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BEST PRACTICES OF TEAM COHESION IN SMALL SCHOOLS

Patricia Jean Shaw
Southeastern University - Lakeland

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BEST PRACTICES OF TEAM COHESION
IN SMALL SCHOOLS

By

PATRICIA JEAN SHAW

A doctoral dissertation submitted to the
College of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Doctor of Education
in Organizational Leadership

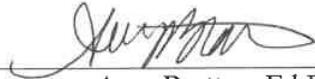
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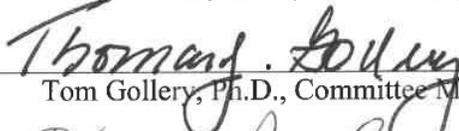
by

PATRICIA JEAN SHAW

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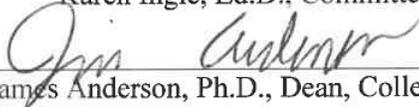
Amy Bratten, Ed.D., Dissertation Chair



Tom Gollery, Ph.D., Committee Member



Karen Ingle, Ed.D., Committee Member



James Anderson, Ph.D., Dean, College of Education

DEDICATION

I owe my deepest gratitude and respect to many individuals that have played a role in this accomplishment. You have helped me achieve a goal that seemed unattainable at times. To my husband, Chris Shaw, for always encouraging me, understanding the difficulties, and loving me through the challenging days. To my children, Regan and Bailey, for allowing me to take time away from my mom duties to work on my homework and research for my dissertation. You were always there to make me laugh and to pray for me when I needed it. Thank you to my parents, Bill and Billeona Alderman, for loving me and teaching me that quitting is not an option and that I am a leader not a follower.

I want to thank my best friend, Shelly Sharrett, for listening when I needed to vent, for praying when I needed support, and for making sure I made time for laughter and enjoyment. Also, I want to thank the rest of my friends and family who offered support and encouragement through this endeavor. My encouragement to you all is to listen to the Lord and develop a relationship with Him, and you will achieve success. He has a plan for each one of us, and it is perfect.

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. The conclusions from the study assist future educational leaders with using best practices to influence team cohesion within school settings that have small groups of staff. If faculty can achieve team cohesion, goals can be achieved and success can be attained. Research for large organizations and team cohesion is documented; however, this study fills a gap in research by focusing on small schools. The study's conclusions help prove that small schools benefit from team cohesion and outline the best practices for reaching team cohesion. This study is a quantitative survey-based research study to establish the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. Surveys were given to teachers employed at small private schools in order to investigate perceptions of team cohesion. Though task-oriented cohesion and social-oriented cohesion were a part of the Framework of Cohesive Teams Survey, for study purposes, only those items that were validated to a 100% level in the area of "task" were utilized in the research instrument. The top predictors of team cohesion were the participants' perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization. *Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization* was the top practice of team cohesion distinguished by the study.

Key Words: team cohesion; cohesiveness in groups; small schools; task-oriented cohesion; social-oriented cohesion; collaboration

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I. INTRODUCTION

What is team cohesion? The notion of team cohesion has been a basis of management practices since the early 1950s (Rosh, Offermann, & Van Diest, 2012). Though the importance of team cohesion was recognized many years ago, the meaning of team cohesion has evolved. Initially, team cohesion was a unidimensional concept, meaning the focus of research is mostly on the individual instead of the team (Rosh et al., 2012).

According to Rosh et al. (2012), substantial importance was placed on the building of “task enjoyment, group pride, and interpersonal liking” (p. 123). While team cohesion became popular in businesses, the focus shifted to a decline in team disagreements, innovation in groups, and development in the performance of individuals (Rovira-Asenjo et al., 2017). Team cohesion usually decreases the amount of conflict within a group (Rovira-Asenjo et al., 2017). Thompson et al. (2015) stated:

Team functioning, or team cohesion, reflects the degree to which members are committed to one another in the achievement of team goals. Factors that are purported to contribute to team cohesion include number of team sessions, amount of time in the team, team size, team accountability and rewards for success. (p. 380)

Brockman, Rawlston, Jones, & Halstead (2010) acknowledged views similar to Thompson et al. (2015) and the two distinct stages of cohesion, “task and interpersonal” (p. 202).

According to Brockman et al. (2010), task cohesion was a team’s joint commitment to a goal; whereas, relational cohesion was described as the teammate’s liking of the team but later

theorized as the strength of personal bonds among group members. Thiss (2017) agreed with Brockman et al. (2010) when the two practices of team cohesion were defined: task-oriented practices and social-oriented practices.

Cohesion does assist in reaching organizational outcomes. Team cohesion or team-building is “the formal and informal team-level interventions that focus on improving social relations and clarifying roles as well as solving the task and interpersonal problems that affect team functioning” (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016, p. 806). Liang, Shih, & Chiang (2015) suggested diverse personalities in work teams can have a tremendous impact on output for teams. Diversity within a person’s outgoing traits is complementary to team-building, and individuals become more outgoing when they feel safe and part of the group (Liang et al., 2015). If team members are diverse and able to accept each other’s diversity, the team can utilize the strengths of each team member to help the group become successful. Many factors are related to team cohesion, and each factor contributes to team-building. Park, Park, Kim, & Kim (2012) found that when the cohesion of a team is high, the team has the capability of increasing creativity and, when the team is not cohesive, creativity decreases.

Task-Oriented Practices of Team Cohesion

Share a Common Purpose

Thiss (2017) stated that part of the task-oriented practices of team cohesion is the group sharing a common purpose. Teams with a common purpose share specific characteristics such as mutual goals and objectives. Groups that share a common purpose celebrate achievements when tasks are accomplished. According to Thiss (2017), the goals of the team are very detailed and include objectives for the year, thus allowing each team member to understand the intended

outcome of the team's purpose. Early on, teams spend time developing the team and periodically share updates of team results with leadership (Thiss, 2017).

Supportive Leaders

Thiss (2017) emphasized supportive leaders as a part of task-oriented practices for team cohesion. Leaders guiding teams is a way to nurture individual abilities. Typically, according to Hinton (2010), many people are not born to be leaders “but leadership skills, such as vision, integrity, and compassion, can be learned and developed” (p. 1). Individuals have an innate need to participate on a team and are not as successful without the help of others such as leaders (Druskat, Wolff, Messer, Koman, & Batista-Foguet, 2017). Trust between team members will encourage the involvement of the individuals and help foster willingness to complete a task; therefore, it is important for a leader to share the power and to trust teammates to use gifts and talents (Hinton, 2010).

Group Efficacy and Success

Group efficacy and success make up part of task-oriented team cohesive practices (Thiss, 2017). The team must work together to meet goals and objectives, and teams must be trained effectively (Thiss, 2017). Role-clarification gives each team member a clear definition of any responsibilities shared as well as defining individual roles. Each member of the team should know what the expectation or purpose is for all members of the group (Aga et al., 2016). Clarification of roles increases communication amongst team members and increases the chances of meeting the goal at hand (Aga et al., 2016). Role clarity not only increases group efficacy and success but also uses individual strengths amongst team members (Thiss, 2017).

Trust Within the Team

Thiss (2017) highlighted trust as a part of task-oriented practices of team cohesion. Marcus (2017) suggested that building trust by engaging the team gives individuals the opportunity to feel safe in the work environment and to trust that leadership will follow through with promises made. Marcus (2017) focused on how team leaders could encourage and facilitate trust within teams. “Team meetings are a golden opportunity [*sic*] to model trust and support of your team” (Marcus, 2017, p. 2). If colleagues do not trust the members of the team or leadership, outcomes can be diminished or decreased. Thiss (2017) suggested “open, honest and complete communications” to achieve trust within a group (p. 114).

Communication Among Teammates

Communication is an area that can affect task-oriented portions of team cohesion and involves the ability to speak effectively as well as listen effectively (Thiss, 2017). Chiang, Chapman, and Elder (2011) reported that nurse instructors were placed in a collaborative environment to improve instruction and learning. The team was challenged due to the familiarity of working independently. Working collaboratively with communication was difficult for the nurses (Chiang et al., 2011). The nurse instructors found working together challenging and compared the situation to “a heap of loose sand” trying to work together when referring to the norm of working alone (Chiang et al., 2011, p. 29). It is impossible for loose sand to work together which was the point the nurses were trying to make. After learning to communicate with each other, the nurses found that the result was group cohesion.

Commitment to Objectives

Commitment to objectives is a task-oriented practice of team cohesion (Thiss, 2017). Multi-functional groups build rapport by utilizing team-building strategies to settle on a common

purpose, team responsibilities, communication methods, and comparable features of work (Lynn & Kalay, 2016). Administrative groups use team-building to create business-related approaches and set future direction (Lynn & Kayay, 2016). Work groups utilize team-building to determine communal values, resolve dissimilarities, and implement task implementation (Lynn & Kalay, 2016). Team cohesion also has worth for each participant by maximizing the team's contribution to the company and incorporating individual goals with the establishment's goals (Lynn & Kalay, 2016). Whether applying commitment to the team as an individual or collectively, commitment remains imperative for team cohesion and success.

Respect of Group Members

Group members must respect each other to form team cohesion (Thiss, 2017). For team interdependency or trust to occur, team-building should emphasize strengthening performance instead of focusing on the environment of the team. When teams have a specific goal to achieve, success is more evident (Lynn & Kalay, 2016). Team-building requires a purpose which merits the investment put into the team. Sinni, Wallace, and Cross (2014) outlined an example of a medical group participating in obstetrics with a need for safety and efficiency. The team members were willing to focus on the task of obstetrics while displaying acceptance, trust, and respect. The senior group members immediately showed respect to each other and were more enthusiastic about the opportunity to trust (Sinni et al., 2014). The junior group members expressed frustration in the beginning because respect needed to be earned by coworkers. Trust was naturally built as the outcomes were achieved because team members had an opportunity to work toward a common goal (Sinni et al., 2014).

Social-Oriented Practices of Team Cohesion

Camaraderie

Camaraderie or mutual friendship, and trust, are social-oriented practices of team cohesion according to Thiss (2017). Developing interdependency and camaraderie within relationships involves discussion of any conflicts within the team and making sure there are no hidden agendas (Aga et al., 2016). Thinking the best should help team members see they are valued and trusted. An individual's personality is expressed by actions. Honoring commitments and being truthful and authentic helps teammates believe in each other (Mote, 2013). Making sure the person with the concern is told first instead of telling others is showing loyalty which builds camaraderie (Mote, 2013). Supposing the greatest about, and assuming the best from, teammates generates a favorable setting for achieving camaraderie and solving problems within a team (Mote 2013).

Altruism

Altruism, or kindness, is a characteristic of a social-oriented practice of team cohesion (Thiss, 2017). According to Gerpott, Balliet, Columbus, Molho, and de Vries (2018), team members must agree upon how interdependency will occur effectively. Along with interdependency also comes altruism. When teams have interpersonal and administrative skills rooted in kindness, the execution of goals is accomplished, and individuals can achieve tasks assigned (Lynn & Kalay, 2016). Team and individual accountability and responsibility are shared among the group, as well as, a passion for doing what is best to make the team successful (Lynn & Kalay, 2016). When a team member shows kindness toward the others within the group, the team will be more successful as a whole (Thiss, 2017).

Workplace Friendliness

Friendliness between teammates is crucial to team cohesion according to Thiss (2017). Stakeholders in an organization do not always share similar values or culture when collaboration begins. D’hont, Doern, and Delgado García (2016) researched the role of friendship in relation to entrepreneurship and teams. The study found team members who began working together but originally began as friends became cohesive, successful working teams. D’hont et al. (2016) stated:

A strong tie may form outside the professional sphere through family ties and friendships, but may also be the result of a long-term working relationship with colleagues, customers or other stakeholders that the founding entrepreneur knows from their previous professional engagements (Zolin et al., 2011, p. 1098). (p. 556)

If the team leader was friendly and able to listen to the group, the team achieved success (Thiss, 2017). Acts of kindness such as getting lunch for teammates or having team-building events encourage workplace friendliness (Thiss, 2017). Members of groups who cultivate cohesiveness when managing teamwork, and acquire a comprehension of group dynamics, according to Thiss (2017), can better resolve complex difficulties and meet the needs of the organization.

