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Impact of Media Culture on Influence, Tenure, and Professional Aspirations of the School Superintendent

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**Impact of Media Culture on Influence, Tenure, and Professional Aspirations of the School
Superintendent**

by

Judy Beaton

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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Dissertation Committee:
Dr. Frances Kayona, Chairperson
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Abstract

School superintendents in the 21st century face a prolific media culture with widespread and easy public access to information. The internet allows instantaneous dissemination of information and news about educational issues (Kowalski, 2005). Because community members, staff, parents and students can quickly communicate using the internet and cell phones, modern day superintendents need to be adept in dealing with both internal and external communication (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young & Ellerson, 2011). Internal stakeholder groups include school staff, parents and students. These communications also arise and originate from external stakeholder groups which include the information and social media networks, news media, community leaders, local and state political leaders, and higher education (Kowalski et. al., 2011; Lockhart, 2011).

The problem for the study was to analyze Minnesota school superintendents' perceptions of the impact of intense media scrutiny and relations with communication media in general on their sense of influence, length of tenure and professional aspirations regarding their profession. In light of the rapid changes in communication technologies, school leaders are increasingly being subjected to more scrutiny regarding their decisions about school change and policy. At times this scrutiny becomes not only intense, but hostile and even threatening (Carr, 2013; Eaton & Sharp, 1996; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Metzger, 2003; Metzger, 1997). The study examines to what extent this news media environment impacts the role of the superintendent.

The study examines superintendent perceptions regarding their interactions and experiences with media culture using a questionnaire and selected interviews. Survey data was gathered from approximately [300] public school superintendents who are members of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) professional organization. Three superintendents were invited to participate in a follow-up interview in order to glean additional perspectives and information regarding their interactions and experiences with media culture. Participants were asked to complete a 23-item survey in summer 2014 using Survey Monkey®. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics for selected items and non-numerical language to analyze results from open-ended comments. Qualitative methods were used to analyze results from selected interviews. Results from the study may assist current and aspiring school superintendents to gain a deeper understanding of how information technology and the communication age impacts professional ambition and ability to carry out this role.

The research questions for the study were:

1. To what extent does the media culture affect the superintendent's leadership success and perception of one's ability to influence and impact the organization?
2. To what extent does the media culture impact the professional tenure (longevity) and career of school superintendents?
3. To what extent does the media culture affect the professional aspirations of school superintendent?

In the study, the impact of the media culture on the role of the superintendent was found to be distracting from job responsibilities. The results of the survey displayed that the slant or bias of news information and social media were strong factors that impacted professional tenure and job satisfaction.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Superintendents in the 21st century face a prolific media culture with widespread and easy public access to information. The internet allows instantaneous dissemination of information and news about educational issues (Kowalski, 2005). Because community members, staff, parents, and students can quickly communicate using the internet and cell phones, modern day superintendents need to be adept in dealing with both internal and external communication (Kowalski, McCord, Peterson, Young, & Ellerson, 2011). Internal stakeholder groups include school staff, parents and students. These communications also arise and originate from external stakeholder groups which include the information and social media networks, news media, community leaders, local and state political leaders, and higher education (Kowalski et al., 2011; Lockhart, 2011).

Lockhart (2011) examined how superintendents maximize relations with the media. Superintendents must be skilled at handling negative media coverage of school districts and respond appropriately. One strategy is to create a positive reciprocal working relationship with the local news media. Lockhart contends it is also important for school districts to create a functional working relationship with local news media in order to create a method of sharing positive news regarding school achievement and to raise community awareness of school activities. This author also stated that the “role of public relations is to support and enhance the school’s marketing activities” (p. 201). The school superintendent has many tasks of importance which must be handled on a daily basis. Navigating the news media, media culture, and promoting positive school public relations is one of many important job roles. In the Kowalski et al. (2011) decennial study of American school superintendents, information describing many roles of the superintendent is presented. The American Association of School Administrators

(AASA) has been sponsoring these studies since the early 1900s. The scholars who conduct these studies on behalf of AASA all have had significant roles and experiences in the field of the superintendency.

Kowalski et al. (2011) compared the major role and job functions of the superintendency from the 1960s with today's current job functions. The authors analyzed the role of the superintendent in 1961 and found four common job functions that were driven primarily by the need for proficient communication skills in order to inform, instruct, evaluate, and influence. Today's superintendents are described in the literature as utilizing their communication skills to serve as facilitators, collaborators, and builders of positive relationships with stakeholders (Kowalski, Petersen, & Fusarelli, 2007). Kowalski et al. (2011) labeled this change in the traditional role of the superintendent as a "*relational communication*" job function.

A relational communicator is described as one who is able to clearly communicate the mission and vision of the school district with respect to all stakeholders. Within this relational communication framework, a superintendent is expected to demonstrate an open communication style which builds positive relationships with others. The level of skill to be an effective relational communicator may well impact the efficacy with which the superintendent is able to manage media culture, and can have a significant impact on professional tenure, and personal aspirations toward the field of the superintendency.

This study is designed to add to the literature pertaining to the myriad of stressors faced by school superintendents in light of the growing media scrutiny and information communication era of today

Statement of the Problem

The problem for the study is to analyze Minnesota school superintendents' perceptions of the impact of intense media scrutiny and relations with communication media in general on their sense of influence, length of tenure and professional aspirations regarding their profession. In light of the rapid changes in communication technologies, school leaders are increasingly being subjected to more scrutiny regarding their decisions about school change and policy. At times this scrutiny becomes not only intense, but hostile and even threatening (Carr, 2013; Eaton & Sharp, 1996; Hawk & Martin, 2011; Metzger, 2003; Metzger, 1997). The study examines to what extent this news media environment impacts the role of the superintendent.

The study examines superintendent perceptions regarding their interactions and experiences with media culture using a questionnaire and selected interviews. Survey data was gathered from approximately [300] public school superintendents who are members of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) professional organization. Three superintendents were invited to participate in a follow-up interview in order to glean additional perspectives and information regarding their interactions and experiences with media culture. Participants were asked to complete a 23-item survey in summer 2014 using Survey Monkey®. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics for selected items and non-numerical language to analyze results from open-ended comments. Qualitative methods were used to analyze results from selected interviews. Results from the study may assist current and aspiring school superintendents to gain a deeper understanding of how information technology and the communication age impacts professional ambition and ability to carry out this role.

Purpose of the Study

The overall purpose of the study is to gather the perceptions of school superintendents related to the way they handle media culture coverage of education in their school districts and to examine the impact on influence, tenure and professional aspirations. The study will more specifically examine the following aspects of the role of the superintendency:

1. To better understand what extent media and social media impact and shape the role of the superintendency in the 21st century.
2. What competencies do superintendents need to possess and which strategies do they need to employ to successfully navigate media culture and communication?
3. How is the role of the superintendency shaped or impacted with respect to media culture?
4. It is common for Superintendents' longevity to be between 3-5 years in a school district. It takes 6-8 years for school improvement to take hold (Fullan, 2009; Fullan, 2005). Schools are constantly criticized in the media culture for remaining static systems. The short tenure of many school superintendents creates conditions which prevent the superintendent from seeing school vision and goal setting strategies through to implementation. Does media culture and how superintendents are portrayed in the media have an impact on superintendent tenure?
5. What are implications for school administrative preparation programs – which skills impart more competencies in handling communication and media culture?

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent does the media culture affect the superintendent's leadership success and perception of one's ability to influence and impact the organization?

2. To what extent does the media culture impact the professional tenure (longevity) and career of school superintendents?
3. To what extent does the media culture affect the professional aspirations of school superintendents?

Assumptions for the Study

The research assumptions for the study are as follows:

1. Participants will answer survey questions truthfully and honestly.
2. This study will anticipate a normal distribution among respondents.

Delimitations

Delimitations of the study are described below:

1. The study will not disaggregate by ethnicity.
2. Only Minnesota public school superintendents will be surveyed.
3. The study will not include study results by gender (anticipating small sample of female superintendents based on demographic data in research).
4. Only school superintendents listed in the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) directory will be surveyed.

Definitions of Terms

1. Community Relations: the business of influencing the community in which a person or institution resides in order to promote goodwill toward the person or institution (Houston, 2001).
2. Media Demassification: Houston (2001) defines demassification as a resulting lack of common public experience resulting from the profusion of news media coverage the public is exposed to on a regular basis. Restructuring of media industry into smaller

entities in order to reach a specific, targeted audience to become less centralized and more diversified.

3. Enthymeme: defined as the idea that the audience (listener) is as responsible for creating meaning of communication as the speaker (Cambrom-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, & Hoff, 2005).
4. Hostile Media Perception: tendency for people to see news media coverage as hostile (favoring the opposing opinion) or biased to their own point of view (Chia, 2001).
5. Media Engagement: role of superintendent to educate the press and news media about education issues. The superintendent would take a proactive role in media engagement when possible, to initiate the communication. When the news media initiates engagement, the superintendent then is reacting to the initiation of the engagement (Lee, 2009).
6. News Media: members of the mass media including newspapers, radio news stations, internet news publications, and television news media (Lee, 2009).
7. No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB):
(www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/index.html) United States government legislation governing public schools. NCLB is also referred to as the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Public Law 107-110. The premise behind this legislation is to improve the academic achievement of disadvantaged students.
8. Persuasive Press Inference: news which is manipulated or represents a distinct favorable or unfavorable slant on current issues and as a result influences perceived public opinion.
9. Public Relations: the business of influencing the public to have an understanding of a person or institution and promote goodwill toward the person or institution. Public

relations are often used to influence or persuade the public to have a positive opinion in regard to a particular person or institution.

10. Relational Communication Model: According to Kowalski, et al. (2011) a relational communication model is one in which the more traditional authoritarian style of communication is replaced by a model in which the individual is expected to use communication to build and maintain positive relationships.
11. Phenomenology: A qualitative research method which asks the question: “What is the experience of an activity or concept from these particular participants’ perspectives?” (Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012).
12. Aspiration: A strong desire and diligence to achieve a goal. The term aspiration is used in this study related to a superintendent’s motivation to achieve a desired district strategic objective or a personal professional aspiration. (Crowson, 1987).
13. Tenure: The amount of time, typically counted in years, a superintendent holds a position. (Wells, 2013).
14. Influence: Factors that impact leadership success. Influence includes one’s personal perception of one’s ability to have influence and effective impact on outcomes within the organization (Maulding, Peters, Roerts, Leonard, & Sparkman, 2012).

Human Subjects Approval

In efforts to ensure that the rights and welfare of subjects participating in this research study are protected, the St. Cloud State University Committee on Human Subjects Review Board reviewed this project and concluded that confidentiality was assured and the potential benefits through increased knowledge were appropriate. The study was conducted so that no emotional risks or risks to self-esteem were present. Modified informed consent to participants was

assumed by those voluntarily completing and returning the feedback instrument. See Appendix

A.

Chapter 2: Review of Related Literature

The current research in the literature reveals many aspects of school public relations, media relations, and the superintendent's role in managing media culture of the 21st century. The purpose of this literature review is to describe research related to the historical and current role of school superintendents, examine the demographics of school superintendents, research 21st century skills of superintendents and to summarize the literature related to school media relations and media culture. This review of the related literature examines the impact of media culture on the influence, tenure, and professional aspirations of the school superintendent.

Historical and Current Role of School Superintendents (Influence)

According to the literature, many authors assert that, over the past century, the role and responsibility of the school superintendent has dramatically changed (Brunner, 2002; Houston, 2001; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski, 2011). The superintendent's role has evolved from one of handling a busy daily schedule dealing with parent, staff, and student complaints to the expanded role and responsibility in a modern-day political climate where the stakes have increased and the stakeholder membership now includes community, state, and nation-wide participants (Hanson, 1961; Houston, 2001; Kowalski, 2005).

Grogan (2000) remarked that 21st century superintendents require skills geared toward increased understanding of how to manage the vast amount of information they are faced with on a daily basis. Grogan asserted that superintendents must make careful choices regarding how they present and respond to information, including negative news media attention. In the current decade, the superintendent must focus more on the challenges of facing social issues within our society (Houston, 2001; Rinehart, 2005). Kowalski (2005) focused on how the role of the superintendent has evolved in the public schools. He provided a historical perspective that

addressed the role of the superintendent and how it evolved from a timeline beginning in 1865 as “teacher of teachers”. He stated that the role of the superintendent has followed a pattern beginning with the role of first being “teacher of teachers”, then a “manager”, “statesman” and suggests current trends leading to the evolved superintendent role as an “applied social scientist”. Kowalski (2005) also summarized findings by the Kellogg Foundation Grants of 1961 which were related to behavioral science research on school administrators. These studies focused on providing aspiring superintendents with a “greater sensitivity to large social problems”.

Kelly (2009) examined the impact and influence of advances in technology on superintendents’ effective communication. The author found important considerations for superintendents when interacting with media culture. Successful superintendents displayed proficient skills in utilizing technology and managing media communication. Kelly (2009) discussed findings that although technology has made communicating easier, faster and more efficient, there is an impact on the need to closely monitor the context of electronic communication.

Houston (2001) formulated a hypothesis that the current trend in education, which focuses on educational reform, forces the superintendent to be a relationship-enhancing communicator rather than a top-down dictator. Houston stressed that communication skills are becoming increasingly important and are directly related to the effectiveness of a superintendent. Rienhart (2005) examined the work ethic of superintendents engaged in educational reform. He summarized findings which concluded that superintendents’ behavior continues to be driven by traditions, needs, and expectations of the community.

Cambrom-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, & Hoff (2005) portrayed successful school superintendents as those that have the experience and skills necessary to engage efficiently with

the local, state, and national news media. The authors use the term “enthymeme” to define the relationship between the news media and the school superintendent. Enthymeme is defined as “the idea that the audience (listener) is as responsible for creating meaning of communication as the speaker”.

