Barty, et al., 2005; Thomson, et al., 2003).

The fourth and final factor examined as a component of the shortage trends of school administrators is early retirement (Miller, 2012; Potter, 2001; Terrell, 2016;

Williams, 2001). Those serving in educational leadership positions often retire early when compared to their counterparts in the private sector. This is due in part to financial incentives pertaining to the Defined Benefit pension plan which reward those who go into administration late in their careers and penalize those who work beyond their peak point on their pension wealth curve. Physical and emotional burnout are also leading contributors to early retirement in school administrators (Strauss, 2015; Viadero, 2009; Weber, et al., 2005).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Introduction

This was a case study using semi-structured interviews to investigate to what degree does media portrayal affect job satisfaction for school administrators in rural communities.

Participants

Five participants currently serving as school administrators in rural northern California were purposefully sampled based upon recent (1/1/2017-3/1/2019) educational news items that garnered public attention and public comments in online news media. The county office of education public relations officer helped determine the educational issues that received the most public input at the county level during the past 26 months. The five school administrators included three principals, one superintendent and one director of student services participated in a 45 minute semi-structured interview. Only those who had been involved in a news item garnering public attention and public comments were selected to participate.

Instrument

The semi structured interview questions were developed to ascertain the degree to which media portrayal affects the overall job satisfaction for school administrators in rural communities. The interview schedule included six semi structured questions

regarding the participant's experience; one grand tour question, one demographics question, and four questions examining attitudes toward the subject. The interviews were recorded using a digital recorder, transcribed, and then coded.

Procedure

Research was conducted by contacting the county office of education public relations officer, contacting online news media outlets, and reviewing 26 months' worth of comments on educationally related online news media posts. Comments relating to administrators were then coded and the sample was identified. Introductory emails were sent followed by phone calls to each participant to set up a time and place (selected by the participant) to hold the interview. Two days before the scheduled interview time an email reminder was sent including a general overview of the questions, time expectations, and a reiteration of the promise of confidentiality. On the day of the interview, after the consent form was signed by the participants, a series of questions in a semi-structured interview format following the interview schedule were asked. Interviews last from 30 to 60 minutes, depending on the respondent's level of engagement. The interviews were transcribed and coded for common themes.

Project Methodology

As a first year principal and a graduate student, my first few months on the job were exceptionally stressful and all consuming. I started to second guess my career choice and began researching how school administrators cope with the vast

responsibilities and excessive time commitment that come along with the job. It was then I discovered literature supporting a world-wide shortage of school administrators. Several reasons for the shortage were offered including overall job dissatisfaction. Multiple causes of job dissatisfaction were offered including negative portrayal in the media. I noted a gap in the literature in relation to more modern media sources such as online news forums. I became particularly interested in local online media sources and the impact of the comments section on school administrator morale. As multi-generational member of a small rural community, mother of four children, and wife, I quickly became acutely aware of the public scrutiny school administrators are under. I also observed the emotional toll vitriolic comments on local online news media sources takes on school administrators and their families.

In developing my project I first contacted the public affairs liaison at the county office of education to gain insight into the most controversial local educational topics. I also contacted the moderators of local online news sources for additional insight. Lastly, I conducted searches pertaining to education from January 2017 to March 2019 and scoured the comments sections. I then coded the comments looking for common themes. I identified the administrators involved in the most caustic comment generating events and set up interviews with all who were willing.

This research was approved through the Humboldt State University Institutional Review Board. IRB APPROVAL NUMBER: IRB 17-186

RESULTS

Upon coding the transcripts of the interviews with school administrators, five themes emerged. The first was amazement at how quickly a story can spread on social media. The second was thoughts on whether or not school administrators should read and/or respond to comments on local online media sources. The third theme was the credit given to being either local or not in the way one was judged in local online media sources, particularly the comments sections. The fourth theme that emerged was the preemptive use of media in protecting both a school and an administrator's reputation. The fifth theme was the impact that social media had on overall job satisfaction as school administrators.

All names of people, school districts, and schools are pseudonyms. "Parent" is a label used to denote the person responsible for a child. This could be a grandparent, guardian, aunt or uncle, foster parent, etc.