Bonding

Thiss (2017) stated “the group aspect looked at the unity of the group through elements such as bonding and closeness” (p. 10). The intimacy of team members determines the bond of the group. Bonding is important for team cohesion (Thiss, 2017). The encouragement of communication and listening to each other promotes bonding within the team (Thiss, 2017). Rosh, Offermann, and Van Diest (2012) explained that time spent in a group to build cohesion can often lead to intimacy within the group. According to Rosh et al. (2012), “humor may

increase bonds of sociability and foster cohesion” (p. 123). Intimacy is positive when working in teams (Rosh et al., 2012).

Sense of Belonging

Team members need to feel a sense of belonging to achieve team cohesion (Thiss, 2017). A sense of belonging can mean that strengths and weaknesses are accepted by teammates. When individuals have a common vision, the feeling of belonging to the team arises. One’s contribution to the common vision is valued (Thiss, 2017). Teams must appreciate diversity of the abilities and strengths within the group (Liang, Shih, & Chiang, 2015). Groups must operate in situations that require respect and gratefulness for a team’s diversity and utilize the strengths of each individual (Liang et al., 2015). “As it might be impossible for managers to change the personalities of their team members, they should instead work to fit people with specific personalities into certain work teams” (Liang et al., 2015, p. 56). Placing varied personalities together will assist in facilitating a sense of belonging amongst team members.

Identification With Group Members

When teams are cohesive, there are often similar attitudes and values within the group (Aga et al., 2016). If teammates differ in values and attitude, finding common ground can be difficult (Aga et al., 2016). “Social identity theory” specifies that one’s sense of individuality is focused on the team(s) to which they belong (Cientanni et al., 2017). Research shows that work-related stressors are resolved by support from the team, in that individuals who identify with a team have an increased likelihood of receiving support and are less apt to experience fatigue (Cientanni et al., 2017). Influence and experience exist in individual positions because coworkers on teams have different professional background knowledge and experiences (Chiang et al., 2011). The differences within individuals facilitate identification within the group.

Group Pride

Group pride is a part of social-oriented team cohesion (Thiss, 2017). According to Rovira-Asenjo et al. (2017), a “meta-analysis of 37 studies documents that teams with dense networks of interpersonal ties are more successful in achieving their goals and are more motivated to stay together” (p. 4). Cohesion is “the degree to which members are attracted to a group and motivated to remain part of it” (Rovira-Asenjo et al., 2017, p. 35). When group members want to remain part of the group, it is usually because of a sense of group pride.

Small Schools Versus Large Schools

In the early 2000’s, the Small Schools Movement took place because the dropout rate of large urban schools was high (Barrow, Schanzenbach, & Claessens, 2014). “While the guideline for enrollment was no more than 600 – and ideally closer to 400 students – it is important to note that the intervention of the Small Schools Movement was intended to be about more than just the number in the student body. The small schools were expected to have an additional set of attributes including common focus, high expectations, a culture of respect and responsibility, performance standards, and effective use of technology” (Barrow et al., 2014, p. 101). Significantly small schools may not have multiple teachers teaching similar populations, therefore making it difficult to collaborate and assist each other. Teachers often feel alone or isolated in these situations. Each teacher within a small school may have a class of students that are very different from the students in the other classes.

Problem/Purpose Statement

Research, such as that conducted by Thiss (2017), identified best practices of team cohesion in large organizations. Small schools are structured differently than large organizations or large schools; therefore, the problem is identifying best practices of team cohesion for small

schools. There is limited research to show which practices best promote team cohesion in schools where vertical planning is occurring more often because horizontal planning is not appropriate.

The purpose of this study is to determine the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. There is research on the best practices of team cohesion in larger organizations; however, the same practices may not apply to small schools. Small schools must still operate through the use of teamwork, and educational leaders must work to achieve team cohesion among the small team member. When narrowing the research in relation to small schools, the gap is evident and research is needed. Thus, this study will seek to identify which practices of cohesion teams at small schools are successfully implemented.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this dissertation is based on the compilation of two theories related to community and systems thinking. Grant and Osanloo (2014) stress the importance of conceptual framework in relation to the research process. “Without a theoretical framework, the structure and vision for a study is unclear, much like a house that cannot be constructed without a blueprint” (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 13). A conceptual framework mentioned by Grant and Osanloo (2014) was the Sense of Community (SOC) Theory. Boyd and Nowell (2017) explained, “traditional measures of SOC tend to reflect an individual’s sense that their community serves as a resource for meeting key physiological and psychological needs such as the need for affiliation, influence, and connection” (p. 211). Boyd and Nowell (2017) also describe the dimensions of the Sense of Community Theory to include the fulfillment of an individual’s needs within the community, the feeling of relatedness to the community, the sense that the individual matters in the community, and a sense of connection to the community. The

definitions of the Sense of Community Theory relate to the social-oriented practices of team cohesion which established the conceptual framework of this study, the Framework of Cohesive Teams by Thiss (2017).

Another conceptual framework mentioned by Grant and Osanloo (2014) was the Systems Theory. Team cohesion is developed from a system that works well together. Theories of work motivation typically focus on motivation of individuals, disregarding team processes in relation to individuals, or motivation of teams, disregarding differences of individuals within the team (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). The Systems Theory suggests evaluating both task-oriented and social-oriented practices of team cohesion supporting the research of Thiss (2017).

Significance of the Study

The setting chosen for this study is adequately unique and is likely to expand knowledge in the educational field for small schools. The setting will be within a large school district that houses 10-20 small schools, and all faculty from qualifying schools will be invited to participate. Participants will be surveyed in regards to the degree of cohesion their work teams demonstrate. Upon analysis of the collected data, educational leaders, small school administrators, teacher trainers, and teacher leaders will benefit from the results of this study. The results will be significant to the field in that the results will isolate the specific strategies that promote team cohesion among an exclusive population of educators at small schools.

Overview of Methodology

Methodology

This is a quantitative survey-based research study to determine the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. The surveys will be given to small private school teachers to determine perceptions of each subgroup in relation to team cohesion. The groups are used to

help lessen a method bias, or perspective prejudice, from occurring and leading to skewed results (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). Surveying various perspectives, then, will create an overarching set of conclusions. Potentially participating schools will be selected based on geographic location within a large school district in the state of Florida. The largest city within the district will serve as the hub of potential participants because the largest city houses the largest number of small schools.

Teachers from small private schools will be sampled for a variety of reasons. First, each teacher has a unique role within a specific classroom. The roles of the individuals are interdependent of each other requiring team cohesion for successful performance. The interdependency within the teams of teachers requires the administrators to manage team responsibilities and processes to optimize performance. Also, many teachers have histories of working with the administration from year to year and are able to reflect upon past accomplishments. Lastly, teams typically meet weekly and interact frequently which gives sufficient opportunity to cultivate team cohesion.

Subsequently, cohesion is an evolving process and takes time to develop. In order to give participating teams a chance to build team cohesion through the beginning of the school year activities, the surveys will be administered approximately two months after the school year is in progress. The researcher will contact the school administrators to seek permission for the school employees to participate. Upon permission being granted, employees will receive a link to the survey through their work email. Employees must agree to participate by clicking the informed consent box provided on the overview letter within the body of the invitation email. Upon clicking the informed consent box, participants will be granted access to the survey. Participants will be given two weeks to complete the surveys with weekly reminders of the survey closing

date. Participants will complete the survey and submit results through a secure, online survey tool.

The survey instrument will be a condensed version of the Framework of Cohesive Teams Survey written by Thiss (2017). Each item is a descriptor of practices for creating team cohesion; and, each practice serves as a prompt for participants to rate on a Likert-scale indicating the degree to which their team implements each practice. The Framework of Cohesive Teams is also used as a framework for organizations to develop team cohesion (Thiss, 2017). The framework was created from a delphi study and used within a Fortune 500 company to confirm validity and reliability; therefore, the researcher for this study will not conduct validation tests of the instrument.

The Framework of Cohesive Teams is made up of 76 items which measure two areas of team cohesion: task-oriented team cohesion and social-oriented team cohesion. The layout of the Framework of Cohesive Teams specifies how each area of cohesion is broken down into sections. The task-oriented practices are described as “open communication, commitment to objectives, respect of group members, share common purpose, trust, supportive leaders, and group efficacy” (Thiss, 2017, p. 113). The social-oriented practices are described as “camaraderie, altruism, workplace friendliness, bonding, sense of belonging, identification with group members, and group pride” (Thiss, 2017, p. 113). Data collected from the survey will be analyzed for patterns and trends revealing best practices of team cohesion in small school work teams.

Research questions

1. Overall, to what degree will study participants perceive their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization? And, was

there an effect for study participants' level of education and years of experience in the teaching profession?

2. Overall, to what degree will study participants perceive they are satisfied with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team building approach in leading the organization? And, was there an effect for study participants' level of education and years of experience in the teaching profession?
3. Which of the identified individual elements of "task behavior" in the study's research instrument was most related to and predictive of study participants' perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization?
4. Which of the identified individual elements of "task behavior" in the study's research instrument was most related to and predictive of study participants' perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team building approach in leading the organization?

Research hypotheses

H1: There will be statistical significance in study participants' perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization.

NH1: There will not be statistical significance in study participants' perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization.

H2: Study participants have a high degree of perception that they are satisfied with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team building approach in leading the organization.

NH2: Study participants have a low degree of perception that they are satisfied with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team building approach in leading the organization.

H3: Some of the individual elements of "task behavior" in the study's research instrument that is related to and predictive of study participant perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization will represent statistical significance.

NH3: None of the individual elements of "task behavior" in the study's research instrument that is related to and predictive of study participant perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization will represent statistical significance.

H4: Some identified individual elements of "task behavior" in the study's research instrument was most related to and predictive of study participant perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team building approach in leading the organization will represent statistical significance.

NH4: None of the identified individual elements of "task behavior" in the study's research instrument was most related to and predictive of study participant perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team building approach in leading the organization will represent statistical significance.

Analyses

The survey presented prompts to determine how teams achieved cohesion. The researcher conducted descriptive statistical analyses of the collected data to determine the best practices of team cohesion. The prompts were coded according to the practices classified as “task-oriented, social-oriented, or both” (Thiss, 2017, p. 82). The Likert-scale groups were translated to numbers to determine the frequencies, means, and standard deviations” (Thiss, 2017). The frequency was the number of times a participant responds to an item in a certain way. The mean was the average number of times a certain response is shown.

Preliminary Analysis

Before the official analysis of the study’s research questions, initial preliminary analyses were conducted. Evaluations of missing data, internal reliability, and demographic identifiers were the primary initial analyses conducted. A variation of descriptive, inferential, and measurement statistics were utilized in the initial analyses.

Data Analysis by Research Questions

Once the data of the official analysis was collected, the standard deviation showed how far apart the numbers were. The frequency and mean of the data collected was analyzed along with the standard deviation to determine which practices were most often represented as a best practice. Missing data analysis, through the implementation of Cronbach’s alpha, will determine if omissions of the responses skewed the data results. The data from Thiss (2017) was compared to the data in this study to determine if small schools were comparable in team cohesion as larger organizations.

Limitations

This study has limitations. The research on the Framework of Cohesive Teams was analyzing team cohesion for larger organizations and not team cohesion in small educational settings (Thiss, 2017). The survey instrument contained a large number of items, and when the surveys were lengthy, motivation to answer the questions may decrease. The definition of small schools found in research is 400 students or less (Barrow et al., 2014); and, the definition may prove too broad in that based on the number of working teams, the same set of best practices may not be generalizable for schools with less than 100 students because the number of employees would be smaller. The study used a convenience sample of school employees in small schools within the local school district; and the sample was restricted in range due to the number of schools that meet the criteria to be a small school. The restricted range can possibly limit the generalization of conclusions to educators in other geographic locations.

Definition of Key Terms

Cohesion. “A dynamic process, which is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its goals and objectives” (Thiss, 2017, p. 36).

Team. When a group of individuals is in the performing stage of achieving a common goal, it becomes a team (Thiss, 2017).

Small School. For the purposes of this study, the definition designated during the Small Schools Movement will be used to determine what constitutes a small school – schools that enroll 400 students or less (Barrow et al., 2015).

Task-Oriented. “An association among group members that is based on a shared commitment to achieving group performance goals” (Thiss, 2017, p. 19).

Social-Oriented. “Having a closeness or attraction to a group based on community

relationships and feeling a sense of belonging” (Thiss, 2017, p. 19).

Summary

This study analyzed the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. The practices of team cohesion were determined by the Framework of Cohesive Teams Survey to determine if a particular subset of practices correlated with larger organizational team cohesion practices. Team cohesion was researched in relation to small schools which had vertical teams instead of horizontal planning teams.