In Cambrom-McCabe, et al. (2005), Kathleen Hall Jameson gives advice and perspective to superintendents when advising them in communicating with the public. She stated three main points about communicating with the public to include: reframing issues, inoculating one’s self (becoming resistant to criticism depleting one’s self image), and when communicating with the public, refusing to hide from them. For example, in today’s educational systems, modern day superintendents must deal with difficult budget related decisions in a bleak financial climate. Jameson also remarked that it is critical for superintendents to have a strong and implicit awareness of public opinion. She remarked that superintendents should have a high-level of awareness regarding critical local, state, and national educational issues. Superintendents are called to increase student achievement while simultaneously working with a limited or reduced fiscal budget (Ginsberg & Multon, 2011).

Maulding et al. (2012) researched factors which impact leadership success related influence of school leaders. They found that emotional intelligence and resilience had a strong correlation with perceived leadership success. Resilience was defined as the capacity to understand adversity utilizing one’s inner strengths. These researchers found that resilience in school leaders manifests in the ability to confront the demands of a rapidly changing society and emotional climate.

The role of the superintendent when engaging with the news media and public relations is often described in the literature as a reactive relationship (Howlett, 1993). Effective

communication has also evolved from creating basic newsletters and the primarily responsibility for informing parents about school events, to involving a much wider public constituency. As a public relations strategist, superintendents have an opportunity to attract community support for the school district while implementing a public relations plan to enhance positive rapport with the community at large. (Cambrom-McCabe et al., 2005; Howlett, 1993; Peterson, Kelly, Reimer, Mosunich, & Thompson, 2009).

Peterson et al. (2009) researched the perspectives of 350 California superintendents in relation to their ability to support student learning while also addressing several key elements impacting school districts including social, economic and personnel issues. Other issues also explored were declining enrollment, increases in English-learner population, collective bargaining, reduced revenues, school board activism, and increased expectations and accountability related to academic achievement.

Job Stressors and Tenure of Contemporary Superintendents

In the 1950s, the tenure of superintendents was reported to be an average of 14 years. This tenure decreased to 6 years in the 1990s. The changing role of the superintendent currently places more emphasis on instructional leadership, compliance with state and federal mandates, strategic planning, shared-decision making, increased student achievement, fiscal management, and managing community interest groups (Harris, Lowery, Hopson, & Marshall, 2004; Hawk & Martin, 2011). Shifts during the 1970s, resulted in less local control of education and more state and federal control. A commonly held belief, during the 1970s, was that school superintendents should not get involved with governmental politics at any level (Netusil & Dunkin, 1974). The public opinion at the time was that superintendents were responsible for keeping local and state legislators informed. The superintendent had an obligation to educate politicians on issues

considered by the legislature that impacted public schools. School superintendents were advised at the time not to align themselves with a particular political party or publicly support political candidates.

The lack of qualified candidates for the superintendency is also an issue across the nation (Kowalski, 2005; Sharp, Malone, Walter, 2002). In a study conducted by Sharp et al. (2002), superintendents responded that the major motivation for them to become a superintendent was to “make a difference” within the school system. The main responsibility of the superintendent is often stated in the literature to improve the educational experience of students and to raise achievement for all learners. However, the public perception of the superintendent is often under scrutiny (Sharp et al., 2002). Trevino, Braley, Stallone Brown, & Slate, (2008) examined the challenges faced by 46 Texan school superintendents. The specific job challenges investigated included: 1) political obstacles/governance, 2) high stakes testing, 3) curriculum and instruction, 4) funding, 5) student socio-economic status, 6) student demographics, 7) personnel ethics, 8) lack of highly qualified teachers, 9) lack of educational diversity, and 10) student discipline. The researchers found a statistically significant relationship between the impact of the above job challenges and the tenure of superintendents. Trevino et al. (2008) stated that “public school superintendents continue to live in a culture that is based upon conflict, insecurity, and uncertainty”. The length of superintendent tenure and frequent turnover has an impact on the implementation of initiatives which create and sustain organizational change. The ability to implement and sustain systemic reform requires strong, experienced, and consistent leadership.

Yee & Cuban (1996) studied 47 urban school superintendents across the United States. In their study, they found that only one superintendent had tenure of over 5 years. Short tenure of superintendents resulted in superintendents lacking the ability to follow-through on vision and

goals which were developed during their first three years in office. Yee & Cuban (1996) found that frequent turnover of superintendents led to leadership instability. They explored the reasons for shortened tenure such as unfavorable board relations, lack of superintendents' professional preparedness, intense political environment with a high level of scrutiny, and fiscal challenges of the school district. Fullan (1992) analyzed school change and found that it takes at least five years to implement and produce lasting change. Yee & Cuban (1996) hypothesized that the trend of shorter superintendent tenure directly impeded school reform initiatives.

The literature also suggested that the underrepresentation of women in the superintendency is confounded by a shortage in the United States of qualified professionals who aspire to the superintendency (Blount, 1998; Grogan, 2000; Kamler, 2009). Job stress is often cited as a reason why so few individuals seek the superintendency. One stress factor commonly discussed in the literature is dealing with the news media (Cambrom-McCabe et al., 2005; Wolverton & Macdonald, 2001).

In a survey of Illinois Superintendents, conducted by Sharp, Supley, Malone & Walter (2004), respondents were asked 1) "Do you agree with statements regarding the superintendency as a "male" field?", 2) "Is "power" the same for men and women?", and 3) "How do men (versus) women value trust, competence, and collaboration?". The respondents were asked to answer the questions in a forced Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). In response to a question about communication skills: If it was agreed that men listen for facts, while women listen for feelings, 82.8% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. This question was developed by researchers using information from the literature regarding male/female communication style comparisons.

Grogan (2000) reviewed the literature over the past 50 years regarding female superintendents. She suggested that female superintendents must currently lead through a non-traditional contemporary lens in order to adapt to modern society's social expectations for the role of the superintendency. Grogan also proposed "paradoxes of the superintendency" to include the "paradox of vision" which means that the superintendent must create a futuristic vision for the school district, but may only hold a limited year contract. This results in the superintendent possibly not being present when reforms within the district actually take place. Another paradox the author discussed was "decentralized authority and increased accountability" meaning that as a superintendent becomes more accountable for student outcomes, they must become more decentralized in their authority in order to empower others. Superintendents are increasingly called upon to interact with community members, resulting in fewer opportunities for educators to interact with the superintendent.

Tallerico & Blount (2004) noted that the role of the superintendency is particularly complex for women as they are working in a predominantly male work force. Historical data on American school superintendents by gender has been described over the past several decades. Kowalski et al. (2011) reported in *The American School Superintendent Decennial 2010 Study*, in 1910, the percentage of female superintendents was 8.9%; in 1970, 3.4 %, in 1998 it increased to 10%, and in 2010, 24.1% of superintendents were reported as being female. Brunner (2000) described the traditional discourse of communication samples of 12 female superintendents across the United States. The researchers analyzed writing samples and verbal narratives and then divided the female superintendents' communication skills into two categories: "talkers" or "listeners". Texts and narratives of female superintendents were analyzed. Brunner analyzed the discourse and found five "topics of talk" or themes which emerged: 1) power, 2) silence, 3)

style, 4) responsibility, and 5) people. The study found female superintendents' perceptions of their experiences and cultural gender-specific norms were found to impact their professional experiences. Three substantial findings revealed that female superintendents reported experiencing inequality and gender-bias, using coping strategies which covered or belied gender-bias, and adhering to cultural norms surrounding gender behavioral expectations. In this study, Brunner (2000) defined successful female superintendents as those perceived by others to be capable, effective, respected, and well supported by others. The experiences of female superintendents, throughout the professional educational system, were impacted by a cultural norm that the position of a school superintendent is traditionally viewed as masculine.

The common discourse according to a Brunner (2002) study concluded and recommended that all superintendents are advised to carefully shape how they communicate all types of information to others. Brunner stated that although this research finding was not unique to gender, it was discovered that female superintendents reported experiencing inequality with their positions. Female superintendents reported a perception of having to take greater care in communicating messages.

Nozaki (2000) summarized the unique experience of female superintendents and how the news media focuses on gender and race when describing superintendents. Nozaki concluded that male and female superintendents typically share common traits: both are well-equipped with skills and knowledge in managing new technology and handling communication and news coverage. Nozaki's research found that desired superintendent candidates, whether male or female, embody shared traits that school boards find attractive. These traits were found to be tailored to specific school district needs as perceived by the school board: 1) ability to represent/reflect the community (based on ethnicity/race, personality, political affiliation,

communication style, personal attributes, values); 2) strong leadership competencies; 3) efficient management of all areas of the educational system; 4) personal qualities (warmth, social acumen, charisma, style, confidence; 5) high-level of expertise (school district initiatives individualized to unique district goals); 6) strong credentials, educational background, and former experience as a successful superintendent.

Impact of Information (News) Media Coverage of Education

Houston (2001) described the most challenging media issue facing superintendents today as “demassification”. He defined demassification as a resulting lack of a common public experience because of the plethora of media that the public is exposed. The author stated that, in recent history, people obtained news information from a limited media field (such as only having three television channels available) and a narrow selection of newsprint publications. In today’s modern prolific mass media climate, people can choose from literally hundreds of television channels and also have access to the internet. Houston ascertained that increased opportunities for unrelenting and immediate access to media culture coverage is related to the increased criticism of public school systems. Journalists in the United States have commonly asserted their formal and informal authority to manage public opinion regarding public matters including political issues and candidates (Edy & Snidow, 2011; Killeen, 2007). Most voters view the media as a major venue to gain information about political elections. For example, the coverage of education policy platforms during Presidential elections is one area that receives a large amount of media coverage and public interest. A review of the literature suggested that people have differing perceptions of estimating the degree of influence that the media has on self and others (GertsI-Pepin, 2002; Oliver, Yang, Ramasubramanian, Kim, & Lee, 2008). Public perceptions of political media bias results in the publics’ attempts to discern which media outlets

represent either a conservative or liberal bias (Gertsl-Pepin, 2002). Lee (2009) discussed the effect of media coverage on audience attention. Lee remarked that “one important role of news media is to create salience for certain events, which influences the audience in terms of drawing attention, asserting importance, and provoking thoughts.”

Studies of news media coverage and perceptions of educational policies in the United States investigated the impact of the slant of the news media and influence on public opinion. Studies have also focused on the direct effect and influence news media has on public sentiment. News media editorials and letters to the editor make an impact which is interpreted as persuasive press inference. Slant occurs when favorable or unfavorable news articles are presented to the public. The impact of favorable and unfavorable news articles impacts personal perceptions of credibility of local and national news publications (Christen & Huberty, 2007).

In the past two decades, there has been a dramatic increase in news media coverage of public education (Haas, 2007; Killeen, 2007; Christen & Huberty, 2007). Media reach and influence has increased due to internet access and online editions of newspapers and television news stations. Mediamark Research, Inc. reported that 93.5% of United States citizens watched “some” television each week, 79.3% read newspapers, and 41.5% of U.S. households reported having access to the internet at home (Christen & Huberty, 2007). Research suggests and is congruent in finding that news media frequently represent public education issues in an exaggerated negative view. Possible reasons for this negative reporting bias have been attributed to “over reporting” by the media of less scholarly material in comparison to news reporting which is more entertaining or dramatic and controversial in nature (Killeen, 2007).

Ogle, Eckman, & Leslie (2003) provided an analysis of newspaper reporting and the written representation of the 1999 Columbine school shootings through a social constructionist

definition. Social constructivism is described as a sociological theory of knowledge of social settings wherein groups of people construct knowledge for each other creating a shared meaning of events. One example the authors described involved the phenomenon of “initial claims” of an event followed by the resulting counter claims by the news media which then become “secondary claims”. The secondary claims evolve when the media reinterprets and therefore transforms the initial claims (reporting based on initial interviews and accounts of an event). Reporting of initial claims of school events are traditionally gathered from interviews of school public relations specialists, students, parents, school administrators, and school board members. Public perception of schools in the United States is one of a perceived possibly unsafe educational environment for students and staff. The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) has a second component that addresses common concerns about public school safety. NCLB requires schools to report incidents of violence. Schools which are designated “persistently dangerous” allow a provision for students to transfer to a different school. Mass news media reporting on events such as school shootings impact the entire community and influence the public perception of the reality of safe schools and school choice (DeAngelis, Brent, & Lanni, 2011).

The news reporting absorbed by the public shapes their perception of the public school environment. One method of improving public relations through utilization of the news media is to provide the local newspaper with news articles or media spots written by the school district. These proactive positive news stories, which are provided by the school districts directly to news outlets, allow districts to highlight positive attributes of the school district and to promote an image of success and achievement. Distortions of school issues by the media can be diminished by providing the news media with factual and accurate representations of school issues (Ediger, 2001).

Stakeholders in school public relations include a wide spectrum of community members such as parents, business community, senior citizens, religious organizations, and civic organizations. Media outlets play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion. News coverage of organizations can shape the public opinion by slanting facts which make claims based on investigative and reporting practices (Andrew & Caren, 2010).

The public's trust in education nurtures a culture of school support. Therefore, school public relations officials have an important role in creating a communication system which maintains this trust. News media reports of a Florida school district accused of circumventing No Child Left Behind (NCLB) regulations by overestimating its graduation rate resulted in a breach of public trust and a public relations nightmare (Watson & Brown, 2010).