Going Viral

It comes as no surprise that information and misinformation spread quickly on the internet. Brain research suggests that dopamine is released by sharing content online (Desjardins, 2018). People share for a number of reasons including to be involved in a current trend or event, to get the opinions of friends, and to express emotions including disgust (Desjardins, 2018).

Despite knowing that things spread quickly online, administrators interviewed expressed shock at experiencing this personally. Debra, a middle school principal reflecting on a situation that happened at her school lamented, “It just moves so quick, it just blows up, it’s like you don’t even know it’s happening.” She later added, “It had taken a life of its own at that point.”

Richard, also a middle school principal, in discussing the viral nature of a video taken by a student at his school stated, “I don’t want to think about what their [those who chose to share the video] intentions were, but that was pretty blown-up and it was like uncles and cousins. I had a woman from Japan email me because she’s seen it online in Japan, and she was trying to tell me like how we should be helping kids at our school...It went to over 200,000, over 200,000 hits at one point.”

In addition to surprise with which their stories went viral, administrators expressed frustration in needing time to fully investigate the situation before responding to parents and the community at large, if warranted.

Debra said, “I think that what has happened with parents, with social media is just the speed with which something becomes ginormous has gone from three or four days or a week to 15 minutes. And it can just be nothing, it can just be so inconsequential.”

People want immediate answers and results, but thorough investigation and appropriate response takes time. Barbara, a middle school administrator, told of a time she was made aware of a situation one morning “And before the end of the day, they’re calling [my supervisor] to complain that no one’s doing anything.” She had spent the

entire day interviewing students, gathering information, and using restorative practices to mediate the situation.

Being asked to respond before investigation has been completed is a common frustration. Richard shared a similar experience. “We didn’t have all the information because we hadn’t seen the video yet, and then I get a call from the superintendent on Sunday saying, ‘Hey, this thing is on Facebook and it’s gone viral.’”

Despite the fact the they were faced with a situation at their school going viral, administrators felt they owed a response to their own school community first and foremost. But owed or not, a response is often required once online media picks up a story. Richard stated, “This happened so fast and I had to communicate with our own community.”

Like Richard, Frank, a high school principal, felt his obligation for information was to his students, their families, and the community where they live. “That’s...who I felt like we owed information to, was our school community. I didn’t feel like we owed [neighboring/rival high school] an explanation for what we were gonna do or anybody else…”

But the intention of keeping things on a need to know basis can be foiled by social media. Richard’s situation mirrored that of the other administrators in that once online, it spread like wildfire and he was no longer able to simply handle things privately. He stated, “But then it went online and viral, and all the comments, and people got out of control with it...I knew the news would be coming.”

Social Media Commentary

When asked if they read online media comments, all five administrators responded with a resounding no, however all but one later admitted to reading comments, especially on posts pertaining to their school or district.

Barbara stayed true to her initial response of refusing to read and acknowledge online comments sections. “I don’t wanna know. I just don’t wanna know. ‘Cause if it wasn’t on social media, if it was just people talking, I wouldn’t know. I wouldn’t know. And that’s how the world’s supposed to work.” Further in the interview she doubled down, “I just don’t look. I can’t. I’d go insane.” But despite actively avoiding online comments, Barbara was often secondarily exposed. “I can’t be unaware because even though I don’t follow it on purpose, people will tell me.”

In response to multiple but unrelated personal attacks online, Barbara went so far as to put out a post on her own social media account saying, “Please, if you see something on social media and you’re worried about my safety, tell my husband, or if you’re worried about my school and its reputation, tell my boss.” This backfired however in that a friend who saw the post approached her and asked, “’Oh, are you talking about this?’ and she put the thing I didn’t want to know about, right there [gestures to right in front of her face].” Barbara responded, “Oh, my God, fuck off...I don’t wanna fucking know.”

Debra, who later in the interview described some of the comments she had read said, “I really don’t read comments, like I don’t. I don’t generally read comments sections...I just think it’s like the ugliest part of humanity.”

After saying that he didn’t read the comments section of online media, regarding a particularly contentious situation on his campus, Frank admitted, “I think a read a couple of comments because I couldn’t help it... kind of an interest in what they are saying about us and me.”