Team cohesion was an evolving concept (Rosh et al., 2012). If a team is cohesive, conflict decreased within the team (Rovira-Asenjo et al., 2017), and the team was more likely to achieve its goals. Thiss (2017) separated team cohesion into two distinct groups: task-oriented and social-oriented. Task-oriented cohesion is angled toward a common goal or task. Team members worked to attain the same outcome that involves particular tasks. Social-oriented cohesion, according to Thiss (2017), was related to the emotions and responses of the team. For example, altruism and workplace friendliness were two of the social-oriented cohesion types.

The research in this study will be applying a framework derived from best practices of team cohesion in larger organizations to determine best practices of team cohesion in small schools. Small schools often do not have opportunities for horizontal or broad planning with team members; therefore, this study will determine the best practices in situations where vertical planning is more appropriate according to the population at hand.

The conceptual framework used in this study was based on the Framework of Cohesive Teams. The ideas underlying Community Theory and The Systems Theory created the overarching concept of this study. Since small schools are structured and operated uniquely, this study will be investigating a gap in research to outline the best practices of team cohesion in

small schools. The purpose of this study is to inform educational leaders, small school administrators, teacher trainers, and teacher leaders the best practices to use within small schools when building cohesive teams. Team cohesion leads to stronger performance within the organization.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Team cohesion has been proven to have positive outcomes on group performance in many different settings (Rosh, Offermann, & Van Diest, 2012). If teammates feel a part of the group, it is more likely performance will rise and outcomes will be more successful. “Given strong linkages between cohesion and performance, organizations would benefit from knowledge regarding processes that may lead to team cohesion” (Severt, 2016, p. 5).

“Greater utilization of teams in organizations provides a better response to competitive forces, mines greater efficiencies from existing resources, and offers an ability to produce better results” (Thiss, 2017, p. v). There are several factors that affect team cohesion and the performance of the team. Specific practices, such as setting goals and objectives (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016), guiding teams (Hinton, 2010), encouraging teams (Galbraith, 2014), and giving feedback (Aga et al., 2016), can affect team-building in many ways. The practices of team cohesion can be broken into two categories: task-oriented practices and social-oriented practices (Thiss, 2017).

The task of narrowing down the best practices of team cohesion in small schools is challenging. Subsequently, not much research has been conducted concerning cohesion in small schools. Thiss (2017) created a Framework of Cohesive Team Practices after surveying Fortune 500 companies to find best practices of team cohesion. The outcomes of Thiss’ (2017) work resulted in a comprehensive list of cohesive team practices in relation to large organizations. The intention of this study is to investigate whether the same cohesive team practices found by

Thiss (2017) correlate to the best practices of team cohesion in small schools.

Definition of Cohesion

Team cohesion, according to Martin and Good (2015), was defined by the social identity theory (SIT) which developed from research completed by Henri Taifel, a social psychologist in the 1970s. Taifel's work revolved around discrimination among groups and group conflict (Martin & Good, 2015). The social identity theory suggests that an individual's perception of group memberships affects one's individual identity and modifies the way an individual interacts with teammates. If an individual considers oneself as part of a team, the individual's perception is that other teammates are similar, leading to group identification (Martin & Good, 2015). Group identification helps to foster team cohesion.

Pomohaci and Sopa (2018) found group cohesion to have a substantial effect on performance and other essential dynamics in teams, particularly sports teams (Carron & Eys, 2012). Concerning a theoretical explanation of cohesion, most researchers have referred to an individual's social perceptions of a group (Pomohaci & Sopa, 2018). Another definition of team cohesion in relation to sports teams was presented by Carron, Brawley and Widmeyer (2002) (as cited in Pomohaci & Sopa, 2018) as "a dynamic process in which we can observe the tendency for the members of the sport group to stick together and stay united following their purposes for satisfaction of member affective needs" (p. 58).

Educational teams can be considered cohesive in the same manner as sports teams by remaining unified and meeting goals. Teams are affected by external forces such as the need to relate to team members, the feeling of appreciation, the acknowledgement of members in the group, and the support of each other within the group. The more the forces are apparent, the

more members are attracted to the group (Pomohaci & Sopa, 2018). If one feels appreciated and acknowledged by the members of the team, team cohesion will be a natural result.

Types of Cohesion

Team cohesion is often divided into two types of cohesion: task-oriented and social-oriented cohesion. Cohesion was formerly defined as the “total field of forces causing members to remain in the group” (Fruhen & Keith, 2014, p. 22). Subsequently, research related to team cohesion was conducted, and the results outlined an explanation of cohesion as a more complex notion involving task and social cohesion (Fruhen & Keith, 2014). Thiss (2017) took both types of cohesion and categorized particular cohesive practices as task-oriented, social-oriented, or both in order to determine which types of practices were implemented most often or most effectively. Furthermore, the distinction between task cohesion and social cohesion delineates specific characteristics of cohesion to increase group performance (Fruhen & Keith, 2014). Researchers must continue to clearly define both types of cohesion in order to determine the best practices of team cohesion.

Task-Oriented Cohesion

Boyd, Kim, Ensari, and Yin (2014) determined task cohesion to be the quantifier of how decisively each individual is brought to the team to fulfill task achievement. Task cohesion also examines the degree to which teammates bond as a group to accomplish a common goal (Boyd et al., 2014). Athletes who believed the team was task-oriented communicated that they were drawn to the task given to the team to fulfill a personal need to perform (Boyd et al., 2014). While Pomohaci and Sopa (2018) stated “task cohesion has a fundamental role in the functioning of every sport group” (p. 59), Fruhen and Keith (2014) defined task cohesion as the extent to which group members desire to complete the task at hand. Participants of task-oriented teams,

where determination and performance were deemed important, determined mistakes are acceptable because they are a piece of the educational process (Boyd et al., 2014). All team members learned from the mistakes, and it was important to discuss the mistakes made and determine how steps could be taken to perform better in the future.

Every player is believed to perform a noteworthy job within the group, according to Boyd et al. (2014), and each player is drawn to the group to accomplish the job and contribute to the group. “A task-involving climate not only leads to positive affective outcomes such as enjoyment, intrinsic motivation, and the belief that effort leads to success in sport (Roberts, 2012), but as the results suggest, to task cohesion as well” (Boyd et al., 2014, p. 116). Task-oriented groups tend to be more intrinsically motivated because the focus is on the task and not the relationships of the group members (Boyd et al., 2014).

Social-Oriented Cohesion

Social cohesion represents the degree to which each player is interested in the group to meet his or her individual, communal, and relational needs (Boyd et al., 2014). Individuals who relate to social-oriented cohesion are more relational and thrive on social situations which, in turn, are extrinsically motivating (Boyd et al., 2014). Social cohesion also measures perceptions of how well the team members bond with each other to fulfill social needs. Fruhen and Keith (2014) defined social cohesion as the desire to cultivate and maintain social connections within the team. Pomohaci and Sopa (2018) stated, “Social cohesion is another cohesive force developed in time among the group members” (p. 59). Social-oriented cohesion is needed in order to have a unified team.

When studying social cohesion in relation to society as a whole, Fonseca, Lukosch, and Brazier (2019) described social cohesion as constructing societies where individuals have

opportunities to be around each other with individual differences. Achieving social cohesion in society is much more complex than achieving social cohesion within a small group. Fonseca et al., (2019) defined social cohesion as:

A characteristic of society that shows the interdependence between individuals of that society (Berkman and Kawachi 2000), and coins to social cohesion (1) the absence of latent social conflict (any conflict based on for e.g. wealth, ethnicity, race, and gender) and (2) the presence of strong social bonds (e.g. civic society, responsive democracy, and impartial law enforcement) (Durkheim 1897). (p. 233)

Within teams in an educational setting, Fonseca et al.'s, (2019) definition is applicable because teammates who are socially cohesive do not have social conflict and do have strong bonds with each other.

Building Team Cohesion

Several of the research-based practices for building team cohesion utilized in large organizations began with groups of individuals and facilitated cohesion within the groups to create a unified team working toward a common goal. From sharing a common purpose to time commitments, best practices must be implemented in order to create a cohesive team (Thiss, 2017). As organizational leaders implement work groups, applying team building structures will create cohesion and lead to goal accomplishment. Cohesive teams accomplishing common goals will lead to organizational success.

Similar Attitudes and Values

An important attribute contributing to team cohesion is team members having similar attitudes or common values. Values affect perception and interpretation of information in that “individuals’ values are aligned with those of their work groups, groups become more effective,

because individuals can enhance their psychological commitment through the performance of behaviours [*sic*] that are congruent with their personal values” (Kim, Kim, & Shin, 2011, p. 1).

When teammates have similar gender, age, or ethnicity, research indicates those teammates will also demonstrate similar attitudes and values promoting positivity within the group. Kim et al. (2011) suggested:

To enhance the attitudes of men in a primarily male work group, it is desirable for them to have their own values in alignment with group values. In an effort to do so, managers might consider composing work groups of individuals who possess similar values. (p. 12)

Female group members were not as strict as male group members in needing alignment of values in order to form cohesive groups (Kim et al., 2011). Therefore, organizational leaders may consider the effects of gender differences in groups when working to promote team cohesion.

Individuals exercising obedience or conformity tend to support uniformity with team members. Individuals displaying conformity tendencies typically follow traditional social actions, such as creating family relationships in various settings. Also, individuals following conservative standards usually establish a simple social individuality and relate to in-group restrictions (Flunger & Ziebertz, 2010). Thus, according to Flunger and Ziebertz (2010), people who have a personality that conforms can usually help facilitate group cohesion easily.

Sharing a Common Purpose

Teams operating cohesively must consider setting shared goals. Goal-setting includes a description of goals and objectives for team members as well as outlining subtasks and timelines for the end goal (Aga et al., 2016). Sharing a common purpose or goal-setting is an approach involving clarification for team members in reference to general-type goals as well as detailed objectives and timelines (Aga et al., 2016). Aga et al. (2016) stated,

Team members exposed to a [*sic*] goal-setting are expected to become involved in action planning to identify ways to achieve those goals. Studies show that goal-setting intervention combined with performance measurement and feedback have in many cases been successfully applied in organizations (Salas et al., 1999). (p. 807)

Once teams put forth action toward goals, the team must be given feedback or a performance measurement to assess if the goals were met according to standards (Aga et al., 2016). A common purpose, therefore, may contribute to teams accomplishing the task at hand.

Group Size

The size of a group is an important attribute to consider when evaluating team cohesion. Five to seven team members is the recommended size for a successful group, according to Thompson et al. (2015). Depending on the type of organization and team goals, recommended size could differ. Larger teams can successfully solve more complex issues because they have additional shared knowledge; however, smaller groups can develop cohesion easier and quicker which can increase initial group performance (Thompson et al., 2015).

Larger groups tend to develop less frequent and intimate interactions between team members. Group members who communicate less often are more likely to feel unknown and contribute to group tasks less often (Soboroff, 2012). Individuals of larger teams also describe more difficulty forming trust with teammates and are not as friendly as individuals of smaller teams. Ceschi, Dorofeeva, and Sartori (2014) established the size of a team to be positively associated with the performance of the team. Individuals of larger teams report less fulfillment and collaboration. Group size is imperative to the success of team cohesion because, according to Soboroff (2012), effective teams have a natural size constraint. Larger teams have less

cohesion and might display less performance on tasks when compared to teams within the limit of five to seven members (Ceschi et al., 2014).

At times, individuals may feel they do not matter to the success of the team, but cohesion can remain high despite that feeling (Soboroff, 2012). However, there may be circumstances where tasks assigned are jointed and require individuals to work together, which in turn could become problematic in a large team. Ceschi et al. (2014) found “group size can affect dynamics of the innermost intragroup relations level before having an effect on decision performance and learning” (p. 223). Soboroff (2012) suggested that individuals with low self-confidence could potentially avoid tasks involving joint effort in an attempt to maintain team cohesion among the remainder of the group members. Because of the possibility of individuals being overlooked, it is more likely one could avoid a task in a larger group, which is why smaller group size is recommended (Soboroff, 2012).

Aubé, Rousseau, and Tremblay (2011) stated “the number of members in a team depends, for example, on the characteristics of the task to be performed and the characteristics of the environment in which the team is evolving” (p. 358). The results of Soboroff’s (2012) research indicated that groups of three to seven people did not result in a significant difference in group cohesion; however, once the group became larger than eight people, differences were noted. “Members of eight-person groups were reported to be significantly less competent and valuable than members of four-person groups, possibly owing to the effect of group size in lowering awareness of other group members” (Soboroff, 2012, p. 99). Aubé et al. (2011) found the internal functioning of a group were affected when groups were too large. When building team cohesion, it is imperative that group size is taken into account in order for the group to be successful.

