The spatial diffusion of information for education policy decision making

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Presented at Urban Affairs Association, 2017, Minneapolis

Project Website: http://mispi.psy.msu.edu
Where do school administrators get the information they use to make decisions?
Data Collection

We asked 600 principals & superintendents:

“If you were looking for information about school programs, who would you talk to or where would you go first?”
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We repeated that for up to 12 waves and talked to 382 administrators & 472 brokers
This yields network chains...
This is an education researcher.
He was reached by:

11 superintendents & 32 principals

This is an education researcher.
How does geography matter for school administrators’ information searching?
Keep it **local**

A **rural principal** went to a nearby **suburban principal** who went to the **small county ISD** who went to a **larger county ISD** who went to a **large urban district** who went to the **Chicago Researcher.**
Outside the box

A rural principal went to a nearby educator who went to another nearby educator who went to another nearby educator who went to the State Dept. of Ed. who went to the Chicago Researcher.
Way outside the box

A rural principal went to a nearby educator, who went to a Seattle consultant, who went to a San Francisco consultant, who went to the Chicago Researcher.
So what?

There are a few common spatial patterns for information seeking behavior.
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There are a few common *spatial patterns* for *information seeking behavior*

Most resemble *Levy Flights*:
A bunch of short hops, and a few long ones
There are a few common spatial patterns for information seeking behavior. Most resemble Levy Flights: A bunch of short hops, and a few long ones. Chains that the “outside the box” are shorter lead to faster access to information and higher fidelity information.
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Most resemble Levy Flights:
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Chains that the “outside the box” are shorter:
→ Faster access to information
→ Higher fidelity information

Next Step:
Development of an intervention to facilitate short chains
Questions?

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