Like Frank, James, a district superintendent, generally avoided comments sections unless something is brought to his attention or it has the potential to drastically affect the district as a whole. “First, I don’t read comments, and very intentionally so. Once in a great while, if there’s something that somebody calls to my attention that I need to read because it has a large impact on the district, I’ll read it.”

Richard, who doesn’t personally use social media was still made privy to scathing posts and commentary. “Our district is web-based, and we’re like, ‘Oh, sign up for Facebook, like us on Facebook.’ I cancelled that, just because I don’t wanna know...If something is enough to affect our school, I’m gonna hear about it.”

When asked about some of the problems with online media comments sections, anonymity and self-proclaimed experts topped the list with the five interviewed school administrators.

James said, “Everyone just spouts off opinion and they can do it anonymously and take pop shots, and cheap shots and all that kind of stuff. And candidly, to me, if they’re not willing to come down and talk to me, to come to a school board meeting, and talk

during a public comment portion of the school board meeting, have a phone call to me, send me a personal email, it's just like an anonymous complaint. If an anonymous complaint comes through the district without any signature, unless it is alleging some sort of child abuse or some sort of imminent danger to somebody, I disregard it, because you have to be able to stand behind with your name."

James continued by pointing out that online commenters are often self-proclaimed experts. "The problem with social media comments and news blog comments and everything, everybody's an expert, that's number one...On social media, they don't know the whole story. They profess to know the whole story, profess to be experts."

In discussing whether or not it is appropriate for school administrators to respond to comments in online forums, all those interviewed agreed that this was not best practice.

Frank stated, "It's frustrating because it's really out of your control in many ways. And yet it almost creates a demand for some sort of energy to respond to it...I'd rather not have to deal with that, that's for sure." Frank further stated, "I think the frustrating part about social media is in our positions, someone puts out something that's blatantly false, or someone paints a decision in a light that is not true...but you can't, I don't believe that's something you should respond to. If you start that process, you'd go crazy...When people are upset, they can post things without any fear of repercussion...Your hands are tied by professional duty."

Richard shared that he regularly helps students navigate difficult situations caused by social media. He said, "When you enter into an argument with angry dumb people

who are saying stupid things, you drop down to that level. So I try to listen to my own advice, and not go there. He went on to say, “So it’s a tricky balance, because I’m concerned about how our school is perceived, but I also don’t wanna worry about like… I can’t control other people’s thoughts.”

James warned, “When you start responding, you start validating the stuff that’s out there.” Richard echoed these sentiments when he said, “If you try to do the damage control on Facebook, then you get sucked into it. And pretty soon, you’re part of a crazy argument. James further stated, “You just can’t get dragged down into that because you have to worry about the business of educating children, and not the business of responding to social media.”

Is Being a Local a Hindrance or a Help When it Comes to School Administration?

Of those interviewed, Debra, Frank, and James were born and raised in the community in which they were employed as school administrators. James left the area for schooling and worked for many years in education in another part of the state before returning home. Richard was brand new to the area while Barbara had lived in her small community for about 15 years. When asked whether being local, meaning having been born and raised in the community in which you work, was a hindrance or a help, Frank, James, Debra, and Richard all felt their status as a local or in Richard’s case, from out of the area, was beneficial to their career. Barbara did not consider herself a local nor did she consider herself new to her community, so she chose not to respond to this question.

Debra felt that being local “helped a lot of relationships.” She said it “allowed me to have the benefit of the doubt” when controversial decisions had to be made. She shared that in her earliest years as an administrator, she frequently referred to the fact that she was a local while addressing groups of parents, in hopes of establishing rapport. Debra chose to discontinue this practice after a member of her staff gently shared that repeatedly referring to yourself as a local “could be interpreted to mean that you engage in discriminatory practices or were not accepting and welcoming of new people or folks of color.” Debra said she now only mentions her deep community roots on occasion or when it is pertinent to the situation at hand.

Frank stated that being local “hasn’t been a negative...I never felt like it’s worked against me.” In fact, one of Frank’s former schoolmates who worked for an online news organization contacted him and let him know that an incident that had occurred at Frank’s school was gaining a lot of attention online. Frank’s reporter friend said “Do you want him [a blogger known for inflammatory journalism] to be the one who sets the narrative for all that’s transpired, or as best you can, do you wanna get out in front of it?” Frank recognized that this could be somewhat self-serving on the part of his reporter friend, but in the end appreciated the “heads-up” and gave an interview.