Heterogeneous Grouping Related to Strengths

Analyzing the strengths of individuals before creating teams is important for building team cohesion because teams should be populated with people having varied strengths.

Heterogeneous grouping is defined as compiling a team of individuals who have varied attributes (McGlynn & Kozlowski, 2016). According to McGlynn and Kozlowski (2016), individuals are aware of their own strengths and can utilize those specific strengths to increase group success. When placing individuals into teams, Santovec (2014) suggested to leaders, “knowing your strengths and investing in others' strengths, getting people with the right strengths on your team and understanding and meeting the four basic needs of those who look to you for leadership” are necessary tasks in creating team cohesion (p. 1).

In the past, according to Santovec (2014), Krause-Hanson and other researchers suggested individuals focus on cultivating weaknesses which were “anything that gets in the way of an excellent performance” (p. 1). “Each person's greatest room for growth is in the areas of his or her greatest strengths” (Santovec, 2014, p. 2). McGlynn and Kozlowski (2016) found heterogeneous grouping allowed individuals to use strengths while support was given in weaker areas. Struggling to develop a weakness diverts one from utilizing innate strengths and drains energy; therefore, the task at hand is not enjoyable. Santovec (2014) found that focusing on strengths within the group and ignoring or managing weaknesses was important for promoting team cohesion.

Heterogeneous grouping is suggested to use the strengths of each team member so the team can accomplish different types of tasks leading to the end goal. To find strengths of group members, Santovec (2014) suggested having a strengths-centered conversation to find out what each member is good at and what each person enjoys most. Leaders should check in with group

members periodically to ensure strengths are utilized in the best way possible as tasks evolve over time (McGlynn & Kozlowski, 2016). Waiting until annual evaluations is not sufficient to continue cohesion. Repeated check in and dialogue are the bases to successful performance administration (Santovec, 2014).

StrengthsFinder is an assessment given to determine innate strengths of individuals which allows leaders to “operate from a fact-finding approach rather than a punitive stance” (Santovec, 2014, p. 27). When managing groups, Krause-Hanson decided to approach a rude team member to determine why the person was struggling within the group (Santovec, 2014). The individual’s strengths were *empathy* and *harmony* which were perfect strengths for the given task of greeting visitors as they entered the front office. An additional task given to the individual was budgeting and scheduling which required attention to detail and focus. Frustration of constantly restarting tasks due to interruptions of visitors increased and were detrimental to interactions with others. With continuous checks, the situation was remedied quickly and the individual was moved to a quieter place in the office with fewer interruptions (Santovec, 2014).

Gallup scientists released the Clifton StrengthsFinder which is an assessment that focuses on strengths-based discovery and expansion (Clifton, 2018). The CEO of Gallup, Jim Clifton (2018), stated that the “Clifton Strengths movement is exploding around the world” (Clifton, 2018, p. 1). By 2020, around 20 million individuals, particularly college students and employees, will have taken the assessment to find their strengths. “Clifton Strengths is quickly becoming the common language of human development” (Clifton, 2018, p. 2). Finding a person’s strengths and utilizing the information within groups is directly related to developing strengths to obtain desired outcomes (Clifton, 2018), such as team cohesion.

Heterogeneous grouping in relation to strengths can lead to team cohesion because teams can succeed more efficiently by assigning tasks to individuals aligned to strengths.

Good leaders manage a team with projects and activities that encourage members to understand individual and team strengths. In an effective team, members know who their strengths partners are—the people who will do things that the individual doesn't do well. (Santovec, 2014, p. 5)

Teammates must recognize how each individual contributes to the team's overall objectives – how each person's strengths will contribute to the context of the situation and goals of the team.

Camaraderie, Altruism, and Friendliness

Camaraderie, altruism, and friendliness are all components related to social cohesion within teams (Thiss, 2016). Camaraderie is not an easy task to achieve when team members are working together, so it is essential to develop relationships to feel safe and to trust coworkers (Aga et al., 2016). “Believing the best about and expecting the best from team members creates a positive frame for conflict resolution and team problem solving” (Mote, 2013, p. 1).

“We find that people can reliably differentiate situations according to 5, but not 6, dimensions of interdependence: (a) mutual dependence, (b) power, (c) conflict, (d) future interdependence, and (e) information certainty” (Gerpott et al., 2018, p. 716). The research on interdependence by Gerpott et al. (2018) highlighted an absence in past research and focused more on how individuals think about interdependence or friendliness.

Ritov and Kogut (2017) suggested that team cohesion is correlated with a feeling of connectedness to a team. Team cohesion was shown to improve cooperation between team members and group identity. Ritov and Kogut (2017) considered how one's altruism or kindness within a group could occur due to consequences of a situation or due to intentions. Through the

study of Ritov and Kogut (2017), the role of group-cohesiveness was examined as an essential factor accounting for one's level of generosity toward group members using 107 students as participants. The students played a game where the task was to share the game money with team members in the group. The conclusion from Ritov and Kogut's (2017) study indicated that some group members felt compelled to show friendliness or altruism to group members because teams are supposed to have harmony, and others genuinely felt like showing friendliness or altruism because of the camaraderie built among the group.

Bonding and Cooperation

Bonding and cooperation among teammates are key to achieving team cohesion. Stakeholders in an organization do not always share similar values or culture when collaboration begins. To outline a non-example of a team demonstrating bonding and cooperation, Hurlburt et al. (2014) referred to the case of an organization called Safe Care. Within the company, some individuals came from larger government groups, and other individuals came from lesser non-profit establishments. The individuals often did not share similar ideas about pursuing adjustments in the organization or individual roles in the progression (Hurlburt et al., 2014). The difference in opinions often led to conflict which made the situation more complex when implementation was needed.

Individuals willing to be flexible implement self-direction and individuality people who are determined to explore should get to know others who may not be part of the team, or out-group members (Flunger & Ziebertz, 2010). Establishing personal relationships will promote bonding, thus leading to cooperation among team members. Therefore, individuals open to change usually have a positive impression on out-group mindsets (Flunger & Ziebertz, 2010).

One with self-direction and individuality would need to put forth more effort to listen to others with different attitudes and values to create team cohesion.

To lead shared duties, Chiang et al., (2011) suggested working rules for teams in collaboration. The rules were:

- (a) Speaking our own opinions with objectivity.
- (b) Listening to others with an open mind and respect.
- (c) Participating in discussions and making group decisions equally.
- (d) Maintaining confidentiality.
- (e) Attending team meetings on time.

(Chiang et al, 2011, p. 30)

The listed parameters were useful for directing behavior and for constructing civil interactions (Chiang et al., 2011). Sonntag and Zizzo (2019) supported the research of Chiang et al. (2011) by finding participants in a team were more likely to cooperate when held accountable by team members. During the study, participants were placed in two different situations to perform a task. One situation required feedback and accountability from teammates and the other was a more isolated task where the individual was not monitored or held accountable. The bond between teammates gave individuals a sense of ownership within the group to cooperate and perform well (Sonntag & Zizzo, 2019).

Henttonen, Johanson, and Janhonen (2014) found:

When the members interact with larger numbers of other members the team should benefit from a lower tendency to engage in social loafing, meaning that people expend less effort when they perform collective tasks than when they work on the same task individually, or opportunism, and a closer adjustment to agreed-on norms: in other words, the team will perform better. (p. 333)

Bonding of team members is beneficial to organizations because teams will be motivated by each other to perform well, which fosters team cohesion and benefits the organization cost-wise (Henttonen et al., 2014). In light of increased work production, bonding and cooperation are important aspects of achieving team cohesion among groups.

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation

Encouraging the motivation of team members is important when building team cohesion. Motivation can be extrinsic, or motivation can be intrinsic – which is an inner drive to accomplish a task with perseverance, according to Farhath and Bin Hamzah (2017). Utilizing incentives to encourage actions and the want of an individual to perform a task is termed as extrinsic motivation. Thus, leaders must be aware of the two types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic.

Intrinsic motivation signifies the incentive necessary to participate in an activity for enjoyment or satisfaction (Gultekin & Acar, 2014). The common intrinsic motivation factors are aspiring to participate and willingness to develop traits (Gultekin & Acar, 2014). Farhath and Bin Hamzah (2017) described intrinsic motivation as an action of a person which derives from individual desires, aspirations, interests, and performances.

“Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is derived from the influence of some kind of external incentive, distinct from the wish to engage in education for its own sake” (Gultekin & Acar, 2014, p. 292). Extrinsic motivational factors include the school culture and financial motivations (Gultekin & Acar, 2014). When an individual works for rewards, or works to prevent penalty, Farhath and Bin Hamzh (2017) explained the work as extrinsic motivation.

Intrinsic motivation has a higher effect on people than extrinsic motivation, but both motivations assist in building team cohesion. If an individual is interested in a task or objective,

the individual will more than likely be intrinsically motivated to complete the task; and, if the individual is asked to complete a task that is not of great interest, extrinsic motivation may be necessary (Farhath & Bin Hamzh, 2017). Leaders must find which types of motivators are needed to help groups work toward goals and objectives.

Maintaining Team Cohesion

Once teams achieve cohesion, it is imperative to maintain cohesion over time to increase success and accomplish goals (Mathieu, Kukenberger, D’Innocenzo, & Reilly, 2015).

There are several ways to maintain team cohesion within an organization. Defining roles, creating identity, and committing to objectives are a few practices to assist with maintaining team cohesion. Continuation of a cohesive team requires consistent monitoring and evaluation.

Role Clarity

“Ambiguous roles brought out greater anxiety and tension among employees and reduces employees’ productivity. Setting role expectations is an important first step when employers hire people for their organization” (Thangavelu & Sudhahar, 2017, p. 6). Role clarity and interdependency are both equally important to continue the cohesiveness of a group. Team members need to clearly understand roles and build relationships with the team. Eys and Kim (2017),

With respect to roles, Carron and Eys (2012) summarized that cohesion and role perceptions (e.g., role ambiguity, acceptance, and performance) appear to act on each other in a reciprocal fashion, though Bosselut, McLaren, Eys, and Heuzé (2012) found that youth athletes’ perceptions of social cohesion were predictive of their subsequent perceptions of role ambiguity. (p. 6)

When the teammates can identify what is expected in their individual roles, then performance increases (Thangavelu & Sudhahar, 2017). It is imperative for the leader to clearly define the roles and responsibilities for team members, the aspects that are important for the job, how the team will be assessed, and how delivering the responsibilities of the roles will ensure success. Role clarity will increase job satisfaction among group members and structured role definitions for teams becomes instrumental in cultivating performance (Thangavelu & Sudhahar, 2017).

Soboroff (2012) found that role clarity helps to maintain team cohesion within groups. Team cohesion is not sustained if group members are not committed to or do not feel a part of the group. Role clarity gives individuals the sense of belonging to the group because a specific role is dependent upon that individual. If roles are limited within organizations and groups to simplify processes, performance and cohesion can be damaged (Soboroff, 2012).

Commitment to Objectives

Maintaining team cohesion requires individuals of the team to sustain the commitment to work toward the objectives set by leadership. As groups move toward the objectives, change will occur and leadership will need to deliberately plan for modifications to succeed (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018). Each individual within the group will take a leadership role in facilitating the change needed along the way. One individual, or a group of team members, should be conscientious and act as the leader of the improvements leading to the objectives (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018). This individual or group requires adequate perspective to observe the entire situation comprehensively and strategize how to meet the objectives. Sustainability of the group relies on whether or not leaders within the group are keeping the commitment to focus on the specific objectives set (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018).

Commitment to a team is different from cohesion, according to Soboroff (2012). Cohesion includes beliefs that the team identifies with each team member and difficult situations will bring the team closer; while, commitment is the intent to sustain relationships within the group. However, commitment of team members can, in turn, bring about or maintain cohesion (Soboroff, 2012).

Sense of Belonging Through Identification with Group Members

Maintaining team cohesion is heightened if members feel a sense of belonging through identification with others in the group. Emerging interpersonal relationships encompasses dialogue about any disagreements within the team and ensures there are no hidden agendas (Aga et al., 2016). Creating a sense of belonging and camaraderie is not easy to attain when team members are working together, so it is imperative to develop connections to feel secure and to depend on coworkers (Aga et al., 2016). Using a survey containing Likert scales to answer questions about teammates and whether an individual feels safe or comfortable would be an effective way to see if the interpersonal relationships are established and if individuals feel a sense of belonging.