Haas (2007) explored how news media presents information about education. In this study, Haas compared four types of "think tanks": 1) contract research, 2) academic, 3) advocacy, and 4) mixed academic. The findings of this study show that the news media used all four types of think tanks as a source for reporting on education. The news media uses these think tank groups to cite quotes regarding educational research, statistics and professional opinion regarding the state of public education in the United States. Haas concluded that the news media not only influences the general public in forming favorable or unfavorable opinions; the news media also influences public perception of which educational researchers are credible sources. This study provided a specific analysis of how the news media influences public opinion by including or excluding specific scientific research regarding public education.

Impact of Media Culture on Superintendents' Professional Aspirations

The literature suggests that news media can influence not only personal opinion but also influence our perception of what others' opinions truly represent. Persuasive press inference is

one theory that suggests that individuals infer the general public opinion based on their perception of media coverage persuasion (Gunther, 1998; Gunther & Chia, 2001). In other words, how the news media is slanting a news story will sway the public opinion in a favorable or unfavorable direction. The possibility of multiple biases or motivational biases can emerge concurrently in the media. The news media has the power to exert its influence on people's judgments and behavior (Babad, Peer, & Benayoun, 2012). Gunther (1998) reported that this theory is based upon a generally accepted societal norm: when forming one's own opinion, we tend to consider others' beliefs and opinions. Research on the significant impact of mass media on public opinion showed that the news story slant of favorable versus unfavorable media coverage of an issue influenced public opinion in a corresponding way (Gunther, 1998). Gunther & Chia (2001) examined the phenomenon of hostile media perception, which is defined as viewing media coverage of societal issues as "contrary to one's own point of view". Gunther & Chia termed this as "hostile media effect". Persuasive press inference links how the media perceives and portrays news worthy events to how the public perceives issues and events.

Several media outlets have been accused of projecting a more liberal left bias (Sutter, 2011). Internal stakeholders within the educational system also may have an impact on persuading public opinion. Alston (2005) defined tempered radicalism as activism performed by an individual who identifies with and is committed to their associated organization. This person also simultaneously identifies with and is committed to a cause, community, or ideology. In many cases the two interests may be fundamentally different from each other. The tempered radicalist is a person who may also possibly be at "odds" with the dominant culture of the organization.

Ksiazek, Malthouse, & Webster (2010) examined the pattern of news consumption and the contributing role of the news media in civic engagement. Their sample studied 25,000 adult respondents in the United States. Ksiazek et al. (2010) classified the population as either “Avoiders” or “News-seekers”. The criteria used for determining a label was dependent upon respondents reported level of news consumption across several types of news media. The researchers developed a “Total News Consumption Index” which was described in the study as “an index of news media usage across platforms”. The results of this study reported that 49.5% of respondents were identified as “Avoiders” and 50.5% as “News-seekers”.

Research on media representation of education found that media frequently presents a simplified view of educational issues through an overtly critical lens. How the media chooses to frame educational concepts, transformational trends in education, and discussions of educational equity impact the public’s perception of public education. Education issues are brought to the attention of the general public by the news media. One public perception influenced by the news media is the role of public schools. The role of public schools is frequently defined in the media as to not only educate students, but to also assist them in becoming better citizens and improve society as a whole (Zyngier, 2004).

The school superintendent is impacted directly by the quality and factual information being presented by the media. In school systems, news media reports and public relations issues are often monitored and managed by designated staff (Epstein, 1995). Epstein lists proactive strategies in communications which are designed to include parents and streamline effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication channels.

Eller & Carlson (2009) recommended that superintendents utilize a detailed information flowchart in order to ensure that all stakeholders impacted by the organization who need

information are informed appropriately. Information flowcharts can be used and tailored for different situations and planned for ahead of time. Johnson (2009) described an approach for superintendents to use during community engagement sessions. Johnson recommended that superintendents gain perspective by following this step: take into consideration and contrast a traditional authoritarian decision-making approach by balancing this with engaging positively with the community. By collaborating with parents and other community members, and interacting effectively with groups who may have conflicting perspectives, a superintendent has an opportunity to gain a fresh and possibly altered perspective. Johnson recommended this approach to increase wise decision-making in light of using district monetary resources. This author argued that when superintendents are able to listen to the shared concerns of community members and understand the competing interests of school and community, they are able to make more informed decisions.

Nestor-Baker & Hoy (2001) described the implied expressed knowledge of school superintendents which may not be fully expressed through communication with stakeholders. School superintendents were interviewed and asked to respond to specific situations and to identify elements of their responses which were critical to the success or failure of the occurrence. The authors defined “tacit knowledge” as the innate, not easily articulated, knowledge that one possesses because of one’s own personal and professional experiences. Nestor-Baker & Hoy (2001) found that the profession of the school superintendent is “heavily focused on personal relationships and reliant on people skills for goal achievement”. The authors reported that superintendents reported having a high knowledge of handling public relations successfully was an important aspect of their job. Public relations placed a high demand on their work schedule, especially in dealing with people outside of the school system.

Glass & Franchini (2006) summarized data collected from 1,338 American superintendents. The survey results demonstrated commonalities across the nation in perceptions of superintendents related to job stress factors. Anderson (2007) argued that in today's heavily charged political climate, the role of media culture in education reform is a factor which impacts the role of the superintendent. This author stated that the media has the strategic ability to promote social agendas. Anderson commented "although schools have enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy as a public space in which to educate students, more stringent accountability systems and increased outsourcing and contracting of private services have decreased this autonomy".

Anderson (2007) also commented on a literature finding that the role of the superintendent is often described in terms of balancing the relationship between the high levels of stress with job satisfaction. Pascopella (2008) wrote that as stress seems to grow across the board in American business, so does it grow in the American school system. Pascopella described the survey conducted by Glass & Franchini (2006) which found that 44 percent of superintendents surveyed reported they feel considerable job stress, while nearly 15 percent reported they felt very great job stress. Potential job factors related to stress included: a) funding, b) No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandates, c) overt attention (scrutiny), d) negative media board relations, and e) conflicting community demands.

Moore (2009) discussed how schools turn to the news media to convey information to large groups of people. Moore listed two broad categories of generating media coverage related to school accomplishments: 1) coverage surrounding students and teachers, and 2) sharing excellence of the school district. Superintendents often find themselves in the role of managing the news media to communicate positive images of the school district or conducting damage

control related to negative news media coverage. A positive working relationship with the news media is critical in promulgating an overall positive public relations perception (Jenkins, 2007). Jenkins described ways of managing the news media to create a positive school district image. Management techniques described included proactive scheduling of regular meetings with local media outlets (such as a newspaper editor). Langlois (2004) stressed that “superintendents are watchful for leaks to the press which might distort information for the simple purpose of demolishing the reputation of their organization” (p. 86).

Opfer (2007) focused on research addressing the negative impact of the media. Opfer described how positive coverage by the media can boost the reputation of the school district. Conversely, negative coverage by the media can erode public confidence in the school district resulting in declining support for public education. Opfer discussed the converse relationship between the news media and public education. This author presented a phenomenon termed as “mutual destruction”: as the news media report negatively and attack public education; in return, public education officials defensively attack the news media. A relationship was described between dramatic news events and how these events can drive issues to the top of the news media and government agendas (Lawrence & Birkland 2004; Opfer, 2007). Opfer argued that this presents an atmosphere in which both entities simultaneously cause public disengagement and distrust.

Opfer (2007) also illustrated a framework for labeling types of education coverage by the media. In this study, Opfer described the complex political intricacies of media reporting. The three major types of educational media reporting described included: 1) Civic Forum: informative coverage which is available to all sectors of stakeholders and society, 2) Mobilizing Agent: informative but also provides information related to a process for public action and

engagement, and 3) Watchdog: informative but holds school officials accountable for their actions and provides an in-depth analysis of educational events and plans.

According to the National School Public Relations Association (NSPRA), there is no shortage of opinions regarding media coverage of schools in the United States. News media coverage of education has increased in intensity over the past 20 years. In the 1980's, the news media was at the center of a massive number of reports and coverage regarding school violence (McQuaid, 1989). The author highlighted the way the prominent 1983 report titled *A Nation at Risk* sparked heightened news media coverage of public education. This report on American education was sponsored by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. The National Commission on Excellence in Education was created by T. H. Bell, U.S. Secretary of Education in 1981. The commission was created in response to the Secretary's request and concerned public statement: "the widespread public perception that something is seriously remiss in our educational system" (Gardner et al., 1983).

McQuaid (1989) also presented the argument that *A Nation at Risk* marked the turning point for how the media covered educational issues. In 1983, William Bennett was the U.S. Secretary of Education. In the political arena, Bennett was supported by savvy media advisors. Education reporters reached out to education officials who had the highest authority on the continuum from the local superintendent of schools to the top of the administrative chain in the United States, the Secretary of Education (McQuaid, 1989).

This review of the literature leads to a description of a cyclical relationship between communications, public relations, and media culture related to the role of the superintendent. One case study conducted by Levin (2004) focused on the connection between the government and the media and the resulting distrust. This case study gives personal experiential data

regarding how Levin dealt with the media in his role as a Canadian governmental official. The author described his personal experience in relationship to his wife also receiving many calls from the news media due to her charitable work. The author told his wife that he had assumed a disaster had taken place at her charitable work site, due to the large volume of media interest. In reality, the opposite was true. The charitable work place had received a flood of positive news attention and good publicity from the media. In Levin's own immediate professional experience as a Canadian Provincial Minister of Education, he found that the news media primarily focused on negative aspects of the educational branch of government. Levin (2004) described the relationship in which each party relies on each other but also distrusts one another. Government uses the media as a major way of communicating with the public. Conversely, many government officials do not have a favorable view of how the media portrays them. He concluded by stating that every individual and organization is in a position to do a small part to help create a stronger public dialogue on education and other vital issues. There are many stakeholders identified in the literature who may be represented in the media to include teachers and their unions in addition to several other parent and community stakeholder groups (Goldstein, 2010).

According to Kowalski et al. (2011), the evolving role of the superintendent will require profound exemplary skills in communication, media relations, and self-awareness. School superintendents commonly create favorable collaborative relationships with local businesses including the local chamber of commerce (Bennett & Thompson, 2011). In today's politically charged culture of governmental control over public education, school leaders must effectively build and manage school-business partnerships and adapt to the changing needs of the school system (Mertkan, 2011).

Carr (2006) described the current high-stakes environment of school districts directly related to the role of the superintendent and hiring the right public relations professional. According to Carr, many school districts in the United States have employed public relations professionals to conduct many aspects of school communications. Carr (2006) also quoted Edward Moor, an Associate Executive Director of the National School Public Relations Association: “The ideal person needs to be the kind of critical thinker who can envision and create a strategic approach to communications programming”. Peterson et al. (2009) remarked that superintendents face a multitude of complex issues competing for their focus and attention. Working conditions of superintendents were surveyed and focused on 11 factors impacting the role of the superintendent, which included media relations. Superintendents were asked to rank the top five most pertinent issues impacting their job effectiveness. The number one factor identified was interpersonal relations skills. Also surveyed was the request to rank the top areas needed for personal professional development. The number one identified professional development training area was “budgeting”. Public relations and communication was identified as number six (out of 11) professional development training needs in order to increase superintendents’ effectiveness.

McClellan, Ivory, & Dominguez (2008) conducted a study of 50 United States superintendents across seven states. This study revealed three overarching themes emerging in the field of the superintendency: 1) leading through and with others, 2) relational communication with others in order to gain shared perspectives, and 3) relational mentoring with others. This study also revealed implications for practicing superintendents regarding shifting communication styles and expectations of superintendents. In the 19th century, Superintendents were expected to demonstrate a style of leadership marked by actively directing, inspiring,

training, and advising others to a movement in the 21st century of an expectation of a more open communication style which is less authoritarian with an increase in active listening. McClellan et al. (2008) described a relational leader as one who focused more on the fluid and collaborative attributes of communication rather than focusing on a dominant communication style directed by “vested authority” of position.

The American Association of School Administrators 2010 Decennial Study on The American Superintendent reported that as superintendents become more familiar with media coverage; they may view the media either as an asset or as a liability (Kowalski et al., 2011). The results of this 2010 study found that 54.1% of respondents viewed the media as a major or minor asset, and 25.6% reported they viewed the media as “neither an asset nor a liability”.

Superintendents employed in larger districts of 25,000 + pupils were found to be nearly three times as likely to respond that the media was seen as a “minor or major liability” than were the smallest districts with less than 300 pupils.

School public relations-politics can become even more evident when superintendents attempt to implement any educational reform. Allison & Shumacher (2011) examined a case study where a single issue community group took over the dialogue of reform through intimidation. In this case study, small-group resistance resulted in the school board’s dismissal of the superintendent. The superintendent, skilled in change and reform utilizing scientific research, presented data that supported the sleep needs of high school students and proposed a 30 minute later start time for high school students. Allison & Shumacher (2011) reported that the sleep research was backed by not only the National Sleep Foundation, but also the University of Minnesota and Brown University School of Medicine. The superintendent utilized the public media to include dialogue during formal meetings with local news media editors. The

superintendent's proposal faced strong opposition from several small well-organized groups of parents of student athletes who opposed the change in the practice schedule. The news media caught the story and picked up on and focused on reports of aggressive and angry parents. The news media focused on the school board meetings which were illuminated with hostile public parent resistance which was reported by the news media.

Boncana & Lopez (2010) described implications for school districts in dealing with community relations. The authors discussed how parent involvement in school relations is a driving force which has a strong impact on school-community relations. Parenting behaviors impact the school when parents must be physically present to assist in school related activities. School districts have a role in creating a formal process for home-school relations with parents and guardians. The authors asserted that when parents are viewed as "assets" to this partnership and are given the opportunity to speak openly with school officials, the partnership becomes stronger, richer and more sustainable. Kracke (2009) depicted a Director of Community Relations who worked in a medium-sized suburban school district in Minnesota. The school district encompassed four suburban communities with an enrollment of 8,700 students. The Director of Community Relations reported directly to the superintendent and served on the superintendent's cabinet. The person in this position was a key advisor to the superintendent in all matters related to school public relations and, in addition, advised and supported the school board, district office administrators, and school principals in all matters related to communications issues.