In further describing the benefits of being local, Frank stated, “Anonymity is not something that I guess I craved too much, so maybe that speaks to some arrogance on my part. But yeah, yeah, it hasn’t been a negative. Yet.” He explained further, “You treat people well. You act with integrity, Yeah, you genuinely try to do what’s best for the people in your community. I think that there’s a benefit in being in a small community. If

you can work to constantly be that person and own your mistakes too. So if you're humble, you work hard and you treat people well, I think having a small community, I think is a benefit. However, but I think you have to remember that it is a small community and so that it's very easy if you operate outside of those parameters of humility, working hard and treating people well, I think it could be very dangerous and turn. It can turn on you very quickly, 'cause information can spread."

When asked if he finds it difficult to be an administrator in the community where he grew up James stated, "Actually, I think it's helped, Oh, yeah. Absolutely...That's 'cause I have long...long standing relationships in this community. My mom was a superintendent at one time, principal for years and years, and all in the Sunny Grove School District...she had a great reputation, and some of those relationships that my family has had for years and years. My dad was a logger and so he's deep into the blue collar families of [this community]. I think it helps lend to my credibility of a lot of things that end up out on social media, that people just don't believe."

Conversely, Richard stated "I think it's an advantage" not being from here. He explained further, "So the part of that is having a perspective, I think, has helped a lot...I think there's people get maybe trapped here, they went to school here, they go to [local college], they never leave the county, and then they come in and they're in the same school district the whole time, you don't get to see how other people do it."

Despite many perceived positives, being local and living in the community in which you work can be difficult for school administrators and their families. Frank

shared, “It sucks seeing stuff where people say things about you and know that that’s public.”

Debra described a situation where her mother attempted to come to her defense in an online comments section. “My mom has gone on to protect me and then she got slammed by somebody...and then she just got blasted, and then she was so upset and in tears.” Debra also shared an incident where her teenaged child sent a racy message to a classmate and it was screenshotted and posted to Instagram with the caption, “This is my principal’s son.”

Proactive Use of Media

Another theme that emerged while interviewing administrators is the proactive use of online media outlets to not only provide information and share positive happenings, but to take a preemptive strike against those who would use such forums as a way to spread negativity or criticism of schools and those who work there.

Debra’s small town has an online community watch Facebook group. Though it is in violation of group norms, some members use this forum to lambaste schools and school administrators. Members also try to get information they would not otherwise be privy to. Debra said, “They want information I can’t give them...so they go online and try to crowdsource it.” As part of a way to stem the tide of online negativity, Debra shared, “I’ve actually befriended two of the moderators, and they have been kind enough to give me their cellphone numbers and just say, ‘Hey, if anything yucky comes up, just let us know. We don’t want...That’s not what we want this to be...They can say whatever they

want, you can't defend yourself.' And so he is willing to take stuff down if that's where it's going in such a way that people are putting out accusations that we can't respond to because of privacy. So sort of making that connect was important."

Debra added, "I think in other ways, it's [social media] been positive. We've created a Facebook page for each of our classes...and communicating with parents about what's coming up. Being able to communicate positive stuff on our Facebook page has been good. I have some teachers who have Instagram pages that are super positive, posting all kinds of fun science and math stuff and getting kids excited…"

Frank was able to use local connections to help him navigate or "get in front of" negative online discussion by giving an interview to a well known online local news media outlet. Additionally, like Debra's, Frank's school regularly uses social media to positively communicate with students, their families, and the community at large.

James too sees the benefit to using social media to his district's advantage. "We have a person in personnel who is in charge of social media...We have our own Facebook account here as a school district, which we see is very beneficial. We'll blast out something that will be a release talking about information, but not as a response to what people are saying...because we find that we get a lot of following on the positive information that's out there. Just for everyone that's out there that have really taken this negative spin, there's a lot of people that are very happy with what's going on as well."