Group members must be able to identify with the group to have a cohesive team (Thiss, 2017). For example, a recent meta-analysis by Steffens, Haslam, Schuh, Jetten, and van Dick (2016) revealed that social identification has an important impact on stress and well-being within the workplace in that those who identify with a work group are less likely to experience mal-effects on health such as stress and burnout. (Cientanni et al., 2017, p. 706)

Group Pride

One idea related to team cohesion is when a team sees itself as an entity (Ritov & Kogut, 2017). When groups are seen as an entity, a sense of group pride begins to build which, then,

increases team cohesion. Added team cohesiveness may be accomplished through collaborating toward a mutual goal. Either way, increased cohesiveness is anticipated to increase a feeling of connectedness, which facilitates more meaningful interactions (Ritov & Kogut, 2017).

Motivation to participate in the group facilitates a sense of excitement, which, in turn, gives the team a sense of mission to meet goals. Social interaction can facilitate informal relationships within the group. “Thus, informal connections between individuals can have important implications for the team as a whole, as they limit or facilitate the flow of resources between and within teams” (Rovira-Asenjo et al., 2017, p. 65). Group pride gives confidence for teams and can facilitate success.

Communication Among Teammates

According to Jensen and Mottern (2016), a group performs well by listening to each other. Listening can increase the commitment to one another which will increase the development and achievement of team members. Jensen and Mottern (2016) applied the concept of listening to case management which requires a cohesive team. “By listening first, the case manager was able to stay true to the case management process of identifying the individual’s goals and providing options and education to empower decision making” (Jensen & Mottern, 2016, p. 308). Chiang et al. (2011) related listening similarly within the task of decision making. Healthy teams have dialogue that nurtures sincerity and trust (Jensen & Mottern, 2016). Promoting positive relationships with staff starts with listening to co-workers’ feedback and ideas (Kroning, Yezzo, Leahy, & Foran, 2019). When staff members realize their leadership team is listening to the staff members’ ideas, trust and buy-in are increased.

During collaboration, diverse views are often articulated through dialogue. Individuals within groups may have differing opinions on what will work to create group cohesion and group

success. Due to the numerous needs, interests, objectives, and standards between members in a group, there will be conflict (Chiang et al., 2011). According to Chiang et al. (2011), conflict is essential to successful transformation or enhancement within the group. Individual diversity, differences, and conflicts are possible bases for new thoughts and team learning. Leaders should engage in constructive and introspective discussions that support new ideas (Chiang et al., 2011).

In 2010, Hinton was a leader in a medical clinic and updated the medical office by expanding the staff and restructuring oversight of the staff in order to implement growth management. During the leadership duties, Hinton (2010) struggled to bring team members together and form a cohesive group. Communication among team members was important to Hinton (2010); to facilitate communication, team members had monthly meetings. The monthly meetings provided leadership and team members with an opportunity to express thoughts and ideas as a group (Hinton, 2010). The meetings also gave time for supporting individuals, guiding practices, and providing feedback (Hinton, 2010). Hinton (2010) encouraged staff to express concerns and kept open communication as a factor of team cohesion.

Trust and Respect Within the Team

Upholding team cohesion requires trust among team members. In the study conducted by Tseng and Yeh (2013), trust was defined as “an emergent state comprising team member intentions to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of the members of the team” (p. 2). According to Soboroff (2012), trust is the perception that an individual will not cause harm to the group members if the opportunity arises. As cohesion is decreased, team members focus more on individuals with more perceived awareness, fostering alliances within teams. Alliances then gain cohesion and identity over time and can reduce individual commitments to the team as a group, thus proving the importance of maintaining team

cohesion as a whole (Soboroff, 2012).

“Traditionally, trust is assumed to build gradually within teams over time based on an individual’s cognitive assessment of the other person’s behavior” (Tseng & Yeh, 2013, p. 2). The absence of shared interactions and limited personal interactions among teammates reduce the possibility for trust to develop. Trust in cohesive groups is more complex and more essential than dyadic trust because cohesive groups encompass numerous trustees, including individuals with different characteristics (Tseng & Yeh, 2013). An individual trusts a team when it is believed that the team

(a) makes a good-faith effort to behave in accordance with any commitments both explicit or implicit, (b) is honest in whatever negotiations preceded such commitments, and (c) does not take excessive advantage of another even when the opportunity is available. (Tseng & Yeh, 2013, p. 2)

Collaboration can empower team members, encouraging those team members to increase their contributions and accomplishments (Tseng & Yeh, 2013). Teammates who trust each other believe the team is working together to meet the same goals and are promoting effective teamwork. Effective collaboration happens once trust is gained from one another. Trust is built “through sharing one’s thoughts, ideas, conclusions, and feelings and having the other group members respond with acceptance, support and reciprocation of disclosures (Johnson & Johnson, 2000)” (Tseng & Yeh, 2013, p. 2).

To form a cohesive environment, group members must also respect each other. One’s perception of the group influences the process in which teammates engage (Eys & Kim, 2017). There are various magnitudes of cohesion with regard to the speed or level of respect that emerge within a group in relation to ongoing strength of the group. Eys and Kim (2017) proposed that

“group members’ attractions to their group have elements that develop at different speeds. More global attractions to the group are proposed to develop quickly while more specific interpersonal attractions (i.e., among group members) need more time to be fostered” (p. 3)

When teams communicate well with each other, a team spirit is created which produces a positive culture. Teams with high levels of trust are most likely to cooperate and share information with each other, which promotes team cohesion (Soboroff, 2012). Team cohesion was defined as “attraction to the group, satisfaction with other members of the group, and social interaction among the group members” (Tseng & Yeh, 2013, p. 2). Building cohesive and trusting teams allows teammates to form relationships, communicate effectively, and remain productive even when difficulties arise (Tseng & Yeh, 2013).

Rewards of Teams

When working toward team cohesion, rewards for success can encourage the team to continue working cohesively (Thompson et al., 2015). Team diversity is a factor when the goal is team cohesion (Liang et al., 2015). Team members observe verbal and nonverbal cues from teammates and make inferences on the individual’s personality and values (Liang et al., 2015). If the personalities of the team members are not similar, team members find difficulty in feeling cohesive (Liang et al., 2015); thus, rewards can serve to boost cohesiveness.

Rewards or encouragement from leadership is imperative to growth and willingness to move forward (Galbraith, 2014). Leadership principles in the business world are often applied to the educational setting. For example, school faculty and staff are given rewards by the administration to encourage personnel to continue working hard toward school-wide initiatives.

Commonly used incentives could be intrinsic or extrinsic. Administrators in education found it challenging to motivate faculty to demonstrate high performance (Gultekin, & Acar,

2014). Also, the motivation of teachers increases performance in the classroom and makes the quality of the school system expand.

Group Efficacy and Success

Lynn and Kalay (2016) stated, “According to role theory (Rizzo et al. 1970), clarity of role means the degree to which required information is provided about how the employee is expected to perform his or her job” (p. 182). Role-clarification is one of the indicators that measures team configuration (Lynn & Kalay, 2016). The assurance of role-clarification provides each teammate with an explanation of any duties shared as well as describing distinct responsibilities (Aga et al., 2016). Using a written job description with names written next to each assignment will clearly resolve any discrepancies and give a reference for any potential explanation needed. Clarification of roles increases communication amongst team members and increases the chances of meeting the goal at hand (Aga et al., 2016).

The Work Personality Index is an example of a questionnaire that is given to determine personality traits that go along with an individual’s performance at work (Macnab & Bakker, 2014). Group efficacy will be increased when team members are matched to the task. The results are used in “personnel selection, leadership development, personal development, and team-building” (Macnab & Bakker, 2014, p. 1). If team members are placed in roles conducive to personality traits and strengths, the outcome could be more productive. Questionnaires such as the Work Personality Index can contribute to group efficacy and success.

The Role of Leaders in Creating and Sustaining Team Cohesion

According to Santovec (2014), great leaders devote time to refining teams and have a significant role in creating and sustaining team cohesion. Leaders should ensure teams are well-rounded and include individuals with strengths that cover four areas of leadership: executing,

influencing, relationship building, and strategic thinking. Constructing a successful team is imperative for group success and team cohesion.

The area of executing, according to Santovec (2014), is a strength describing people who are focused, well-organized, responsible, and serious about making choices. Influence, as mentioned by Santovec (2014), is the second area of strengths needed in cohesive teams. Santovec (2014) described executive strengths as dependable and restorative when facing difficulties within the team. Custard (2016) found that “no leader succeeds individually; it is always a team effort” (p. 7). To be fruitful, a leader should set goals, make plans, and create timelines (Perry, 2017). The core values of the individuals with executive strengths are unchanging, and there is a well-defined purpose for the team (Santovec, 2014).

The second area of strengths needed in a cohesive team, as mentioned by Santovec (2014), is influence. Individuals who influence the team are activators and turn ideas into actions while communicating and commanding. Influencers pursue transformation of the team to increase success while focusing on strengths. Self-assurance and seeking significance are qualities influencers possess when working on teams (Santovec, 2014).

The third type of strength needed to form cohesive teams resides in an individual who can thrive in building relationships. According to Santovec (2014), a relationship builder is adaptable and displays harmony and compassion. One with the relationship-building strength strives to convince teammates to be excited about goals and tasks at hand. For individuals who are relationship builders, there is high satisfaction in achieving a goal with the collaboration of team members (Santovec, 2014).

Strategic thinkers are the final type of individuals needed for team cohesion, as stated by Santovec (2014). People who think strategically can think about the vision of the team and

pinpoint important patterns of concern. Intellectual discussion and input by team members is welcomed by strategic thinkers (Santovec, 2014). Leaders must be strategic thinkers when forming work teams. To manage team weaknesses, a leader can strategically place an additional member on the team who possesses a strength the team is missing. Groups comprised of individuals with similar strengths lack strategic diversity and will have difficulty creating a cohesive team (Santovec, 2014).

Supportive Leaders

Pomohaci and Sopa (2018) completed a study evaluating team cohesion within volleyball teams and how to find the correct leader for the team. The researchers found leaders have two distinct purposes: the first purpose is to offer the volleyball players fulfillment, and the second purpose is to provide direction for each individual of the team to guarantee team and goal accomplishment. Leadership, according to Pomohaci and Sopa (2018), is described as a system in which a person inspires a group of people to accomplish a shared goal.

“Leadership processes should be similar in different contexts and their success and effectiveness should rely on similar factors” (Pomohaci & Sopa, 2018, p. 59). Supportive leaders should motivate, communicate, and encourage team members within the group. Pomohaci and Sopa (2018) also stated supportive leaders are obligated to facilitate social-emotional participation and cultivate friendships at work to keep the team from collapsing. The professional growth of the leader, selecting the correct leader for a given environment, and determining the leader’s role are all topics that need further investigation (Pomohaci & Sopa, 2018).

Leaders should look at the “big picture” and move toward the goal while cultivating connections with other individuals in the group. Thiss (2017) suggested that a team should be kept informed of the vision or goal and should also designate a lead individual to assist with day-

to-day interactions and questions that arise. Leaders should possess a vision to reach goals set by the team. “Be fair, honest, and transparent in your dealings” (Hinton, 2010, p. 1). Leaders may work closely with teammates and even complete undesirable tasks in order to show their motivation to move toward mutual goals.

Feedback from leadership is essential in building team cohesion. According to Aga et al. (2016), transformational leadership creates official, continuous interaction within the team. The interaction between leadership and team members positively influences the success of the team project. Transformational leadership also encompasses servant leadership, which can be defined as serving others in many capacities by putting others first when making decisions (Northouse, 2015). Leadership should be giving periodic feedback to teams so that teams remain on the correct course of action.