Superintendents need to be aware of public response to closed-session discussions and possible leaks. One strategy for handling leaks to the media is proactively listing key talking points and preparing press releases in advance. Proactive preparation allows for the school

district to frame the issue from their perspective and can increase their credibility. Carr (2009) listed transparency and honesty as essential elements when handling media leaks.

Superintendents often rely on school public relations professionals for daily operational communication and during emergency situations. Immediate parental notification is critical in school emergency situations (Downing, 2011). School crisis response plans include mass notification services which are pre-planned strategic modes of disseminating information to stakeholders which include automated phone calls, e-mail blasts, texts, and news media reporting.

Carr (2006) described the current high-stakes environment of school districts directly related to the role of the superintendent and the importance of hiring the “right” public relations professional. Kearney and Matthews (2007) described a situation where a superintendent was faced with a negative situation in the school district related to an employee’s questionable finance practices. The news media got wind of the story and requested an interview with the superintendent based on questioning and justification of expenditures for conference stays. A news story was then printed which raised ethical questions about school district educational conference expenditures. Ethical concerns were raised because the cost of hotel rooms booked for the conference were for board members which were much higher than the average expense typically incurred by the school district. The news story spread and gained momentum. The state governor requested a statewide audit of public schools above and beyond the standard audit required by law. In this case, a local news media story had a broad impact which resulted in statewide implications for financial audits of educational spending practices. According to the literature, the evolving role of the superintendent will require one in this position to demonstrate competent skills in communications, strategizing and managing media relations, a high level of

self-awareness about the impact of the media, including how to be as transparent as possible appropriate to situations (LaFee, 2009; Ogle et al., 2003; Orr, 2007).

Public school superintendents have many roles and responsibilities in the 21st century educational environment. Superintendents must be skilled in working with many stakeholders including school board members. An effective and healthy school board who works well with each other leads to a higher possibility of an effective school board-superintendent relationship (Grissom & Andersen, 2012).

According to the literature, the leadership paradigm of the superintendent possesses many external pressures which are open to public criticism. Inhibitors for job success and pressures are discussed which include: rapidly changing community and student demographics, increased political activism, governance issues, increased accountability measures, school board difficulty, dissatisfaction in community, isolation, and generalized job stress (Harris et al., 2004; Trevino, Braley, Stallone Brown, & Slate, 2008).

Closing Literature Review Summary

Several major themes emerged in the literature surrounding public relations, media coverage and the role of superintendents. The major themes identified by this writer include: 1) historical and current role of school superintendents, 2) communications styles of superintendents, 3) news media coverage of education and lastly, 4) public relations competencies of superintendents.

The literature suggests that news media can influence not only personal opinion but also influence one's perception of other's opinions (Gunther, 1998). The role of the school superintendent has evolved over the past decade to include intense scrutiny by the news media (Kowalski et al., 2011).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of the study focused on Minnesota school superintendents' perceptions of the impact of intense media scrutiny and relations with communication media in general on their sense of influence, length of tenure and professional aspirations regarding their profession. Specific aspects of the role of the superintendent were analyzed related to the impact of information and news media on the influence, tenure, and professional aspirations of the school superintendent.

Research Questions

The research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent does the media culture affect the superintendent's leadership success and perception of one's ability to influence and impact the organization?
2. To what extent does the media culture impact the professional tenure (longevity) and career of school superintendents?
3. To what extent does the media culture affect the professional aspirations of school superintendents?

Pilot Study

A pilot group was selected from Minnesota School Superintendents who are MASA members. This pilot group was asked to complete the survey instrument and provide feedback prior to the launch of the study. A pilot group of five school superintendents were e-mailed a link to the survey instrument with space for comments and feedback. The five superintendents who were a part of the pilot study will not be solicited for the actual research study.

Design

The research study is a mixed method combination of quantitative and qualitative method. This mixed methodology will be used in order to gain a deeper level of understanding into the superintendent experience. The qualitative nature of this study allows for a more a greater depth of inquiry. This mixed method approach will utilize a QUAN-QUAL model where the quantitative data (electronic survey instrument) will be collected first and the qualitative data will be collected last (Gay et al., 2012).

The proposed method for the study is to develop an electronic survey as a quantitative method to analyze responses from a large sample of school superintendents in Minnesota. The survey questions were developed based upon a literature review of past studies of school superintendents. Specific areas of job role and function were examined to include responsibilities, tenure, impact of media culture, and job stress. The methodology will include a qualitative method using a follow-up interview protocol of three school superintendents. The interviews will take place after the due date for participants' submission of the electronic survey. The electronic survey will include a final question asking if the respondent would be willing to be contacted for a follow-up interview. In order to keep survey responses private and anonymous, my personal e-mail will be listed in order for the respondent to contact me separately from the survey.

Instrument Development

Survey instrument. In developing the survey questions, the American Association of School Administrators 2010 study of American School Superintendents was consulted addressing particular areas of interest to superintendents in regard to public relations. The Survey Monkey® instrument will be utilized to develop a survey tool and gather survey data.

The instrument items were developed from a comprehensive study of research literature focused on the roles and responsibilities of school superintendents. The main focus of the literature review was on the impact of news media/media culture on the influence, tenure, and professional aspirations of school superintendents. The below survey questions were developed in order to gather pertinent information to answer the previously identified research questions.

Table 1
Summary Table of Survey Instrument Questions
(survey instrument inserted at the end of chapter three)

Survey Question	Literature Citation-Relevance to Study	Relevance to Research Questions
Q1. I believe that news media and social media have an impact on the outcome of major school improvement efforts.	Anderson (2007) Christen & Huberty (2007)	1. influence
Q2. In my experience the news media and social media has a more favorable or unfavorable slant on my school district.	Carr (2006)	1. influence
Q3. I believe that news media slant (bias) has an impact on major school board decisions.	Anderson (2007) Christen & Huberty	1. influence
Q4. Responding to, or engaging with, news information and social media distract me from completing other job duties.	Anderson (2007) Carr (2006)	1. influence
Q5. I feel confident in my ability to communicate effectively using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites when responding to my constituents.	Andrew & Caren (2010) Boyd & Ellison (2008)	1. influence
Q6. I believe that the news information and social media directly impact my ability to lead my school district in the direction that I have envisioned and shared with staff.	Gerstl-Pepin (2002) Ginsberg & Multan (2011)	3. aspirations
Q7. I am hesitant to engage with the public via Facebook, Twitter or other similar social media sites.	Andrew & Caren (2010) Boyd & Ellison (2008)	1. influence
Q8. I think that news information and social media adversely impact my reputation as a Superintendent.	Anderson (2007) Jenkins (2007)	3. aspirations
Q9. News information and social media positively impact the reputation and operations of my school district.	Anderson (2007) Jenkins (2007)	1. influence
Q10. News Information and social media negatively impact the reputation and operations of my school district.	Anderson (2007) Kowalski (2005) Jenkins (2007)	1. influence
Q11. The nature of slant or bias of news information and social media coverage of my	Goldstein (2010) Killeen (2007)	3. aspirations

school district impacts my job satisfaction.		
Q12. I worry about public comments on Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites regarding school matters or decision I made.	Andrew & Caren (2010) Boyd & Ellison (2008)	3. aspirations
Q13. The heightened scrutiny by news information and social media hinder my efforts to achieve personal or professional goals.	Harris, et al (2004) Hawk & Martin (2011)	3. aspirations
Q14. The lack of support from news information and social media outlets impacts my desire to remain in the field.	Eaton & Sharp (1996) Grissom & Anderson (2012) Trevino, et al (2008)	2. tenure
Q15. The level of stress I experience with news information and social media impacts my desire to remain in the field.	Hawk & Martin (2011) Metzger (1997) Wells (2013)	2. tenure
Q16. If I am unable to effectively make changes in my school district, then it is unlikely that I will remain in my current position.	Eaton & Sharp (1996) Grissom & Anderson (2012) Trevino, et al (2008)	2. tenure
Q17. If I am unable to make a positive difference in my school district, then it is unlikely that I will remain in the field.	Eaton & Sharp (1996) Grissom & Anderson (2012) Trevino, et al (2008)	2. tenure
Q18. Despite the heightened scrutiny by news information and social media, I intend to remain in the Superintendency until retirement.	Boyd & Ellison (2008) Metzger (1997) Wells (2013)	2. tenure
Q19. The heightened scrutiny by news information and social media has no impact on my plans to either remain in, or exit, the Superintendency.	Boyd & Ellison (2008) Metzger (1997) Wells (2013)	2. tenure
Q20. (Survey of local news media sources)		
Q21. My tenure (longevity) in my current position has an impact on my engagement with the community and stakeholders.	Fullan (2005) Johnson (2009)	2. Tenure
Q22. Heightened media scrutiny could impact my decision to change job positions or make a change to a different school district.	Anderson (2007) Christen & Huberty (2007)	3. aspirations
Q23. How do you perceive your relationship with the local news media?	Carr (2009) Christen & Huberty (2007) Levin (2004)	1. influence
Q24. Strong negative or positive media bias has influenced my decision-making ability. Such as whether or not I should bring a proposal to the school board.	Gunther (1998) Haas (2007)	1. influence

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol will be comprised of four questions based on the research of Kowalski et al. (2011). These qualitative study questions will include a set of probing follow-up

questions, when appropriate. Participants will be asked to agree to have interviews audio-taped for analysis purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity practices of interview participants will be followed.

1. When did you aspire to become a superintendent? In light of the intense public and media scrutiny associated with the position of a school superintendent, did you feel dissuaded or intimidated in your pursuit of a superintendency position?
2. In your current role as a superintendent, describe how you experience the impact and influence of the information media personally and professionally?
3. Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a limiting factor (road block) on your ability to influence and implement desired outcomes such as the district strategic mission, action steps, changes to curriculum, technology practices, school boundary changes, or other action?
4. Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a factor in *your* desire to stay in the position of the superintendency?
5. Do you have any additional comments?

Data Analysis

The research study is a mixed method combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. This methodology allows the researcher to gain a greater level of understanding than utilizing only a quantitative method (Gay et al., 2012). The qualitative nature of this study allows for a deeper level of inquiry and potential for meaningful descriptive analysis.

Seidman (2012) described the use of transcript analysis as a method to analyze and code interview data. Interview data from this study will be coded using a method of outlining responses into categories or emerging themes. A method of review, comparison, and grouping will be used to compare emerging themes. Gay et al. (2012) described one qualitative research

approach as phenomenology which asks the key question gaining insight into a particular participant's unique perspective of their experience of an activity. This qualitative approach of phenomenology will be used at the conclusion of the quantitative study to gain a deeper understanding of participant's unique experiences.

The demographic data will be analyzed as nominal data. The remaining survey instrument questions on a likert scale will be analyzed using interval data analysis. The primary data analysis technique of this study will be a descriptive technique. Data disaggregation will be used when possible. Calculations will be used to describe the data set in more formal analysis. A frequency distribution table will be used to organize survey results by categories. Data Analysis will include descriptions of percent distribution of results.

Summary

This chapter addressed methods to be used in a descriptive study of research results on school superintendents' perceptions regarding the impact of media culture on the influence, tenure, and their professional aspirations. The study will use data collected through the use of an electronic survey tool utilizing Survey Monkey ®. The participants of the study will be superintendents in the state of Minnesota. The procedures to conduct the survey will be to initially interview a small sample of superintendents in order to develop relevant questions and to pilot the survey. The development of the survey instrument questions included an interview with two school superintendents for guidance on readability and relevance of survey questions and to gain an improved perspective of the potential study. The study will involve the assistance of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators in order to obtain a contact list of superintendents and to gather informational advice.

Dissertation Instrument Survey Questions (Quantitative):

Q1. I believe that news media and social media have an impact on the outcome of major school improvement efforts.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q2. In my experience the news media and social media has a more favorable or unfavorable slant of my school district.

Very Unfavorable	Unfavorable	Somewhat Unfavorable	Somewhat Favorable	Favorable	Very Favorable
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Q3. I believe that news media slant (bias) has an impact on major school board decisions.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q4. Responding to, or engaging with, news information and social media distract me from completing other job duties.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q5. I feel confident in my ability to communicate effectively using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites when responding to my constituents.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q6. I believe that the news information and social media directly impact my ability to lead my school district in the direction that I have envisioned and shared with staff.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q7. I am hesitant to engage with the public via Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q8. I think that news information and social media adversely impact my reputation as a Superintendent.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q9. News information and social media positively impact the reputation and operations of my school district.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q10. News information and social media negatively impact the reputation and operations of my school district.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q11. The nature of slant or bias of news information and social media coverage of my school district impacts my job satisfaction.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q12. I worry about public comments on Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites regarding school matters or decisions I made.

Never	Mostly Never	Rarely	Somewhat Often	Mostly Often	Very Often
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Q13. The heightened scrutiny by news information and social media hinder my efforts to achieve personal or professional goals.

Never	Mostly Never	Rarely	Somewhat Often	Mostly Often	Very Often
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Q14. The lack of support from news information and social media outlets impacts my desire to remain in the field.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q15. The level of stress I experience with news information and social media impacts my desire to remain in the field.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q16. If I am unable to effectively make changes in my school district, then it is unlikely that I will remain in my current position.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q17. If I am unable to make a positive difference in my school district, then it is unlikely that I will remain in the field.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q18. Despite the heightened scrutiny by news information and social media, I intend to remain in the Superintendency until retirement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q19. The heightened scrutiny by news information and social media has no impact on my plans to either remain in, or exit, the Superintendentcy.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q20. Please describe what your local news media looks like. Check all that apply.