Richard went beyond positive social media posts. He shared, "The TV news is here quite a bit [lists multiple positive campus-wide activities and events] so I already had a relationship with...or not I, [the school] had a relationship with the community and

the media community, so I didn't feel like they were someone mistrustful. They don't just come in when there's problems." Because of that relationship of trust, Richard was comfortable giving interviews. "I felt like the people [press] who contacted us, I gave the time immediately, because I felt like if they wanna actually come in, and ask questions, and find out what's going on, then I wanna...I think the worst response to what I didn't want to do is say, 'Hey, this is an internal matter, I can't discuss it.' Because then people are gonna speculate we're hiding something."

Additionally, Richard enlisted the help of other school allies to combat the negative online media attention his school was receiving. "And some people checked in or a couple of point people I called and said, 'Hey, here's what's going on and here's how we're handling it. Get the word out." These trusted and well-connected parents were able to then do positive PR for Richard's school.

Impact of Social Media on the Overall Job Satisfaction of School Administrators

Though social media can be used to relay information and share positive messages, most of the administrators interviewed held the opinion that, it made their job more difficult and reduced overall job satisfaction. Three sub-categories emerged as to how social media is adversely affecting school administrators. First, social media has negatively influenced the way people view schools. Second, it has increased the burden of responsibility of school administrators. And third, parents' inability to control their children's social media habits have pitted parents against school administrators in being the ones to enforce healthy boundaries.

When asked if social media has had an impact on overall job satisfaction, Debra responded, “Yeah. Absolutely. I think it really is our sit-at-home-and complain culture...We just have become a society that sits in our car or in our bed, face down in the screen complaining. I think it’s really negatively impacting the way people see their local schools.” James agreed stating, “It’s not the students out there creating this negativity. Many of the people that are blasting Sunny Grove Schools don’t even have children that go to the district here so they’re not even part of that loop.” Barbara further discussed the damage done by putting schools on blast, “It poisons our school’s reputation. I think it creates mistrust and doubt and we have to prove ourselves even more.”

Richard reflected on the damage that one viral post can have on an otherwise wonderful school doing wonderful things for kids. “This doesn’t represent the values that we teach students here. And developmentally, we’ve got kids in progress. It’s the stuff we work on, but we’re not gonna be represented by a video and 100,000 Youtube hits...Hey, a lot of things are going well. I wanna make sure that people know we’re doing well.”

Barbara and Debra felt strongly that social media has added to the already immense workload faced by school administrators. Barbara commented, “Good Lord, if their kids didn’t have social media, yes, I think my job would be so much easier. Because we have zero control over it and they are so addicted to it...I think it more changes how hard each of us have to work.”

Debra shared multiple examples of situations requiring hours of administrative intervention caused by social media. In the first example, during the school day, a female

student “took a picture of two boys, who happened to be cousins, hugging.” The student then sent it out on social media. She was asked to take down the photo and was reprimanded for using social media at school, taking photos of students without permission, and then sharing the photo without permission. In retaliation, the families of the students involved re-posted the photo on social media stating that Debra and her school were homophobic. Their posts went viral, getting “picked up, not only by local press, it got picked up as far away as Germany. There was international pickup of this situation. So in the eyes of the online community, what happened is these boys were hugging, there was a picture and we freaked out, out of intense homophobia and made a big deal out of it. Never mind that these boys are A: white and privileged, and hetero, and cousins.” The fallout lasted years.

Debra also shared examples of navigating the ever-changing social media front. “Snapchat’s pretty ugly kid-on-kid bullying...Musical.ly is pretty nasty. A lot of racism, a lot of racist, yucky stuff.” Also difficult is “dealing with young women who are sharing parts of their bodies [texting nudes]...And then once those things have been sent to a boy who can then post it to anything...We’ve had a lot of backlash with TBH pages, which are To Be Honest pages on Instagram, or hate or burn pages, too. So they create a separate account. Nobody knows who has it, although the kids always have an idea...So those can be pretty ugly and pretty sad, and really crush kids.”

Richard, who worked as a counselor for a decade before taking on administrative roles, is not one to shy away from working with his students’ social and emotional needs, but social media has changed his work and its effectiveness. He stated, “One of the things

that a principal does too is like, ‘Hey, let’s put this into perspective, these are you know [small problems in the scheme of things],’ but social media just takes it completely out of perspective and out of context, and it takes on a life of its own.”