Set Goals/Objectives

To sustain team cohesion, leaders must set goals and objectives for the group. The goals and objectives established should be clear and communicated consistently to the team by the leader (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018). A study about school reform, completed by Dueppen and Hughes (2018), revealed that group members in the Reform Partnership Initiative (RPI) perceived the objectives of the team vastly different from each other. The opposing views were inclined to be established based on the position of the members in the team. The study illustrated the significance of confirming that goals are well-defined, comprehensible, and consistently communicated throughout the team (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018). According to Eys and Kim (2017)

Specifically, the team-building program must promote a shared vision that encompasses the group’s overarching goals and expectations, collaborative and synergetic teamwork as

a result of role clarity and acceptance among members, and individual and mutual accountability that reflect their willingness to accept responsibility for their actions and group outcomes. (p. 12)

When setting goals and objectives, creating communication avenues such as a team newsletter, email messages, and websites can assist with delivering a reliable opportunity to communicate expectations. Taking larger long-term goals and breaking them into smaller short-term objectives assists teams in completing tasks more effectively (Eys and Kim, 2017). Open interaction and visibility from leadership are beneficial to ensuring better understanding of the goals and objectives (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018).

Guidance of Teams

Leaders play an important role in the development of cohesion within a group (Eys & Kim, 2017) and can create and sustain team cohesion by guiding teams in an accurate direction. When guiding a team, organization is an imperative part of a leadership position. Individuals are more productive when the work area is organized and well-ordered (Hinton, 2010). If a team is organized, the leader is better able to guide the team without a chaotic environment. Workflow is improved, and there is pride taken in the organization itself. Workers should be able to access supplies and necessities including manuals and notes (Hinton, 2010).

Another important piece of guiding teams is determining priorities and establishing expectations in a cooperative manner (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018). School leaders have substantial power to make or break the course of a team because the leader's influence comes from the capability to determine priorities and expectations. However, the priorities and expectations of the group should be created collaboratively with the school's faculty and staff to

cultivate a common set of goals while the school leader guides the team toward achieving the goal (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018).

Eys and Kim (2017) found that leaders who demonstrate social support, model positive feedback, and pursue professional development training can positively influence team cohesion. When researching sports teams, Eys and Kim (2017) established that coaches should positively motivate the team and create an interactive climate to increase cohesiveness. If an ego-involving climate – one which allows the leader to exercise control and gain recognition – is supported, team cohesion will decrease (Eys & Kim, 2017); however, when the team’s members and goals are the focus, team cohesion will increase. The approach a leader takes in guiding the team will determine the success of team cohesion.

Supervision of Behaviors

Problem-solving transpires when the team has behavioral problems which need to be worked out and a plan is formed to address and solve the problems (Aga et al., 2016). Relationship conflicts are serious problems for collaboration in teams (Tseng & Yeh, 2013). “It is advantageous to discover the struggles and conflicts earlier, to facilitate the open communication channel in teams, and to encourage individual accountability” (Tseng & Yeh, 2013, p. 8).

Action plans are important during the early stages of collaboration to work through behavioral issues that arise during the process of teamwork (Aga et al., 2016). One way to demonstrate action planning is through utilization of a written rubric which walks the team through conflict resolution and assists with a step-by-step solution to any problem. The team can refer back to the rubric when needed. This action planning process works well because it gives a visual of each step in the process.

According to Aga et al. (2016), another successful practice in the management of behavior within a team is to identify central issues of the task. Once the issues are identified, the team members can problem-solve and put a plan in place to move forward (Aga et al., 2016). The team, then, progresses from identifying task-based issues to resolving behavioral problems and on to collaboration and effective team work.

Encouragement of Teams

In order to sustain team cohesion, leaders must encourage teams often. Leaders are often busy, and time can be detrimental to the consistency of team encouragement. One solution to the lack of time, as suggested by Dueppen and Hughes (2018), is to cultivate leadership at all levels within groups. A meaningful conclusion of the study completed by Dueppen and Hughes (2018) was that “leadership does not always equate to having positional or supervisory authority” (p. 31). Thus, leaders are individuals who determine learning focused priorities, give encouragement, and provide opportunities for group members to learn.

Leaders are also people who encourage others and work collaboratively within the team. Hinton (2010) suggested leaders encourage teammates to reach their full potential individually in order to be an effective team member in order to achieve team cohesion. As each individual reaches his or her potential, the task of encouraging teams, leading to team cohesion, can be shared among individuals who make up the group. Dueppen and Hughes’ (2018) research focused on education; therefore, the findings of the study are applicable to team dynamics in educational settings. Thus, Dueppen and Hughes (2018) found it is imperative for individuals in education to recognize that, as an educator with or without a leadership title or job description, there is a leadership role as a member of a working team to encourage teammates.

As another method of encouraging the team, a leader should set expectations of increasing team resilience and thinking positive thoughts each day. Mathew, Sudhir, and Mariamma (2015) stated, “While positive automatic thoughts are related to positive daily functioning, future expectations, self-evaluation, and other’s evaluations of the self, negative automatic thoughts are typically in the area of personal maladjustment, negative self-concept, expectations, low self-esteem, and helplessness (p. 53).” The role of positive or optimistic thoughts raises self-worth which buffers stress (Mathew et al., 2015). When stress is reduced, individuals feel more encouraged.

Not only do leaders provide encouragement to the members of the team, but teammates can also serve as an encouragement to each other. “Classroom teachers can also be a significant source of encouragement and positivity for each other, their administrators, their students and their community as they work to guide future reforms and seek to accomplish goals that matter” (Dueppen & Hughes, 2018, p. 31). With several team members giving encouragement to one another on the team, cohesion can be sustained.

Feedback for Teams

Leaders who take time to gain insight on each team member’s strengths can use the information to give adequate feedback and receive quality actions from the team (Santovec, 2014). Staff members should be aware of the leader’s job performance expectations and be given feedback for improvement. Positive praise should also be given to staff members routinely, especially when staff members are part of a work team with specific roles. Each person has role-specific responsibilities leading to feelings of ownership and empowerment to the group (Hinton, 2010).

Context within schools can be objective and subjective information, according to Ingle (2107). Objective context within schools is obvious for a leader to know. If Leaders must know who is in charge of performing particular tasks within the company or school (Ingle, 2017). Subjective context is not as concrete but can be extremely important (Ingle, 2017). The leader must know how the employees are feeling about a particular direction and how much ownership the team has in what is happening (Ingle, 2017).

We must always remember: We aren't leading assets - we are leading people.

Human beings aren't chess pieces to be moved dispassionately here and there.

Furthermore, leaders who attempt to manage human assets the same way they manage inventory control will usually find themselves frustrated, unsuccessful...or out of a job.

(Ingle, 2017, p. 34)

People change over time, and the leader must also be cognizant of the change as well (Ingle, 2017). Emotions and priorities change over time and people who were once on board with a certain idea may change their minds over time (Ingle, 2017). At schools, leaders need to be aware of times when teachers are exhausted and ready for an upcoming break. The faculty may not be as open to new ideas or avenues of growth when they are only trying to survive the next week which is why it is imperative for leaders to get periodic feedback from teams.

Concise and clear instructions are of utmost importance when leaders are giving direction to a team (Ingle, 2017). The team must know exactly what is expected of them and have a clear picture of where the team is heading (Ingle, 2107). Communication not only involves the person speaking, it also involves the person taking in the information (Ingle, 2017). Even if a leader is clear and concise with direction, the team could be poor listeners and not receive the directions as clearly as they were given (Ingle, 2017). In fact, according to Ingle (2017), leaders should

request feedback from the person listening to make sure they heard what was said or intended. Feedback of all types must be considered in order to determine whether the information was heard correctly (Ingle, 2017). “As a leader, you must be a careful, intentional observer, receiver, and provider of feedback” (Ingle, 2017, p. 42).

Ultimately, a great leader generates the conditions of concentration, commitment, achievement, collaboration, passion, and follow-through to ensure success and team cohesion. Teams are empowered by the leader but given clear expectations (Santovec, 2014). The feedback given should be authentic and relational while showing compassion. Leaders should offer stability and assurance during periods of change showing transparency (Santovec, 2014). If feedback is given with grace and consideration, the team will respond positively and cohesion can become stronger.

Effects of Team Cohesion in Organizations

Team cohesion can affect organizations as a whole or as a part, or cohesion can affect each team member individually. When the organization is a school, team cohesion can affect the school as an entire organization in relation to performance or success. If team cohesion is not in place, team performance will be affected negatively, as well, thus student performance will not increase.

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance (OP) is a factor indicating whether an organization will decline or succeed (Nafei, 2015). In an attempt to define OP, Nafei (2015) stated

Despite the large corpus of research and studies on OP, no agreement on the concept of OP is found. In spite of this difference, most researchers express their OP through the success achieved by the organization in achieving its objectives. (p. 3)

OP is a picture of the organization's capability of achieving goals and objectives. When an organization uses resources efficiently to achieve goals, the measurement of outputs versus inputs is a depiction of OP (Nafei, 2015). There are two dimensions of OP, according to Nafei (2015): 1) comparative performance which indicates the categories of employees in relation to profitability when compared to organizations in a similar location; and 2) internal performance which indicates categories of employees in relation to the targets set for the short and long term goals.

Organizational change and team cohesion are ongoing processes and are continually happening within organizations as growth and circumstances occur (Burke, 2018). Typically, organizational change is not a planned process, and the majority of organizational change is unplanned or evolutionary. When teams are expected to continue to be cohesive and flexible with any change that may occur, operations can be difficult. However, there are times when organizational change is revolutionary, meaning the change is planned (Burke, 2018). Burke (2018) states

The fact that current and future changes in the external environments in which organizations function are now occurring so rapidly requires that organizational executives constantly monitor and attempt to understand the nature of these changes in their respective marketplaces and in the broader world environment. (p. 1)

If organizational leaders keep cohesive teams on board by allowing teams to give feedback and become a part of the movement happening, teams will continue to remain cohesive. “The more that work units in the organization are involved in helping and implement change, the more they are likely to embrace rather than resist the organization change effort” (Burke, 2018, p. 121).

The resistance by groups can take on four different forms: *turf* protection and competition,

closing ranks, changing allegiances, and the demand for new leadership (Burke, 2018, p. 122). Protecting the *turf* is brought about when teams feel the need to protect the role of the group and not compete with new procedures (Burke, 2018), thus creating resistance. OP will be successful if resistance group situations can be avoided. The findings of Nafei (2015) revealed that team cohesion was positively related to and directly affects OP. Leaders should ensure that team cohesion be practiced within the organization in order to promote positive outcomes for the organization as a whole.

Team Performance

Since the 1960's, researchers have questioned whether or not team cohesion was linked to the performance of teams (Eys & Kim, 2017). Research in sport studies was conducted by Carron, Colman, Wheeler, and Stevens in 2002 to determine the correlation between cohesion and team performance; and, the researchers found that there was a positive and substantial correlation between cohesion and team performance (Eys & Kim, 2017). According to Sabin and Marcel (2015), cohesiveness of a group is a difficult and ongoing goal that affects the performance of a team. A cohesive team with frequent communication can increase performance. During the study conducted by Sabin and Marcel (2015) on basketball teams to determine if communication increases cohesion, the results of the socio-metric test administered to the players established that increased communication led to cohesion increase from 0.02 to 0.08 in scores; and, team performance improved indicating progression in team cohesion and performance. Thus, Sabin and Marcel (2015) concluded that team cohesion was an essential element in the group's progression.

Mach, Dolan, and Tzafrir (2010) described the role of team cohesion in relation to team performance.

The explanation of why teams might perform better than the sum of the individual performers or why teams consisting of brilliant individual players might collectively underperform might be found in the role cohesion plays in linking group processes and team results; to rephrase, united groups will be able to use their capabilities more efficiently since they know their teammates better and they are committed to successfully finishing the task before them. (p. 775)

According to Mach et al. (2010) there were several studies defining the relationship between cohesive teams and performance of teams. However, research was missing whether the teams were effective because of cohesiveness or whether teams became cohesive because of the effectiveness of the performance in competition (Mach et al., 2010). Some research addresses the relationship between team cohesion and team performance in a variety of sports teams. Conclusions of the research on sports teams were that cohesiveness and achievement were interdependent (Mach et al., 2010). Therefore, team cohesion positively affects team performance and team performance positively affects team cohesion.

Student Performance

Student performance is directly related to team collaboration (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2016) as a result of collaborative teams being effective in the classroom. When collaboration and team cohesion occur at the school level, student performance will be affected positively (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2016). “Because partnerships are problem-focused, we suggest that they can take the critical next steps and provide solutions that improve teaching and student learning” (Rubinstein & McCarthy, 2016, p. 1129). According to Tutolo (2017)

If we want to encourage our students to be kind and empathetic critical thinkers, then we must reflect these values both in how we interact with our fellow teachers and in the

decisions we make as a team. Because we have established a vision for our students, my colleagues and I will not be complicit in activities that do not align with our vision. (p. 1)

Teachers be part of collaborative and cohesive work teams in order to increase student performance. Cohesive work teams in a school allow for the teachers to serve as resources of knowledge and pedagogy for one another. Cohesive teams are able to clearly see what students are missing and take time to evaluate how to meet the goals toward student achievement (Tutolo, 2017).