Answer Choices
Local (in community) news television
1-2 community newspapers
No local newspaper
County newspaper (nearby community)
County television (nearby community)
Several newspaper and television outlets in area
Reliable accessibility to internet
Unreliable accessibility to internet

Q21. My tenure (longevity) in my current position has an impact on my engagement with the community and stakeholders.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q22. Heightened media scrutiny could impact my decision to change job positions or make a change to a different school district.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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Q23. How do you perceive your relationship with the local news media?

Very Difficult	Difficult	Somewhat Difficult	Somewhat Positive	Positive	Very Positive
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Q24. Strong negative or positive media bias has influenced my decision-making ability. Such as whether or not I should bring a proposal to the school board.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

Follow-up Qualitative Study-Interview Questions:

1. When did you aspire to become a superintendent? In light of the intense public and media scrutiny associated with the position of a school superintendent, did you feel dissuaded or intimidated in your pursuit of a superintendency position?
2. In your current role as a superintendent, describe how you experience the impact and influence of the information media personally and professionally?
3. Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a limiting factor (road block) on your ability to influence and implement desired outcomes such as the district strategic mission, action steps, changes to curriculum, technology practices, school boundary changes, or other action?
4. Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a factor in *your* desire to stay in the position of the superintendency?
5. Do you have any additional comments?

Chapter 4: Findings

The study focused on Minnesota school superintendents and the impact of media culture on the profession of the superintendency in regard to influence, tenure, and professional aspirations. The study was conducted by analyzing data from a 24-item survey instrument. A basic descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on instrument item responses. In addition, descriptive narrative results are provided from follow-up interviews of three current school superintendents.

The problem of the study examined the impact of the media culture on the perceptions and role of the Minnesota school superintendent. For the purpose of this study, media culture included information news media and social media.

Chapter Four is divided into two sections: basic descriptive data and qualitative results. Descriptive results for each response item are displayed in summary form and by item. Interview results are provided following the instrument analysis.

The research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent does the media culture affect the superintendent's leadership success and perception of one's ability to influence and impact the organization?
2. To what extent does the media culture impact the professional tenure (longevity) and career of school superintendents?
3. To what extent does the media culture affect the professional aspirations of school superintendents?

Descriptive Results Survey Instrument

The survey instrument used was a Likert-type scale with a range from 1 to 6: Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Somewhat Disagree=3, Somewhat Agree=4, Agree=5, Strongly Agree=6. Other instrument items included “Check all that Apply” and were reported as frequency counts.

The summary data presented below depict percentage score ratings and frequency counts for 23 of the 24 superintendent perception survey items. For interpretation purposes, 23 item results were initially analyzed by splitting the six-point Likert scale in half and collapsing into two “agree” and “disagree” column categories (See Table 2, Summary of Combined Results). The results are clustered by Likert type scale.

*Table 2
Summary Table of Combined Results: 24-Item Six Point Likert Scale Instrument*

Item	“Agree”		“Disagree”	
	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
Q1. I believe that news media and social media have an impact on the outcome of major school improvement efforts.	91.96%	80	8.05%	7
Q3. I believe that news media slant (bias) has an impact on major school board decisions.	75.86%	66	24.13%	21
Q4. Responding to, or engaging with, news information and social media distract me from completing other job duties.	59.77%	52	40.23%	35
Q5. I feel confident in my ability to communicate effectively using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites when responding to my constituents.	58.63%	51	41.38%	36
Q6. I believe that the news information and social media directly impact my ability to lead my school district in the direction that I have envisioned and shared with staff.	66.27%	57	33.71%	29
Q7. I am hesitant to engage with the public via Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites	62.79%	54	37.22%	32

Q8. I think that news information and social media adversely impact my reputation as a Superintendent.	40.69%	35	59.3%	51
Q9. News information and social media positively impact the reputation and operations of my school district.	72.1%	62	27.91%	24
Q10. News information and social media negatively impact the reputation and operations of my school district.	41.86%	36	58.14%	50
Q11. The nature of slant or bias of news information and social media coverage of my school district impacts my job satisfaction.	68.61%	59	31.4%	27
Q14. The lack of support from news information and social media outlets impacts my desire to remain in the field.	27.91%	24	72.1%	62
Q15. The level of stress I experience with news information and social media impacts my desire to remain in the field.	41.87%	36	58.13%	50
Q16. If I am unable to effectively make changes in my school district, then it is unlikely that I will remain in my current position	83.72%	72	16.27%	14
Q17. If I am unable to make a positive difference in my school district, then it is unlikely that I will remain in the field.	62.79%	54	37.21%	32
Q18. Despite the heightened scrutiny by news information and social media, I intend to remain in the superintendency until retirement.	94.18%	81	5.81%	5
Q19. The heightened scrutiny by news information and social media has no impact on my plans to either remain in, or exit, the superintendency.	74.42%	64	25.58%	22
Q21. My tenure (longevity) in my current position has an impact on my engagement with the community and stakeholders.	89.53%	77	10.47%	9
Q22. Heightened media scrutiny could impact my decision to change job positions or make a change to a different school district.	59.3%	51	40.69%	35
Q24. Strong negative or positive media bias has influenced my decision-making ability, such as whether or not I should bring a proposal to the school board.	26.74%	23	73.26%	63
	“Favorable”		“Unfavorable”	
	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
Q2. In my experience the news media and social media have a more	77.01%	67	22.99%	20

favorable or unfavorable slant of my school district.				
	“Often”		“Never”	
	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
Q12. I worry about public comments on Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites regarding school matters or decisions I made.	55.81%	48	44.19%	38
Q13. The heightened scrutiny by news information and social media hinder my efforts to achieve personal or professional goals.	33.72%	29	66.27%	57
	“Positive”		“Difficult”	
	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency
Q23. How do you perceive your relationship with the local news media?	94.14%	81	5.81%	5

The results were analyzed based on highest and lowest percentages and combined below in the description of item survey results. The survey response rate was 28%. E-mail requests were distributed to 300 potential participants who were listed as current school superintendents in the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) membership directory. Eighty-seven responses were received.

The findings are summarized as related to research questions:

Survey Questions Aligned with Research Question 1	Survey Questions Aligned with Research Question 2	Survey Questions Aligned with Research Question 3
Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5, Q7, Q9, Q10, Q23, Q24	Q14, Q15, Q16, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q21	Q6, Q8, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q22

Research Question 1: To what extent does the media culture affect the superintendent's leadership success and perception of one's ability to influence and impact the organization?

Q1. I believe that news media and social media have an impact on the outcome of major school improvement efforts.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
2.30%	2.30%	3.45%	29.89%	37.93%	24.14%		
2	2	3	26	33	21	87	4.71
Maximum 6.00	Median 5.00	Mean 4.71	Standard Deviation 1.08				

In item one, 33 out of 87 respondents (37.9%) indicated that they believed that news media and social media have an impact on the outcome of major school improvement efforts. Three respondents strongly disagreed (3.45%); twenty-one respondents (24.14%) strongly agreed. When combining all categories of agreement, 80 respondents agreed (92%), and 7 respondents disagreed (8.1%) that the news media and social media have an impact on the outcome of major school improvement efforts. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q2. In my experience the news media and social media have a more favorable or unfavorable slant of my school district.

Very Unfavorable (1)	Unfavorable (2)	Somewhat Unfavorable (3)	Somewhat Favorable (4)	Favorable (5)	Very Favorable (6)	Total	Weighted Average
5.75%	5.75%	11.49%	31.03%	39.08%	6.90%		
5	5	10	27	34	6	87	4.13
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 4.13	Standard Deviation 1.23				

In item two, 34 out of 87 total respondents (39.1%) reported their perception that the news media and social media had a favorable or unfavorable bias or slant regarding their school districts. Five respondents indicated very unfavorable (5.8%); six respondents (6.9%) indicated very favorable. When analyzing the scale split responses, 67 respondents (77%) were in agreement of a favorable slant, and 20 respondents (23%) reported an overall unfavorable slant. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q3. I believe that news media slant (bias) has an impact on major school board decisions.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
0.00%	11.49%	12.64%	43.68%	21.84%	10.34%	87	4.07
0	10	11	38	19	9		
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 4.07	Standard Deviation 1.10				

In item three, 38 out of 87 total respondents (44%) indicated they somewhat agreed that news media slant (bias) had an impact on major school board decisions. Zero respondents strongly disagreed (0.00%); nine respondents (10.3%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split responses, 66 respondents or 75.9% were in agreement and 21 respondents (24.1%) were in

disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q4. Responding to, or engaging with, news information and social media distract me from completing other job duties.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
4.60% 4	16.09% 14	19.54% 17	33.33% 29	18.39% 16	8.05% 7	87	3.69
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.69	Standard Deviation 1.29				

In item four, 29 out of 87 total respondents (33.3%) indicated they somewhat agreed that responding to, or engaging with, news information and social media was distracting. Four respondents strongly disagreed (4.6%); seven respondents (8.05%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split responses, 52 respondents (59.8%) were in overall agreement and 35 respondents (40.2%) were in disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q5. I feel confident in my ability to communicate effectively using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites when responding to my constituents.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
5.75% 5	19.54% 17	16.09% 14	22.99% 20	28.74% 25	6.90% 6	87	3.70
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.70	Standard Deviation 1.39				

In item five, 25 out of 87 total respondents (29%) agreed that they felt confident in their ability to communicate effectively using Facebook, Twitter, and other social media sites when

responding to their constituents. Five respondents strongly disagreed (5.75%); six respondents (6.90%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 51 respondents (58.63%) were in overall agreement, and 36 respondents (41.38%) were in disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q7. I am hesitant to engage with the public via Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
10.47% 9	16.28% 14	10.47% 9	20.93% 18	22.09% 19	19.77% 17	86	3.87
Minimum 1.00	Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.87	Standard Deviation 1.64			

In item seven, 19 out of 86 total respondents (22%) indicated they agreed that they are hesitant to engage with the public via Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites. Nine respondents strongly disagreed (10.47%); seventeen respondents (19.77%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 54 respondents (62.79%) were in overall agreement, and 32 respondents (37.22%) were in disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q9. News information and social media positively impact the reputation and operations of my school district.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
3.49% 3	8.14% 7	16.28% 14	41.86% 36	19.77% 17	10.47% 9	86	3.98
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.98	Standard Deviation 1.19				

In item nine, 36 out of 86 total respondents (41.86%) indicated they somewhat agreed that news information and social media positively impact the reputation and operations of their school districts. Three respondents strongly disagreed (3.5%); nine respondents (10.5%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 62 respondents (72%) were in overall agreement, and 24 respondents (27.91 %) were in disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q10. News information and social media negatively impact the reputation and operations of my school district.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
6.98% 6	20.93% 18	30.23% 26	29.07% 25	6.98% 6	5.81% 5	86	3.26
Maximum 6.00	Median 3.00	Mean 3.26	Standard Deviation 1.23				

In item ten, 26 out of 86 total respondents (30.23%) indicated that they somewhat disagreed with the statement that news information and social media negatively impact the reputations and operations of their school districts. Six respondents strongly disagreed (7%); five respondents (5.81%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 36 respondents (41.86%) were in overall agreement, and 50 respondents (58.14%) were in disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q23. How do you perceive your relationship with the local news media?

Very Difficult (1)	Difficult (2)	Somewhat Difficult (3)	Somewhat Positive (4)	Positive (5)	Very Positive (6)	Total	Weighted Average
1.16% 1	0.00% 0	4.65% 4	17.44% 15	43.02% 37	33.72% 29	86	5.02
Maximum 6.00	Median 5.00	Mean 5.02	Standard Deviation 0.94				

In item twenty-three, 37 out of 86 total respondents (43%) indicated they perceived their relationships with the local news media as positive. One respondent indicated very difficult (1.16%); 29 respondents (33.72%) indicated very positive. When analyzing the scale split in half, 81 respondents (94.18%) responded an overall range of positive, and 5 respondents (5.81%) reported an overall range of difficult. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q24. Strong negative or positive media bias has influenced my decision-making ability, such as whether or not I should bring a proposal to the school board.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
18.60% 16	44.19% 38	10.47% 9	17.44% 15	9.30% 8	0.00% 0	86	2.55
Maximum 5.00	Median 2.00	Mean 2.55	Standard Deviation 1.24				

In item twenty-four, 38 out of 86 total respondents (44.19%) indicated they disagreed that strong negative or positive media bias had influenced their decision-making abilities, such as whether or not they brought a proposal to the school board. Sixteen respondents strongly disagreed (18.6%); zero respondents (0.0%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 63 respondents (73.26%) were in overall disagreement, and 23 respondents (26.74%) were in overall agreement. (See Summary Table 2 of Combined Results.)

Research Question 2: To what extent does the media culture impact the professional tenure (longevity) and career of school superintendents?

Q14. The lack of support from news information and social media outlets impacts my desire to remain in the field.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
19.77% 17	29.07% 25	23.26% 20	15.12% 13	9.30% 8	3.49% 3	86	2.76
Maximum 6.00	Median 3.00	Mean 2.76	Standard Deviation 1.36				

In item fourteen, 25 out of 86 total respondents (29%) indicated disagreement that the lack of support from news information and social media outlets impacted their desire to remain in the field. Seventeen respondents strongly disagreed (19.77%); three respondents (3.49%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 62 respondents (72%) were in overall disagreement, and 24 respondents (27.91%) were in overall agreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q15. The level of stress I experience with news information and social media impacts my desire to remain in the field.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
18.60% 16	34.88% 30	4.65% 4	23.26% 20	15.12% 13	3.49% 3	86	2.92
Maximum 6.00	Median 2.00	Mean 2.92	Standard Deviation 1.50				

In item fifteen, 30 out of 86 total respondents (34.88%) indicated they disagreed that the level of stress they experienced with news information and social media impacted their desire to remain in the field. Sixteen respondents strongly disagreed (18.6%); three respondents (3.49%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 50 respondents (58.13%) were in overall disagreement, and 36 respondents (41.87%) were in overall agreement. (See Table of Combined

Results.)