Barbara feels strongly that the parent/school relationship has been damaged by social media. One possible cause is that parent supervision of online activity is insufficient. “They don’t think any of it’s happening on social media ‘cause they don’t supervise [their children] using it...You’ve given your kid a laser beam and you’re mad that shit’s on fire.” Barbara feels parent support of school intervention on issues involving social media is also lacking. “To have parent support when we call, to have parents back us up, I think it’s eroded that.” She contextualized some of the negative interactions she’s had with parents explaining that “part of what was going on is she had someone she could yell at, and it wasn’t scary.” Parents feel safe and justified in yelling or being otherwise abusive to school administrators. Barbara does not plan to work in her current position for the next school year. “This is a good job to take a break from, ‘cause it’s so much dysfunction…I’m exhausted it. I don’t look forward to coming to school anymore. I’m over it.”

DISCUSSION

Many folks seem to know that much of what they read on social media is inaccurate (Blatchford, 2018). We despise "fake news" when it disagrees with our core beliefs, but have no problem sharing inflammatory information when it aligns with our belief system. Some, and not just "Russian bloggers" admittedly enjoy the banter and contention caused by particularly vitriolic comments, hence the popularity of the meme and gif of Michael Jackson eating popcorn with "I'm just here for the comments" written across it (Figure 1).

When asked if they read the comments section of online media forums, all of the school administrators interviewed were quick to respond in the negative. Yet as the interview proceeded, four of the five administrators went on to describe comments they had read. While it is possible the interview question was misunderstood, it is equally plausible that bound by duty and professionalism, the administrators felt the "correct" answer was "No, I don't read online comments sections." As trust and rapport were gained and the interviewer was seen as a colleague simply trying to make sense of an enormous job, their guard was let down and they felt more free to genuinely respond.

Being local and having your name dragged through the mud for your family, friends, and community to see is undoubtedly a painful experience. Homegrown administrators felt confident that their status as locals protected them if only in a small way. The administrator who was new to the area also felt this status helped him to be more highly regarded and respected due to his more diverse experiences. However, when

reading through the comments sections of local online news media, commenters seemed indiscriminate when it came to locals or transplants. "...this principle [sic] gots to go back to where she came from…" "If [administrator's name] is [school board president's] daughter then one cannot help but wonder if nepotism is at play here, especially when you hear these stories of her being underqualified and unpopular." "[Administrator] is not qualified to do the job she was hired for. It is unfortunate that the school board put her in a position to fail. This school district needs leadership with vision and accountability. It's time for the school board to be rid of old cronyism…"

While it can be argued that misinformation gone viral can be emotionally challenging, Richard brought to light a potentially dangerous situation caused by viral misinformation. One morning, parents read of a possible threat somewhere in the city. "I had like 70 parents show up and pick up their kids, And for me, that was a danger, because all of a sudden, I got these parents...I don't know all of them. I got 40 guys showing up on my campus, add a little bit of anxious because they're worried, and they're moving quickly into the school campus. I'm standing out front like, 'Okay, which one is…[a dad and which one may be a danger to my school]...It's a tricky one because statistically, your chances of getting hurt driving home are way higher than any kind of incident at school, but that's a tough one to explain to people. It's an emotional issue."

One area that deserves further exploration is whether or not female school administrators are more likely to receive negative commentary on social media than their male counterparts. Debra stated, "I think social media is harder on women in general." She went on to clarify, "All of those same double standards about being confident versus

bitchy or direct versus shrill, or just all of the shitty things people say about Nancy Pelosi, that they would never say about Mitch McConnell, exist...I don't know that they're more negative about female administrators than male administrators, but I think the negativity follows the same lines as the sexist negativity across our country. So I think when you see them pissed off at male administrators, they're pissed off at an action, or that they didn't get their way. When you see them pissed off at female administrators, I think it gets more personal and it's about their appearance and it's about their voice, and it's about what a bitch she is anyway...I think the complete culture is sexist across the board."