Small Schools Versus Large Schools

Organizations Parallel Schools

Organizations use best practices of team cohesion to create success and to meet goals. In the same manner, schools can also use best practices of team cohesion to be successful. If organizations are successful with team cohesion, then schools can be as well. Best practices used in organizations to promote team cohesion vary based on the size of the organization.

Organizational design is imperative for the success of businesses and organizations when reaching goals. Galbraith (2014) created a framework called “The Star Model” which gives organizations, such as small schools, a groundwork to base a plan of action. The Star Model ensures managerial policies and influences the behavior of employees (Galbraith, 2014). The organization’s management personnel must become familiar with policies in order to mold the choices and actions of the organization.

The Star Model has five classifications (Galbraith, 2014). The first classification is called *strategy* and establishes the direction, or goals, of the organization (Galbraith, 2014). Schools also have a strategy through which the direction of the school must be established (Ohlson et al., 2016). The next classification of the Star Model is *structure* and establishes the

place, committee, or group through which decisions are made (Galbraith, 2014). “Principals and administrators are needed to lead educational improvement, foster effective change efforts, lead the implementation of new standards, and are central to shaping strong, professional school cultures” (Ohlson et al., 2016, p. 115). The school administration is the structure that schools have in order to make decisions. Subsequently, *processes* is the third classification of the Star Model. *Processes* determines how information will flow in relation to the organization (Galbraith, 2014). In agreement with the processes concept, Ohlson et al. (2016) mentioned that schools have a process for information to be received, and that process is similar to the processes in business organizations. The fourth classification is *rewards* or *reward systems* (Galbraith, 2014). *Rewards* is designed to impact the drive of workers and the ability to reach the goals of the organization (Galbraith, 2014). Rewards can be intrinsic or extrinsic in nature. The last classification is *people* and how the individuals relate to organizational policies. Organizational policies influence worker’s abilities and skill-sets (Galbraith, 2014, p. 52). Schools also have people who relate to policies made and those policies also impact teachers. Organizations and schools are similar when analyzing structure and approaches to team collaboration; thus, team cohesion among schools and organizations is similar.

Large Schools Versus Small Schools

Jarmolowski (2017) researched the concept of teacher planning time and teacher collaboration time related to increasing student achievement. Jarmolowski (2017) found that teacher planning increased student performance, and

In addition to specifying the number of minutes of planning time teachers must receive, district policies and collective bargaining agreements often put in place additional protections on planning time, spelling out not just the amount of planning time, but also

how long a planning block is, how frequently teachers must have time to plan, and when during the school day schools must schedule planning time. (p. 1)

Large schools have more auxiliary employees, such as substitutes and paraprofessionals, and are able to provide classroom coverage for teachers while planning time is occurring; however, in small schools, auxiliary staff is limited and coverage is often not available. Therefore, some teachers in smaller schools tend to have less planning time than teachers at larger schools (Slate & Jones, 2019). Less planning time could lead to lower student achievement rates.

In addition to teacher planning time, teams require time to collaborate to learn from one another and coordinate lessons and grades (Jarmolowski, 2017). Increased planning time, and better collaboration time, is a reason why educational systems in countries like Japan perform better than educational systems the United States (Jarmolowski, 2017). Collaboration time will increase team cohesion and lead to increased student performance due to implementation of effective teaching. Slate and Jones (2019) found that teachers in small schools have less time for collaboration due, mostly, to lack of resources.

Small schools, both public and private, have more difficulty with team cohesion than do large schools. Teams at small schools are not large, and often classrooms are different from one another leading teammates to feel isolated and alone (Raggl, 2015). Classrooms in small schools typically have multi-leveled populations which mean teachers are planning for multiple levels (Raggl, 2015). If planning time is taken by differentiating for multiple levels of learners, team cohesion may not be a priority. With limited staff to cover for planning and collaboration time, teachers in small schools are left with decreased time to build cohesive teams.

Horizontal and Vertical Teaming

There are two types of planning within schools, vertical planning and horizontal planning. Planning approaches used in schools expand perspectives offering time for “vertical (deeper) and horizontal (broader)” planning (Koper, 2012, p. 1). Vertical planning may involve working with coworkers that teach higher or lower grade levels and could also involve administration. Horizontal planning usually involves working with a team of teachers that teach the same grade level and have similar student populations (Klein, 2016).

Klein (2016) refers to horizontal and vertical planning within schools. “While knowledge sharing and horizontal thinking among peers teaching in the same school has been addressed at length in the literature, little has been written about the vertical sharing of knowledge between teachers moving to different positions” (Klein, 2016, p. 240-241). Vertical knowledge and horizontal knowledge produce different outcomes. Improvement in learning takes place during horizontal planning or knowledge. Horizontal planning is not as simple within a small school. For example, in a larger school, there may be two to three teachers teaching fourth graders and in a small school, there may only be one fourth grade teacher.

When horizontal planning is available, teachers feel more value and competent because feelings can be shared collectively (Klein, 2016). Horizontal planning “also promotes greater professional organizational identity and commitment, enhances organizational climate and moderates the tendency of teachers to leave their place of work” (Klein, 2016, p. 241). Vertical knowledge or planning impacts the teacher because the information the teacher is getting from administration or teachers that once had the same position adds pressure to perform as well as the vertical team member (Klein, 2016). Finding the best practices of team cohesion in small schools is an area that needs more research because vertical planning does not always lend itself

to frequent activity. Leaders of small school need to understand what the best practices of team cohesion are in order to become purposeful in ensuring teams are becoming cohesive.

Overall Themes of Creating Team Cohesion

Thematic patterns related to creating team cohesion within large organizations and large schools are evident in research by Thiss (2017). The themes of team cohesion can be categorized into two types: social-oriented cohesion and task-oriented cohesion (Thiss, 2017). Themes of building team cohesion, maintaining team cohesion, sustaining team cohesion, and evaluating the effects of team cohesion are parallel in large corporations as well as large schools. This study will research whether the best practices of team cohesion in large schools will parallel the best practices of team cohesion in small schools.

Best Practices of Creating Team Cohesion

Some of the best practices of building team cohesion include sharing a common purpose, committing time, and heterogeneous grouping (Thiss, 2017). While the practices that build team cohesion are both task-oriented and social-oriented types of cohesion, it is imperative that the team building practices are in place when teams are formed. To maintain team cohesion, organizations must clarify roles, communicate with each other, and build trust within the team. According to Thiss (2017), maintaining team cohesion is an ongoing process and must be continual and intentional.

Sustaining team cohesion involves practices such as setting goals, guiding teams, and providing feedback to assist teams in continuously making progress. Team cohesion affects organizational performance, team performance, and student performance. It is important for schools to achieve team cohesion to increase success.

Lack of Research Related to Team Cohesion in Small Schools

Research is not readily available in the area of small schools despite the canon of research on team cohesion in businesses and large schools. Large organizations and large schools have been subjects of research identifying best practices of team cohesion and are able to follow those practices to increase team and student performance. The intent of this study is to find whether small schools are parallel to large schools when researching and implementing best practices of team cohesion.

Summary

This study researched the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. Task-oriented items determined by the Framework of Cohesive Teams were used to establish the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. The results of the study were analyzed to determine if the team collaboration and cohesion practices of small schools is parallel to the best practices of larger schools and organizations. Team cohesion positively affects the performance of individuals, teams, and students; therefore, school personnel must strive to work in cohesive teams.

III. METHODOLOGY

Introduction/Statement of Problem

The study was considered non-experimental and quantitative. The study's specific methodology used to address the stated research problem was survey-based research. The research problem was to find the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. The projected response rate at the outset of the study was set at 50%. The anticipated completion rate was projected to exceed the 78.6% generally achieved through survey research (Field, 2017).

Brief Literature Review

Team cohesion has been recognized to have helpful outcomes on group performance in different settings (Rosh, Offermann, & Van Diest, 2012). If teammates perceive group cohesion, it is more likely that performance will increase and outcomes will be more effective. Since there are strong links between cohesive teams and performance, organizations would increase success from knowledge concerning processes that lead to team cohesion (Severt, 2016).

There are many elements that affect team cohesion and group performance. Setting goals and objectives (Aga, Noorderhaven, & Vallejo, 2016), guiding teams (Hinton, 2010), encouraging teams (Galbraith, 2014), and giving feedback (Aga et al., 2016) can affect team-cohesion in many ways. Team cohesion can be broken into two categories: task-oriented practices and social-oriented practices (Thiss, 2017).

Narrowing down practices of team cohesion in small schools is difficult. Thiss (2017) generated a Framework of Cohesive Team Practices after surveying Fortune 500 companies to

discover best practices of team cohesion. The conclusions of Thiss' (2017) effort resulted in a wide-ranging list of cohesive team practices for large organizations. The purpose of this study was to examine whether the same cohesive practices found by Thiss (2017) compared to the best practices of team cohesion in small schools.

Description of Methodology

Teachers from small private schools were sampled for a variety of reasons. Each teacher represented a unique role within a specific classroom. The roles of the individuals are interdependent of each other requiring team cohesion for successful performance.

Research Context

The interdependency within the teams of teachers requires administrators to manage team responsibilities and processes to optimize performance. Also, many teachers have histories of working with their administration from year to year and are able to reflect upon past accomplishments. The teams surveyed typically meet weekly and interact frequently which provides sufficient opportunities to cultivate team cohesion. Cohesion is an evolving process and takes time to develop; therefore, in order to give participating teams a chance to build team cohesion through the beginning of the school year activities, the surveys were administered two months after the school year was in progress.

Participants

The researcher contacted private school administrators to seek permission for the school employees to participate. Upon permission being granted, employees received a link to the survey through their work email. Employees agreed to participate by clicking the informed consent box provided on the overview letter within the body of the survey. Upon clicking the informed consent box, participants were granted access to the survey. Participants were then

provided a two-week period to complete the surveys with weekly reminders of the survey closing date. Thirty-six participants completed the survey and submitted results through a secure, online survey tool.

Instrument

The survey instrument used in the study was an adapted version of the Framework of Cohesive Teams Survey created by Thiss (2017). Each survey item was a descriptor of practices for creating team cohesion. Each practice served as a prompt for participants to rate on a Likert-scale, indicating the degree to which their team implements each practice with 5 indicating a high level of agreement, 3 indicating neutrality, and 1 indicating a low level of agreement. The Framework of Cohesive Teams was also used as a framework for organizations to develop team cohesion (Thiss, 2017).

Validity and Reliability. The framework was created from a delphi study and used within a Fortune 500 company to confirm validity and reliability; therefore, the researcher for this study did not conduct validation tests of the instrument (Thiss, 2017).

Procedures

The surveys were administered to teachers employed at four small private schools to determine teachers' perceptions related to team cohesion. Surveying various perspectives was anticipated to create an overarching set of conclusions delineating team cohesion. Potentially participating schools were selected based on geographic location within a large school district in the state of Florida. The largest city within the district served as the center of potential participants because the largest city houses the largest number of small schools.

The Framework of Cohesive Teams was made up of 76 items which measured two areas of team cohesion: task-oriented team cohesion and social-oriented team cohesion. The layout of

the Framework of Cohesive Teams displayed a chart depicting how each area of cohesion was broken down into sections. The task-oriented practices were described as “open communication, commitment to objectives, respect of group members, share common purpose, trust, supportive leaders, and group efficacy” (Thiss, 2017, p. 113). The social-oriented practices were described as “camaraderie, altruism, workplace friendliness, bonding, sense of belonging, identification with group members, and group pride” (Thiss, 2017, p. 113). For study purposes, only those items that were validated to a 100% level in the area of task were included in the research instrument.

Data Analysis

Prior to the analysis of research questions posed in the study, preliminary analyses were conducted. Specifically, the responses to the survey’s items were evaluated for missing data, internal reliability (consistency), essential demographic information, and dimension reduction.

Missing data was analyzed primarily using descriptive statistical techniques. Frequencies and percentages comprised the primary statistical methods of analysis and interpretation. Little’s MCAR test statistic was anticipated to be used at the outset of the study to evaluate the randomness of possible missing data. Little’s MCAR examines the null hypothesis to show as having missing data that was missing completely at random (MCAR). A *p*-value that is less than 0.05 is typically interpreted as having missing data that is not missing completely at random (Cheng Li, 2013). However, in light of the intactness of the study’s data set, neither Little’s MCAR nor the imputation of missing data using both expectancy maximization (EM) and multiple imputations (MI) were considered necessary.