Q16. If I am unable to effectively make changes in my school district, then it is unlikely that I will remain in my current position.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
1.16% 1	5.81% 5	9.30% 8	26.74% 23	40.70% 35	16.28% 14	86	4.49
Maximum 6.00	Median 5.00	Mean 4.49	Standard Deviation 1.12				

In item sixteen, 35 out of 86 total respondents (40.7%) indicated they agreed that if they were unable to effectively make changes in their school districts, then it would be unlikely that they would remain in their current positions. One respondent strongly disagreed (1.16%); fourteen respondents (16.28%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 72 respondents (83.72%) were in overall agreement and 14 respondents (16.27%) were in disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q17. If I am unable to make a positive difference in my school district, then it is unlikely that I will remain in the field.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
5.81% 5	16.28% 14	15.12% 13	22.09% 19	23.26% 20	17.44% 15	86	3.93
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.93	Standard Deviation 1.50				

In item seventeen, 20 out of 86 total respondents (23.26%) indicated they agreed that if they were unable to make positive differences in their school districts, then it would be unlikely

that they would remain in the field. Five respondents strongly disagreed (5.81%); fifteen respondents (17.44%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 54 respondents (62.79%) were in overall agreement, and 32 respondents (37.12%) were in overall disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q18. Despite the heightened scrutiny by news information and social media, I intend to remain in the superintendency until retirement.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
1.16%	0.00%	4.65%	17.44%	37.21%	39.53%	86	5.08
1	0	4	15	32	34		
Maximum 6.00	Median 5.00	Mean 5.08	Standard Deviation 0.97				

In item eighteen, 34 out of 86 total respondents (39.53%) indicated they strongly agreed that despite the heightened scrutiny by news information and social media, they intended to remain in the superintendency until retirement. One respondent strongly disagreed (1.16%); thirty-four respondents (39.53%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 81 respondents (94.18%) were in overall agreement, and 5 respondents (5.81%) were in overall disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q19. The heightened scrutiny by news information and social media has no impact on my plans to either remain in, or exit, the superintendency.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
0.00% 0	5.81% 5	19.77% 17	19.77% 17	32.56% 28	22.09% 19	86	4.45
Maximum 6.00	Median 5.00	Mean 4.45	Standard Deviation 1.20				

In item nineteen, 28 out of 86 total respondents (32.56%) indicated they agreed that the heightened scrutiny by news information and social media had no impact on their plans to either remain in, or exit, the superintendency. Zero respondents strongly disagreed (0.0%); nineteen respondents (22.09%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 64 respondents (74.42%) were in overall agreement, and 22 respondents (25.58%) were in overall disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q21. My tenure (longevity) in my current position has an impact on my engagement with the community and stakeholders.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
2.33% 2	6.98% 6	1.16% 1	20.93% 18	41.86% 36	26.74% 23	86	4.73
Maximum 6.00	Median 5.00	Mean 4.73	Standard Deviation 1.20				

In item twenty-one, 36 out of 86 total respondents (41.86%) indicated they agreed that their tenure (longevity) in their current positions had an impact on their engagement with the community and stakeholders. Two respondents strongly disagreed (2.33%); twenty-three respondents (26.74%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 77 respondents (89.53%) were in overall agreement, and 9 respondents (10.47%) were in overall disagreement.

(See Table of Combined Results.)

Research Question 3: To what extent does the media culture affect the professional aspirations of school superintendents?

Q6. I believe that the news information and social media directly impact my ability to lead my school district in the direction that I have envisioned and shared with staff.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
1.16% 1	13.95% 12	18.60% 16	38.37% 33	22.09% 19	5.81% 5	86	3.84
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.84	Standard Deviation 1.13				

For item six, 33 out of 86 respondents (38.37%) indicated they somewhat agreed that the news information and social media directly impacted their ability to lead. One respondent (1.16%) strongly disagreed; five respondents (5.81%) strongly agreed. Analyzing split halves, 2 out of 3 (66.27%) were in agreement that news information and social media impacted their leadership. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q8. I think that news information and social media adversely impact my reputation as a superintendent.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
5.81% 5	30.23% 26	23.26% 20	20.93% 18	13.95% 12	5.81% 5	86	3.24
Maximum 6.00	Median 3.00	Mean 3.24	Standard Deviation 1.33				

In item eight, 26 out of 86 total respondents (30.23%) indicated they disagreed that news

information and social media adversely impacted their reputations as superintendents. Five respondents strongly disagreed (5.81%); five respondents (5.81%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 35 respondents (40.69%) were in overall agreement, and 51 respondents (59.3%) were in disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q11. The nature of slant or bias of news information and social media coverage of my school district impacts my job satisfaction.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
3.49% 3	15.12% 13	12.79% 11	36.05% 31	29.07% 25	3.49% 3	86	3.83
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.83	Standard Deviation 1.20				

In item eleven, 31 out of 86 total respondents (36.05%) indicated they somewhat agreed that the slant or bias of news information and social media coverage of their school district impacted their job satisfaction. Three respondents strongly disagreed (3.5%); three respondents (3.5%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 59 respondents (68.61%) were in overall agreement, and 27 respondents (31.4%) were in disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q12. I worry about public comments on Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites regarding school matters or decisions I made.

Never (1)	Mostly Never (2)	Rarely (3)	Somewhat Often (4)	Mostly Often (5)	Very Often (6)	Total	Weighted Average
4.65% 4	15.12% 13	24.42% 21	36.05% 31	13.95% 12	5.81% 5	86	3.57
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.57	Standard Deviation 1.21				

In item twelve, 31 out of 86 total respondents (36.05%) indicated they somewhat often worry about public comments on Facebook, Twitter, or other similar social media sites regarding school matters or decisions they made. Four respondents replied never (4.65%); five respondents (5.81%) replied very often. When analyzing the scale split in half, 48 respondents (55.81%) responded somewhat, mostly, to very often; and 38 respondents (44.19%) responded rarely, mostly never, or never worried. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q13. The heightened scrutiny from news information and social media hinders my efforts to achieve personal or professional goals.

Never (1)	Mostly Never (2)	Rarely (3)	Somewhat Often (4)	Mostly Often (5)	Very Often (6)	Total	Weighted Average
9.30% 8	22.09% 19	34.88% 30	24.42% 21	8.14% 7	1.16% 1	86	3.03
Maximum 6.00	Median 3.00	Mean 3.03	Standard Deviation 1.13				

In item thirteen, 30 out of 86 total respondents (34.88%) indicated that the heightened scrutiny by news information and social media rarely hindered their efforts to achieve personal or professional goals. Eight respondents responded never (9.3%); one respondent (1.16%) responded very often. When analyzing the scale split in half, 29 respondents (33.72%) responded somewhat often, mostly often or very often; fifty-seven respondents (66.27%) responded rarely,

mostly never, never. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q22. Heightened media scrutiny could impact my decision to change job positions or make a change to a different school district.

Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)	Total	Weighted Average
4.65% 4	26.74% 23	9.30% 8	34.88% 30	20.93% 18	3.49% 3	86	3.51
Maximum 6.00	Median 4.00	Mean 3.51	Standard Deviation 1.30				

In item twenty-two, 30 out of 86 total respondents (34.88%) indicated they somewhat agreed that heightened media scrutiny could impact their decisions to change job positions or to make a change to different school districts. Four respondents strongly disagreed (4.65%); three respondents (3.49%) strongly agreed. When analyzing the scale split in half, 51 respondents (59.3%) were in overall agreement, and 35 respondents (40.69%) were in overall disagreement. (See Table of Combined Results.)

Q20. Please describe what your local news media looks like. Check all that apply.

Answer Choices	Responses
Local (in community) news television	26.74% 23
1-2 community newspapers	90.70% 78
No local newspaper	1.16% 1
County newspaper (nearby community)	26.74% 23
County television (nearby community)	16.28% 14
Several newspaper and television outlets in area	31.40% 27
Reliable accessibility to internet	87.21% 75
	4.65%

Unreliable accessibility to internet	4
Total Respondents: 86	

Item 20 reports information which provided a description of the range of local news media across school districts. This item was included in this study in order to give the researcher and the reader a clearer understanding of the current state of news media across the respondents' experiences.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Open-ended interviews with three superintendents were conducted in March and April of 2015. Cover Letter and Consent Document (See Appendix A and Appendix B). Each interview began with a review of the Interview Protocol to re-establish the parameters of the interview. Dialogue was recorded on a cell phone audio recording set on a conference table in front of the interviewer and respondent. Respondents were given the choice of location for their interviews: One interview was conducted by phone, and two interviews were conducted in the superintendents' offices.

Respondent Profile:

The sample interviewed for the study included one female and two male superintendents. One superintendent was from a rural setting, and two superintendents were from the metro area. No information regarding the respondents' profiles was included in this summary to protect the identities of the respondents. Responses were summarized, followed by a summary of each interview transcript. In order to give the reader a more complete understanding of responses, the actual respondents' quotes were italicized.

Interview Questions

1. When did you aspire to become a superintendent? In light of the intense public and media scrutiny associated with the position of a school superintendent, did you feel dissuaded or intimidated in your pursuit of a superintendency position?
2. In your current role as superintendent, describe how you experience the impact and influence of the media culture personally and professionally?
3. Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a limiting factor (roadblock) on your ability to influence and implement desired outcomes such as the district strategic mission, action steps, changes to curriculum, technology practices, school boundary changes, or any other action?
4. Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a factor in *your* desire to stay in the position of the superintendency?
5. Do you have any additional comments?

Interview Results

Question 1: When did you aspire to become a superintendent? In light of the intense public and media scrutiny associated with the position of a school superintendent, did you feel dissuaded or intimidated in your pursuit of a superintendency position?

Question 1: Summary of Responses

One common theme that appeared in the responses was that none of the superintendents commented that they were dissuaded from pursuing the superintendency due to intense public and media scrutiny associated with the position of the school superintendent. All three superintendents described the importance of a professional mentor who encouraged them to pursue the superintendency. The interview responses indicated that media culture did not directly affect the professional aspirations of the superintendents interviewed. Although they

responded that they were aware of the impact and importance of the media culture, they did not allow it to dissuade them from aspiring to be committed to the profession of the superintendency.

Question 1: Summary of Interview Transcript

Superintendent A remarked he/she was involved with Aspire approximately 20 years ago. This organization of professionals was part of a professional administrative organization (MEEP) in the 1980s. Superintendent A remarked he/she enjoyed the staff development. Superintendent A left the state and was a union president for a teachers association, later deciding to return to administration. Superintendent A was not intimidated by media or social media when entering educational administration. In past positions, media presence was not perceived as intimidating.

Superintendent B obtained a superintendent's license in 2008-09 and was a school principal who aspired to be a superintendent. He/She "*was upwardly mobile.*" Superintendent B commented he/she was only looking for small districts and suspected it would be a different experience in a larger school district. Superintendent B intentionally only applied for positions in districts with fewer than 1,000 students. Superintendent B remarked he/she was less interested in focusing on larger complex school systems and focused on pursuing positions within smaller communities, in order to *celebrate more personal interaction with others where connections with the general public and staff were less mediated.* A professional mentor at the university level (professor) encouraged Superintendent B when transitioning from a non-public school setting to a public school system and also encouraged and supported him/her when obtaining superintendent licensure.

Superintendent C commented that *other leaders around me encouraged me to pursue the superintendency.* Superintendent C was a teacher leader, principal, curriculum director, and assistant superintendent before becoming a superintendent. Superintendent C found the job of

superintendent intriguing, and he/she wanted to influence school systems. When Superintendent C came to his/her interview for the superintendency position, the previous superintendent had resigned because of a person who was elected to the school board. Local and metro news media had set up a press table at school board meetings. When interviewing for the position, Superintendent C was informed and knew what was currently going on in the school district regarding media coverage. Superintendent C saw a *glimpse into the district of what they were looking for in the qualities of the next superintendent and thought he/she fit with what Superintendent C was looking for*. Superintendent C assumed the attitude of fixing issues and problems upon the start of his/her tenure with the *hopes that the press would die down*. Superintendent C found it helpful to *turn around and make the press a friend, lean into the district communications person and other members of cabinet, such as the business director and human resources director*. Early on in his/her tenure, Superintendent C found the importance of his/her administrative team. The school board needed to have one consistent message from the administration. Superintendent C found that he/she spent a lot time with two local newspapers. The newspaper editor was generous in providing positive school coverage, including *five or six articles in two newspapers*. Superintendent C remarked that *press is part of the job. What you do is public*. Superintendent C provided information for the newspaper editorial two times a week. *Anything you say will be quoted. Any comments get put in the paper. Reporters attend school board meetings. I went into the community to talk to parents who had questions about enrolling in public schools. Crisis turned into opportunities for marketing and selling the district to the public*. Superintendent C commented that *the press doesn't always use direct quotes. Ninety-nine% of the time you can tell your story in a positive way and the media will tell it that way*.

Question 2: In your current role as a superintendent, describe how you experience the impact and influence of the media culture personally and professionally?