One particularly offensive comment suggested that females are not as respected and trusted as men in positions of leadership. The comment, "Just another great example of a woman that thinks she has balls, but has no idea how to use them" was directed a female superintendent who did not respond to multiple requests for an interview. She recently announced her resignation.

Another area that deserves exploration is whether or not female administrators are more likely to resign from a school administrative position after receiving harsh online criticism than male administrators. Though the sample size was small, both female administrators interviewed either resigned (Debra) or plan to resign in the coming months (Barbara). Of the other two female administrators who did not respond to multiple interview requests, one has resigned and the other's name no longer appears on the school district's staff directory, meaning she either resigned or was not offered a continuing contract.

Whether or not school administrators peruse the comments section of online forums, many certainly do all that they can to avoid having their name end up there. Debra recently sent the following message as part of a group text to other district and site administrators, “We are going to get destroyed on social media if we don’t [put out a statement soon].” On a closed Facebook group for school administrators, one commented on a shared story of a disgraced principal, “Every morning I pray, ‘God, please don’t let me make the online news.’” This comment received dozens of “likes” and cascading comments and gifs in agreement. Social media plays a part in being a school administrator in modern society. It has an impact on overall job satisfaction, if not by online commentary, then certainly by increasing the already overwhelming workload we all face.

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APPENDIX

Interview Instrument

Question 1. Tell me about your career path; how did you end up where you are today?
Question 2. What's it like being an administrator here? Please describe for me your typical work day.
Question 3. In (__insert month here___) of last year, you were dealing with an issue that gained a lot of attention in the press (briefly tell the incident to which you are referring). Please tell me about it.
Question 4. Tell me your experiences as an administrator with social media. Along that same line, tell me about your experience as an administrator with the online comments sections of local online news sources like [redacted]
Question 5. Describe the effect of the social media and online comments section had on you personally. Did it have any effect on your family members or friends? Did it change the way your staff interacted with you? Did it affect your relationship with students? Did it affect your relationship with parents?
Question 6. If you are faced with a similar situation in the future, what would you do differently?

To what degree does media portrayal affect job satisfaction for school administrators in rural communities?

Consent to take part in research

- I _____voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that participation involves participating in a 45 minute long semi-structured interview that will be recorded and transcribed.

- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.

- I understand that I may feel emotional distress from bringing up painful memories or acknowledging negative personal attributes or embarrassment from bringing up negative portrayal in media.

- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.

- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.

I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a conference presentation, or publication in a professional journal.

I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.

I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in locked files in the interviewers office until the thesis is published.

I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained until the thesis is published.

I understand that under freedom of information legalization I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165.

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Examples of comments directed at school administrators found in local online social media forums:

"Just another great example of a woman that thinks she has balls, but has no idea how to use them."

"...this principle gots to go back to where she came from"

"One very important requirement for a public school administrator is pig headedness and a level of stupid which rivals trump's useful pawn idiots. School administrators are for the birds."

"Yep its a requirement that admins have the same iq as their belt size"

"get rid of the principal"

"...the assistant principal seems to be a bully herself."

"Are you serious? __ is such a joke."
"She is a progressive p.o.s. and has no right or obligation to indoctrinate the kids and turn them into non free thinkers like her...dump her ass…"

"Their are some people at __ that have way to *[sic]* much power.and that power has gone to their head. kinda of a dictatorship."

"To me that's inappropriate for a grown woman, especially one that's supposed to be in charge of keeping our kids safe to say. What should I do to make sure something is actually done about this. It's an ongoing thing and she won't take the time to do her job."

"I went to the principal and superintendent of schools and nothing was done."

"Things sure have changed . Now with whoever they have in charge."

"I'm not about to let her continue to do her job like that . and still get paid ."

"__ is a complete disappointment as a Superintendent. The few interactions I've had with him makes me think this was the best we had to hire."

"That school needs to get shut down. It's been crook after crook of principals each year who will never get anything done."

"__ ego gets in the way of very decision he makes. He reminds me every day why I don't want my children attending _____ schools."

“Stop running your shit into the ground you over paid Moron.”

I'M JUST HERE
FOR THE COMMENTS
Explain and Send Screenshots
https://awwmemes.com/i/im-just-here-for-the-comments-97-eating-popcorn-gif-c51c4f4ab8694b519

Figure 1