Question 2: Summary of Responses

All three superintendents remarked that the position of superintendent is a very public position which has a large impact on their personal lives and actions. All commented that they were more careful regarding their public actions and understood that the position impacts their personal lives (privacy). All superintendents commented that working with the local news media in a positive manner can be an effective way of communicating the school district message to stakeholders. Professionally, all superintendents were knowledgeable in their relationships with the media, took time to get to know and examine the media culture in which they were immersed, and were proactive in utilizing all available tools to use media to the benefit of the school district. The superintendents also stated that they were active, not passive, participants in communicating the school district message to news and social media. The superintendents responded that working with the local news media was an effective method of communicating the school district message to stakeholders. All three superintendents responded that the media culture did have an impact on their leadership success or their ability to positively influence and impact their school districts (organizations).

Question 2: Summary of Interview Transcript

Superintendent A explained that having a lawyer review any potentially sensitive information before sharing it with the public is important. Superintendent A also commented that *having a Communications Director, or point person, to maintain the relationship with the media is extremely helpful. As a small district superintendent, you are the point person; in a larger district, a communications director is the point person. In a smaller district you may not have a*

defined person “who does what.” Superintendent A commented that a Communications Director can separate from the situation and be more process-oriented. *A typical school superintendent is not a trained journalist.* Superintendent A remarked that having a person working with the public that understands the school communications realm can be helpful to the superintendent and the school district. Superintendent A also recommended to *never fight your battles with the media.* In the position of superintendent, *your presence can be seen as magnified 100X because of that position. The position itself makes you think twice about what you do and who you know.* Superintendent A described himself/herself as more introverted and careful about choices. Superintendent A commented that the position itself affects your personal life and where you choose to socialize publicly.

Superintendent B reported he/she participated on a monthly radio show with a local small radio show for 20 minutes each month. The focus of the radio show is *banter and information* about district events. The small local newspaper provided a large amount of content covering school events. In fact, the editor and reporters of the local newspaper offered a weekly section dedicated to the school district. Superintendent B remarked that colleagues in large school districts comment that the difference in a small school district – compared to large districts – is that the *press is never your friend.* Superintendent B commented that *small districts seem like they are more warmly welcomed, receiving a higher level of respect than larger school districts.* Superintendent B shared that in his/her opinion small school districts are highlighted in the newspaper and are popular sections for parents and citizens of smaller communities. In Superintendent B’s district, the local newspaper accepts a column written by Superintendent B without editing. Superintendent B is not present on social media, noting that he/she is *personally not active on Facebook or Twitter.* He/She commented that Facebook and Twitter are not

popular in his/her district. Superintendent B commented he/she *thinks this is due to combined effects of everyone knowing each other – the local grapevine works.*

Superintendent B did use a LinkedIn (social media professional site) account. He/She noticed the use of social media professionally. In fact, while attending a superintendents' conference recently, he/she noticed the head of the organization tweeting positive comments regarding the conference speaker on Twitter. Superintendent B stated he/she saw social media as more common at meetings and speeches. His/ her staff are more focused on phones, tablets, and laptops, adding that it *seems funny – at a big professional conference with people focusing more on technology.* He/she continued *that one of the biggest things far more effective is actually talking to people, if I stopped taking notes while talking to someone. I listened to others and then took notes later. I gave people a sense of being listened to – by not taking notes. I made eye contact. I focused on the person. It varies a lot by individual. The younger more technical staff used technology during meetings and was less engaged in the meeting or topic.* He/She stressed the importance of being *reflective to data and analysis.* He/She also attended to the *“gut” and feelings conveyed by other people that are often masked in electronic communication and social media platforms. Emoticons are not a substitute for emotional part of communication. Nonverbals (in personal communication) are an important part of communicating.*

Superintendent C stated he/she blogs and tweets and also is on Facebook. Superintendent C communicated that he/she feels it is important to be a *marketing and technology integrationist.* Superintendent C actively watches and posts on Facebook. He/She has a *district Facebook page.* Superintendent C commented that when he/she was out in the community for work, he/she would post on school events. Superintendent C shared that he/she viewed his/her school district as a *large district but a “small” community where information passes quickly.* Superintendent C

stated he/she presented a public presence within the community, including involvement in the local Rotary and on the YMCA board. He/She was out in community at city halls, nursing homes, seeing his/her community as one that really believed in collaboration. The City Council asked Superintendent C to speak at a meeting, and he/she gladly accepted the request.

Superintendent C commented he/she recently had four interviews which were televised or taped with the background setting in the actual schools. The videos then rolled on the local cable city council TV channel. Superintendent C shared he/she held a *very public presence in the community*. *The first year here as superintendent in the fall, the voters passed a levy.* Superintendent C *worked hard on the “branding” department*. He/She had *just finished with a demographic committee* researching the district demographics. Superintendent C recognized the importance of using *blogs, Twitter, Facebook, and submitting articles in the local newspaper*. *The public and community stakeholder do read these forms of communication and pay attention.* *The job of the superintendent is very public.*

Superintendent C shared this learning: *No matter how minute or truthful information is – it will get out*. Superintendent C shared he/she had a very recent social media issue in his/her school district– a YouTube video posting by a parent went viral – with national and international attention. The incident did not occur during the school day or on school devices. However, TV shows and radio shows contacted the school district and wanted to interview the school administration. The district marketing and technology department coached district staff on how to respond appropriately to press requests. *The Assistant Superintendent kept to talking points and did not deter. The police were involved.* The administrative team *kept clear communications, specifically an open and clear line of communication with school board members, who will often get caught out in the community with questions. A quick text or e-mail*

to school board members to let them know updates can provide reassurance and help maintain clear communication to all.

In times of student deaths, urgent texts were sent to administration. It was better to communicate with staff by text. When looking at overall communication strategies, Superintendent C addressed the ever changing amount and ways we kept adding to our communication arsenal to get word out as quickly and clearly as possible. Many dynamics were at play all at the same time. Superintendent C commented that a direct line of command between the Superintendent and the Director of Communications and Manager of Technology was extremely important. In his/her opinion the school district manages best when all district administrators know when to talk to the press or media and what message they want to send out.

Superintendent C commented that many issues that happen in school districts can't be controlled regarding what is going to happen. However, you can control the message. In his/her practice he/she always does a de-briefing with the administrative team and asks 1) what could we do differently or better for next time? and 2) how do we better communicate with audience or community? Superintendent C summarized his/her observations about changes in news media and social media, commenting that e-mail or text blasts and newsletter are always going to be behind students, as they (students' social media posts) are out there way before the district's. He/she stressed that the district communication sent to parents have to have correct message not to get some in danger.

Superintendent C commented on recent changes in school technology: Five years ago, we said if you have a device, we will take it away. Now we will say if you have a device, here is the password. The reality is that the school district isn't much more aware of the multiple ways of communicating and learning. He/she sees a change in practices policies, adding that five years

ago, I would worry about how to use technology. Now I have more respect for students as responsible users of technology.

Question 3: Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a limiting factor (roadblock) on your ability to influence and implement desired outcomes, such as the district strategic mission, action steps, changes to curriculum, technology practices, school boundary changes, or other actions?

Question 3: Summary of Responses

While none of the superintendents reported viewing the media culture as a limiting factor or roadblock in their abilities to influence and implement desired outcomes, they did report that intense media scrutiny was certainly a factor to be managed. Two of the interviewed superintendents reported that having a strong communications director was beneficial. A superintendent in a smaller school district saw the news media as generally in favor of school district actions. In the smaller school district, the superintendent filled the role of the “communications director,” accepting responsibility for creating and maintaining positive relationships with the news media. In the smaller school district, social media was not a large factor in the day-to-day communications operations of the school district. In the larger school districts, however, the superintendents responded that it was important to keep abreast of all social media related to the school district and to engage with the public using social media in a proactive manner.

Question 3: Summary of Interview Transcript

Superintendent A doesn't view media scrutiny as a limiting factor, indicating that *if you work with media, it can work with you. The newspaper needed to understand what school district administrators were going to do, and how they were going to do the work. The*

newspaper staff knew ahead of time, and the district was proactive in releasing information. The newspaper staff knew what was coming. As a result, they were able to answer community questions ahead of time. Superintendent A also provided an example of planned change—a referendum process--that included a media piece within the process. Superintendent A described that he/she views communication differently for a referendum than for a lawsuit. An unintended consequence of proactive communication is when confidentiality prevents material from being shared with the public. Superintendent A added that a newspaper may report information that the school district did not or will not share. However, in reality, the school district can't share some information due to confidentiality. Privileged and private employee information cannot be shared with the media.

Superintendent B views the news media as helpful. However, *media scrutiny in a larger district can be difficult to deal with. One colleague in a larger district received hate e-mails from around the world. Some of the rumors and allegations made it around the world through social media. Superintendent B commented that the rumor mill flew into high gear.* Superintendent B has not experienced community members' negative comments. The only example of recent community comments revolved around a perceived change in schedule at high school. The community and parents commented that it looked like the school was eliminating study hall. Some of the students heard about it, and started discussing this issue on social media. A parent on the school board alerted the superintendent. The very next newspaper column had this topic addressed in a news column. Superintendent B remarked that it is *difficult to prevent and manage community views and social media. Social media can spread misinformation around the world.*

Superintendent B interacted with the media regarding an operating referendum. He/she wrote about the operating referendum in the newspaper and held public meetings. No community members attended the public meetings, but it was required to hold public meetings to give the community an opportunity to hear new information and ask questions.

Superintendent C did not view intense media scrutiny as negative. Superintendent C commented that *no, I see them (the media) as partners in getting the message out. Ninety-nine% of the time I see local and larger metro newspapers as partners, particularly if they ask the right questions: how do we get the message out clear, concise and pointed?* Superintendent C shared a recent media story regarding *ACT tests on April 28th that included innovations granted through MDE. The district and the media worked to make sure that the right information was getting out.* Superintendent C stated that the school district was the *second largest employer in area – and community members saw the school district as making a positive change.* Superintendent C *listened to what the community wanted with regard to communication.* Superintendent C worked with stakeholders regarding the *message we were going to give and got the parents involved.* He/She stated that the *press was influential and helpful in getting messages out to the public.*

Question 4: Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a factor in your desire to stay in the position of the superintendency?

Question 4: Summary of Responses:

Two superintendents remarked that they did not feel that intense media scrutiny affected their desire to stay in the position of the superintendency. One superintendent remarked that he/she did not feel that intense media scrutiny was a factor in his/her desire to stay in their current position of the superintendency, but might be a factor in his/her pursuit of a superintendency position in a larger or metro school district. Two of the respondents stated that

the media culture did not impact their professional tenure (longevity) and intent to stay in the field. One respondent did state that intense media scrutiny was a factor, but not a large enough factor to impact his/her tenure and plans to stay in the field. However, Superintendent B did comment that if he/she were in a metropolitan school district, he/she may feel differently because he/she chose to gain employment in a smaller district.

Summary of Interview Transcript

Superintendent A commented that *current media scrutiny would not drive me out. But I will not miss the public eye when retired.*

Superintendent B stated that *intense media scrutiny is a factor, but not a huge factor. Larger districts might be too big for me to pursue because of my experience. My skills and experiences are so different. In a larger district it might be a factor for me, but I would never go after that (pursuit of employment in a large school district).* Superintendent B commented that *he/she would certainly want to check out the media to see what was going on in regard to local politics in the district and the local paper's view of those politics. I can see that in some places the newspaper is not as positive as where I am.* The impact of intense media scrutiny may be a *factor in my future career decisions.*

Superintendent C commented that, *No, I got used to it. There are different media changes, and it is part of the job: daily online paper and a hardcopy twice a week. Public scrutiny does not exist in this district – until something negative happens. You are a public figure. When I coach people who might want to be superintendents, I tell them that it isn't you, "it's the chair."* Superintendent C commented that *people might seem upset with you as a person - remember it is the position. It is important to have the support you need to continue to be effective in the role.* Superintendent C views the superintendency as an *honor and gift of*

position, but you do have to pay a price as a public figure. How you present yourself in public is important. Superintendent C encourages others to be superintendents.

5. Do you have any additional comments?

Superintendent A shared additional comments regarding social media. If parents have a social media presence, I recommend trying to use social media in a positive way to offset negative social media by giving the community accurate and frequent information.

Superintendent B had no further comments.

Superintendent C commented that he/she viewed the superintendency as an honor and gift of position, but you do have to pay a price as a public figure. It is important to present yourself appropriately in public. Superintendent C encouraged others to be superintendents.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Discussion,

Limitations and Recommendations

This study examined Minnesota school superintendents and the impact media culture has on the profession of the superintendency. The research was conducted by analyzing data from a 24-item survey instrument. A basic descriptive statistical analysis was conducted on instrument item responses. Descriptive narrative results were provided from follow-up interviews of three current school superintendents. The follow-up interview protocol was comprised of four questions based on the research of Kowalski, et al. (2011). The qualitative study questions included a set of probing follow-up questions, when appropriate. Participants were asked to agree to have interviews audio-taped for analysis purposes. Confidentiality and anonymity practices of interview participants were followed.

The problem for the study was to examine the perceptions of school superintendents. The purpose of the study was to examine the impact that the media culture has on the role of the Minnesota school superintendent. Media culture includes information from news media and social media. Data were collected from a sample of Minnesota school superintendents. The participants of the study were members of the Minnesota Association of School Administrators (MASA) and listed as current school superintendents in the MASA member directory.

Conclusions

The conclusions of the study were written in response to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. The research questions are as follows:

Research Question 1: To what extent does the media culture affect the superintendent's leadership success and perception of one's ability to influence and impact the organization?

In the study, the impact of the media culture on the role of the superintendent was found to be distracting from job responsibilities. Fifty-nine% of respondents reported that responding to, or engaging with, media culture distracted them from their daily work. Fifty-eight% of respondents reported that they felt confident in effectively using social media, but 62% responded they were still hesitant to engage with the public using social media. A large percentage of respondents (91%) agreed that news media and social media have an impact on the outcome of major school improvement efforts, and a moderately high percentage of respondents (75%) agreed that news media slant (bias) impacted school board decisions. In addition, the study indicated that respondents perceived that news information and social media had a moderately low impact on their reputations superintendents or on the reputation and operation of their school districts. The findings of the follow-up interview questions supported the survey results. The superintendents interviewed reported that the news media and media culture have an impact on school board decisions, community satisfaction, and the general reputation of the school district. Interview respondents stated that the media culture can have a negative or positive impact on school districts and that developing a positive relationship with the news media is one avenue to create a positive influence on overall communications and relations with the public.

Results revealed that 23 respondents (26.7%) reported that they were in agreement that strong negative or positive media bias has influenced their decision-making abilities, such as whether or not they should bring a proposal to the school board. Sixty-three respondents (73.2%) disagreed with this statement.

According to the review of literature, many authors asserted that, over the past century, the role and responsibility of the school superintendent has dramatically changed (Brunner,

2002; Houston, 2001; Kowalski, 2005; Kowalski, 2011). The superintendent's role has evolved from one of handling a busy daily schedule dealing with parent, staff, and student complaints to the expanded role and responsibility in a modern-day political climate where the stakes have increased and the stakeholder membership now includes community, state, and nation-wide participants (Hanson, 1961; Houston, 2001; Kowalski, 2005).

In the early 21st Century, the superintendent must focus more on the challenges of facing social issues (Houston, 2001; Rinehart, 2005). Kowalski (2005) focused on how the role of the superintendent has evolved in the public schools. He also summarized the research findings of the Kellogg Foundation Grants of 1961 related to behavioral science research on school administrators. These studies focused on providing aspiring superintendents with a "greater sensitivity to large social problems."

Kelly (2009) examined the impact and influence of advances in technology on superintendents' effective communications. The author identified important considerations for superintendents when interacting with media culture. Successful superintendents displayed proficient skills in utilizing technology and managing media communication. Kelly (2009) discussed findings that, although technology has made communicating easier, faster and more efficient, superintendents need to closely monitor the context of electronic communication.

The literature revealed findings that were similar to and aligned with the research results of the study. The results of the study affirmed that the rapid increase of technology and electronic communication has impacted school communication and public relations.

Research Question 2: To what extent does the media culture impact the professional tenure (longevity) and career of school superintendents?

According to the literature, it is common for superintendents' longevity in a school district to extend between 3-5 years. This is troublesome in that, according to Fullan, it takes between 6-8 years for school improvements to take hold (Fullan, 2009; Fullan, 2005). Schools are constantly criticized in the media culture for remaining static systems, yet the short tenure of many school superintendents creates conditions which prevent them from implementing school vision and goal setting strategies. The study examined the manner in which the media culture portrays superintendents and the impact of those portrayals on the superintendents' tenure.

The results of the survey displayed that the slant or bias of news information and social media were strong factors that impacted professional tenure and job satisfaction (68%). A rather unsurprising finding based on the research regarding the short longevity of superintendents indicated that 83% of respondents replied that if they were unable to effectively make changes in their school districts, then it was unlikely they would remain. In contrast, 94% of respondents stated that despite their heightened scrutiny by news information and social media, they intended to remain in the superintendency until retirement. This was one of the most striking findings of this study. The researcher expected to find the opposite; that a high percentage of superintendents would leave the field earlier than anticipated, based on the heightened scrutiny of the media culture. The results of the study showed that heightened scrutiny by news information and social media was not a factor. In addition, 74% of respondents replied that the heightened scrutiny by news information and social media had no impact on their plans to remain in, or exit the superintendency. One explanation for the responses above might be explained by the finding that 94% of respondents perceived their relationship with the local news media as positive.

One survey item was worded awkwardly and was somewhat confusing: "My tenure (longevity) in my current position has an impact on my engagement with the community and

stakeholders.” Eighty-nine% of respondents stated that their tenure in their current position had an impact on their engagement with community and stakeholders. This question is listed in the limitations, as it could be interpreted to mean that the longer respondents hold superintendency positions within specific districts, the more likely they are to have a higher satisfaction rating with the community or that their skills in engaging with the community are more proficient. Fifty-nine% of respondents replied that heightened media scrutiny could impact their decisions to change job positions or to make changes to different school districts. This response more closely aligned with the researcher’s expectations of results from the review of literature regarding the impact of the media culture on the personal and professional aspirations of school superintendents.

The follow-up interview results aligned with and supported the survey results. Superintendents indicated that, in general, they felt a positive engagement with the media culture, but stressed the importance of being careful, astute communicators with detailed, district-wide communication plans.

Research Question 3: To what extent does the media culture affect the professional aspirations of school superintendents?

The review of literature suggested that news media and social media can influence not only personal opinions but can also influence our perception of others’ opinions. Persuasive press inference is one theory that suggests that individuals infer the general public opinion based on their perception of media coverage persuasion (Gunther, 1998; Gunther & Chia, 2001). Gunther (1998) reported that this theory is based upon a generally accepted societal norm: when forming one’s own opinion, we tend to consider others’ beliefs and opinions. Research on the significant impact of mass media on public opinion showed that the slant of favorable versus

unfavorable media coverage of an issue influenced public opinion in a corresponding way (Gunther, 1998).

The results of the survey were mixed with regard to professional aspirations. Fifty-five% of respondents stated that they worried about public comments on social media regarding school matters or administrative decisions. However, respondents were not hindered by the heightened scrutiny of news information and social media on their efforts to achieve personal or professional goals. Only 33% of respondents agreed that heightened scrutiny hindered their efforts to achieve personal or professional goals. Fifty-nine% of respondents reported that they disagreed with the statement that news information and social media adversely impacted their reputation as a superintendent. The results of the survey indicated that the superintendents in this study, although sensitive to news media comments and social media, were not hindered by heightened scrutiny in regard to their professional aspirations.

The follow-up interview responses corroborated the above survey results. The researcher found that the personal and professional experiences of the superintendents interviewed correlated with how they felt about staying in their administrative positions and achieving their professional goals. The interviewed superintendents responded that they were strong and resilient. Most importantly, the superintendents also created a strong administrative and communication team to mitigate negative news media.

Discussion

The research findings did not match the researcher's expectations regarding major themes. The researcher expected to find that superintendents would be hindered by the media culture and feel pressured to leave their positions. The respondents to this survey dispelled this hypothesis. The superintendents in this survey responded that the media culture did not hinder

their intent to stay in superintendency positions until retirement. However, the study did affirm the researcher's prior assumption that the slant or bias of news information and social media coverage regarding their specific school districts impacted the superintendents' job satisfaction (68% agreed). Twenty-seven% of respondents replied that the lack of support from news information and social media impacted their desire to remain in the field. The findings indicate that the inability to impact or make change in a school district has the greatest impact on superintendents' tenure, influence, and professional aspirations, not the impact of a negative media culture.

Regarding the results of Item 24, the findings indicated that 23 respondents (27%) reported that they agreed that strong negative or positive media bias influenced their decision-making abilities, such as whether or not they should bring proposals to their school boards. Sixty-three respondents (73%) disagreed with this statement. This result has significance in that 27% of respondents reported that they believed that strong negative or positive media bias influenced their decision making abilities. No respondents reported strongly agreeing with this statement.

Although the media culture does affect superintendents' confidence and self-image, it is not enough to deter a larger percentage of superintendents from making decisions or bringing proposals to school boards. In closing, the findings were consistent across the survey results and the follow-up interviews: Attaining and maintaining a positive social media presence and a favorable relationship with the news media culture was important to gain a desired impact for the school district, to affirm superintendents' professional aspirations, and to positively influence the educational work of school superintendents.

The public media and communications role of the school superintendent has expanded in the past two decades with the increase in media scrutiny and the impact of social media. This study was designed to address the impact of the media culture on the role of the school superintendent. All respondents reported some degree of access to the Internet and newspaper outlets. However, the digital information age changes quickly, and many more people may have transitioned to online or Internet news outlets since this study began. This study is a snapshot in time. As a result, the continuing changes in the media culture and digital media over the duration of this dissertation work may have impacted item responses.

Limitations

This study contained the following limitations:

1. Survey item (Q21) was written: *My tenure (longevity) in my current position has an impact on my engagement with the community and stakeholders.* This item was awkwardly worded and may have been confusing for respondents.
2. Superintendents who were members of the MASA directory were solicited to participate in this study. The results of the study should only be generalized back to the sample.
3. This study failed to ask if participants had ever had a negative experience with the news media or media culture. This limited the ability to expand on the actual experience of the superintendents surveyed.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations for further research are suggested:

1. Replicate the study and increase the sample size and disaggregate by demographics.
2. Replicate the study and conduct a factor analysis of the items to determine if and how they group.
3. Design a study to examine the preparedness of aspiring superintendents entering the field to manage the rapidly changing media culture.
4. Design a qualitative study seeking out superintendents who have had significant experiences with media culture in order to gain a more complete understanding.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice are suggested:

1. Aspiring superintendents are encouraged to have extensive training in managing media culture and social media. Preparation to engage with the anonymous public presence on social media is a critical competency. The ability to maintain a sense of self and social presence, particularly when the next level of vicious or threatening media presence presents itself, is perceived to be a positive competency.
2. Practicing superintendents are encouraged to become informed consumers and users of social media. Acting superintendents are expected to have a high level of ongoing training and exposure to develop skills to navigate the current and future media cultures.
3. School districts are encouraged to create strong communications departments within their school districts. Whether a superintendent is in a small rural school district or a large metropolitan school district, the skills related to managing media culture can have a positive or negative impact on the image of the school district and operations.

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Appendix A

Interview: Informed Consent Form

Title: Impact of Media Culture on Influence, Tenure and Professional Aspirations of the School Superintendent

Primary Investigator: Judy Beaton

Contact: 952-836-7266 or email: judy.beaton10@gmail.com

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Frances Kayona

Contact: 320-308-3170; or fakayona@stcloudstate.edu

Dear Participant:

You are invited to participate in a research study of Minnesota School Superintendents and the impact media culture has on the profession of the superintendency. You were selected as a possible participant because you are listed as a school superintendent in the Minnesota Association of School Administrators directory. This research project is being conducted to satisfy the requirements of a doctoral degree in Educational Administration and Leadership at St. Cloud State University.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact that the media culture has on the role of the Minnesota school superintendent. Media culture includes information news media and social media. The research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent does the media culture affect the superintendent's leadership success and perception of one's ability to influence and impact the organization?
2. To what extent does the media culture impact the professional tenure (longevity) and career of school superintendents?
3. To what extent does the media culture affect the professional aspirations of school superintendents?

This study hopes to shed light on how contemporary media culture is impacting the professional role of the school superintendent and the perceptions of the superintendent regarding media culture's influence on leadership decisions and overall organizational effectiveness.

Data will be gathered in the form of an interview protocol of five open-ended questions. The estimated time for the interview is 1 hour. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts associated with this study.

This interview will be audio recorded. Participant's responses will be typed on a computer or transcribed by hand. No direct quotes will be used in the study.

There is no compensation for interview participants. No names of individuals of districts or other identifying information will be used in the results of the study.

The confidentiality of the information gathered during your participation in this study will be maintained. Your personal identity will remain confidential. You will not be identified by your

name in any published material. All data will be kept in a locked file cabinet in a secured office and/or on a password-protected computer.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time, for any reason, without penalty. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, the Educational Administration program, or the researchers.

This investigator may stop your participation at any time without your consent for the following reasons: if it appears to be harmful to you in any way, if the study is canceled, or for reasons deemed appropriate by the research coordinator to maintain subject safety and the integrity of the study.

If you are interested in learning the results of the study, feel free to contact myself at 952-836-7266 or judy.beaton10@gmail.com. You may also contact the Educational Administration Doctoral Center staff at 320-308-4220 or go to the SCSU Educational Administration Doctoral Center, 720 4th Avenue South, Education Building B121, St. Cloud, MN 56301.

Acceptance to Participate in the Minnesota Superintendent Study

Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided above and you consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form.

Subject Name (Printed) _____

Subject Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix B Interview Protocol

Name of Interviewer: _____ Date of Interview: _____

Name of Interviewee: _____

Setting and location of Interview: _____

Other topics discussed: _____

Other documents, etc., obtained during interview: _____

Introductions: Greetings

- a. Warm up
- b. Establish relationship and build trust

Explain the nature of the research, purpose, and provide consent form for signing.

Begin interview:

1. When did you aspire to become a superintendent? In light of the intense public and media scrutiny associated with the position of a school superintendent, did you feel dissuaded or intimidated in your pursuit of a superintendency position?

Probing:

- a) Were there any significant events or occasions that you would like to share?
- b) Why were these important?

2. In your current role as a superintendent, describe how you experience the impact and influence of the information media personally and professionally?

Probing:

- a) How did the experience impact your professional operations?
- b) How did the experience impact your personal or family life?
- c) Were there any essential learnings or understandings that you came away with regarding interacting with information media?
- d) If possible, can you describe any changes that you have noticed over the past five years with the impact of information media?

3. Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a limiting factor (road block) on your ability to influence and implement desired outcomes such as the district strategic mission, action steps, changes to curriculum, technology practices, school boundary changes, or other action?

Probing

- a) To what degree do you think you are making a difference in your school district?
- b) Can you give an example of a time when the news media/information media influenced the outcome of a board decision or the results of voting referendum?

4. Do you feel that intense media scrutiny is a factor in *your* desire to stay in the position of the superintendency?

Probing

- a) Do you think that intense media scrutiny and the high level of public position have influenced others in their pursuit of the superintendency?

5. Do you have any additional comments?