Internal reliability levels for participants’ response to the study’s research instrument were assessed using Cronbach’s alpha (*a*) test statistic, which is a valid approximation of a

particular test's validation (Konerding, 2013), with the statistical significance of finding evaluated using the F -test. The F -test is a hypothesis test based on statistics that becomes an F probability distribution (Lavrakas, 2008). Essential demographic information was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques. Specifically, frequency counts (n) and percentages (%) were utilized for illustrative and comparative purposes.

The reduction of the study's survey items was conducted using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which is a statistical method that is utilized to condense data to a smaller set of variables and to investigate the essential theoretical make-up of the study (Howard, 2016). This was completed specifically through a principal components analysis (PCA), which forms the foundation for multivariate data examination (Tan et al., 2019). The Keiser Meyer Olin (KMO) is "a measure of how suited your data is for Factor Analysis" (Glen, 2016, p. 1). The KMO value exceeding .40 was indicative of sufficiency of sample size for factoring purposes. The Bartlett's test of sphericity, a test that finds the significance of correlations among the items of the instrument (Abdrbo, Zauszniewski, Hudak, & Anthony, 2011), value of $p < .05$ was indicative of sufficiently high levels of correlations amongst variables for factoring purposes. The percentage of explained variance within factors meeting the eigenvalue of 1.0 was calculated on each of the identified factors as well as for the composite of identified factors (total). The results of dimension reduction procedures formed the basis of the multiple linear regression analysis associated with research question four of the study.

The study's four research questions were addressed broadly using a variety of descriptive, associative, predictive, and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts (n), measures of central tendency (mean scores), and variability (standard deviation) represented the

primary descriptive statistical techniques used to address the study's formally stated research questions.

Research questions one and two. In research questions one and two, a one-sample *t*-test was used to assess the statistical significance of overall participant response to the question. The alpha level of $p < .05$ represented the threshold for statistical significance of finding. Cohen's *d* was used to assess the magnitude of effect (effect size) of participant response. Cohen's parameters of interpretation of effect sizes were employed for comparative purposes.

Research question three and four. Research questions three and four were associative and predictive in nature. As such, the multiple linear regression test statistic was utilized to assess the predictive abilities of the three independent variables identified in the research questions for modeling purposes. Predictive model fitness was assessed in both parts of the fourth research question through the interpretation of ANOVA Table *F*-values, a statistical method that concentrates on the difference of variances (Kim, 2017). ANOVA values of $p < .05$ were indicative of predictive model fitness. *R*² values represented the basis for the evaluation of predictive effect of the overall model and the three independent predictor variables identified within the model. *R*² values were transformed into Cohen's *d* values for ease of interpretation. The statistical significance of predictive effect was interpreted through the respective predictive slope (*t*) values of the three independent predictor variables and the confluent relationship between the three independent variables and the dependent variable in research question four's predictive model. Assumptions associated with predictive modeling were assessed and satisfied through either visual or statistical methods. The analysis, interpretation, and subsequent reporting of study data were conducted exclusively using IBM's 25th version of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Summary

The study was quantitative and non-experimental. The study's particular methodology used to find answers to the research problem was survey-based research. The purpose of the study was to discover the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. The predicted response rate at the beginning of the study was set at 50%. The anticipated completion rate was expected to exceed the 78.6% commonly achieved through survey research (Field, 2017).

IV. RESULTS

Introduction/Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to evaluate practices that most associate with team cohesion in small schools. Research on the best practices of team cohesion in larger organizations is abundant; however, it may not be assumed that the same practices that associate with cohesion in large school environments will apply similarly with small schools' environments. This study will reveal whether the same practices associate with cohesion in small schools.

Methods of Data Collection

The survey instrument utilized in the study was the Framework of Cohesive Teams Survey (Thiss, 2017). Each of the 76 items that comprise the instrument represents a descriptor of practices for creating team cohesion; and, in turn, each practice serves as a prompt for participants to rate on a Likert-scale indicating the degree to which their team implements each practice. For the purposes of the study, only items achieving 100% agreement during the instrument validation process in the "task" element were used in creating the survey used in the current investigation.

Data Analysis by Research Question

Prior to the formal analysis of the study's research questions, initial preliminary analyses were conducted. The primary initial analyses conducted were evaluations of missing data, internal reliability, and demographic identifiers. A variety of descriptive, inferential, and measurement statistics were used in the initial analyses.

Regarding missing data, a minimal level of 0.36% ($n = 4$) was evident. Moreover, the missing data were considered sufficiently random in nature (Little's MCAR $\chi^2_{(120)} = 98.73$; $p = .92$). As a result, data imputation techniques using expectancy maximization or multiple imputations were not considered appropriate.

The internal reliability of overall participant responses to the study instrument's survey is considered very high ($\alpha = .92$; $p < .001$). Regarding internal reliability by study participants' level of education, participants identifying as having achieved a graduate degree (Masters or Doctorate) manifested a slightly higher level of internal consistency of response to the study's survey items ($\alpha = .90$; $p < .001$) than did their peers with undergraduate degrees (Bachelor's) in the study ($\alpha = .88$; $p < .001$).

Table 1 contains a summary of findings for the internal reliability of study participant responses by years of experience in the teaching profession.

Table 1

Years of Experience Category	n	α
0 -5	7	.84
6-10	9	.94
11-15	2	.83
16-20	7	.91
>20	10	.94

Considering the primary demographic identifying information of the study, the sample of participants was evenly split by educational level (Graduate degrees: $n = 17$, 50%; Undergraduate degrees: $n = 17$, 50%). Two study participants failed to address the demographic

identifier question regarding educational level. The single greatest range of professional experience was manifested in the Greater than 20 Years range (28.6%; $n = 10$), closely followed by study participants identifying as having taught for 6 to 10 Years (26.7%; $n = 9$).

Research Question 1: Overall, to what degree will study participants perceive their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization? And, was there an effect for study participants' level of education and years of experience in the teaching profession?

Hypotheses. H_{a1} : There will be statistical significance in study participants' perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization.

H_{01} : There will not be statistical significance in study participants' perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization.

Analysis and findings. Using the *one-sample t-test* to determine the statistical significance of study participants' perceived degree of their organizational leader being effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization, the overall mean score of 4.64 ($SD = 0.49$) of participant responses was manifested at a statistically significant level ($t_{(35)} = 20.19$; $p < .001$). The statistics given support the alternative hypothesis for research question one; therefore, the null hypothesis for research question one is rejected, and the alternative hypotheses is retained. Moreover, the magnitude of effect of study participants' responses with regard to overall satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization was considered very large ($d = 3.35$).

Regarding the second portion of research question one, the mean score difference of 0.11 favoring study participants with “undergraduate degrees”, there was no statistically significant effect for study participants’ “level of education” ($t_{(32)} = 0.70; p = .49$). Moreover, although the mean score for study participants was greatest for those in the teaching profession for “0 to 5 Years” (4.86; SD = 0.38), there was no statistically significant effect for study participants’ “years of experience” ($F_{(4, 30)} = 0.90; p = .48$).

Research Question 2: Overall, to what degree will study participants perceive they are satisfied with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization? And, was there an effect for study participants’ level of education and years of experience in the teaching profession?

Hypotheses. H_{a2}: Study participants have a high degree of perception that they are satisfied with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization.

H₀₂: Study participants have a low degree of perception that they are satisfied with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization.

Analysis and findings.

Using the One-Sample t-test to determine the statistical significance of the perceived degree of satisfaction expressed by study participants with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization, the overall mean score of 4.56 (SD = 0.56) of participants’ responses was manifested at a statistically significant level ($t_{(35)} = 16.73; p < .001$), thus proving Hypothesis 2 and rejecting the Null Hypothesis 2. Moreover, the magnitude of effect of study participants’ responses with

regard to overall satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization was considered very large ($d = 2.79$).

Regarding the second portion of research question two, the mean score difference of 0.11 favored study participants with "undergraduate degrees", there was no statistically significant effect for study participants' "level of education" ($t_{(32)} = 0.30; p = .77$). Moreover, although the mean score for study participants was greatest for those in the teaching profession for "0 to 5 Years" (4.86; $SD = 0.38$), there was no statistically significant effect for study participants' "years of experience" ($F_{(4, 30)} = 0.77; p = .56$).

Research Question 3: Which of the identified individual elements of "task behavior" in the study's research instrument was most related to and predictive of study participants' perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization?

Hypotheses. H_{a3} : Some of the individual elements of "task behavior" in the study's research instrument that are related to and predictive of study participants' perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization will represent statistical significance.

H_{03} : None of the individual elements of "task behavior" in the study's research instrument that are related to and predictive of study participants' perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization will represent statistical significance.

Analysis and findings.

An initial Correlation Coefficient (r) matrix was constructed to assess the mathematical relationship between each of the elements of “task behavior” with study participants’ perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization. As a result, four distinct elements represented strong ($r \geq .60$) correlates with perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization. The results have proven Hypothesis 3 and rejected the null.

In the second portion of the modeling process in research question three, the four elements representing strong mathematical relationships with the dependent variable of study participants’ perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization were used as independent predictor variables in a forced entry multiple linear regression model. The variable *Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization* displayed the greatest degree of mathematical relationship and predictive ability of the four independent variables with the dependent variable study participant perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization ($r = .41; p < .001$). The predictive effect for the variable *Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization* was considered large ($d = .91$).

The predictive model used in research question three was viable ($F_{(4, 30)} = 23.40; p < .001$), accounting for 75.7 % ($R^2 = .757$) of the explained variance in the model’s dependent variable of participant perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization. The model’s predictive effect was considered very large ($d = 3.53$).

Table 2 contains a summary of finding for the predictive model used in research question three.

Table 2

Predicting participants' perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization

Model	β	SE	Standardized β
Intercept	0.67	0.45	
<i>Promotes open, honest and complete communication</i>	0.32	0.11	.32**
<i>Promotes a climate of mutually beneficial interdependence</i>	0.19	0.10	.23
<i>Provides a clear, well-articulated vision for goal or task completion</i>	0.13	0.12	.14
<i>Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization</i>	0.26	0.07	.41***

** $p = .007$ *** $p = .001$

Research Question 4: Which of the identified individual elements of “task behavior” in the study’s research instrument was most related to and predictive of study participants’ perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization?

Hypotheses 4. H_{a4}: Some identified individual elements of “task behavior” in the study’s research instrument were most related to and predictive of study participants’ perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization will represent statistical significance.

H₀₄: None of the identified individual elements of “task behavior” in the study’s research instrument were most related to and predictive of study participants’ perception of satisfaction

with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization will represent statistical significance.

Analysis and findings.

An initial Correlation Coefficient (r) matrix was constructed to assess the mathematical relationship between each of the elements of "task behavior" with study participants' perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization. As a result, five distinct elements represented strong ($r \geq .60$) correlates with study participants' perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization. The results have proven the hypothesis and rejected the null.

In the second portion of the modeling process in research question four, the five elements representing strong mathematical relationships with the dependent variable of study participants' perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization were used as independent predictor variables in a forced entry multiple linear regression model.

The variable *Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization* displayed the greatest degree of mathematical relationship and predictive ability of the five independent variables with the dependent variable study participants' perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization ($r = .40$; $p = .002$). The predictive effect for the variable *Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization* was considered large ($d = .87$).

The predictive model used in research question four was viable ($F_{(5,29)} = 15.32; p < .001$), accounting for 72.5 % ($R^2 = .725$) of the explained variance in the model's dependent variable of participants' perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization. The model's predictive effect was considered very large ($d = 3.25$).

Table 3 contains a summary of finding for the predictive model used in research question four.

Table 3

Predicting participants' perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization

Model	β	SE	Standardized β
Intercept	0.43	0.55	
<i>Promotes open, honest and complete communication</i>	0.17	0.14	.15
<i>Establishes role and responsibilities of team members early in the project</i>	0.20	0.10	.24
<i>Consistently asks questions of team members if unclear on a matter</i>	0.18	0.11	.22
<i>Devotes adequate time preparing the team for successful goal and task achievement</i>	0.13	0.09	.19
<i>Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization</i>	0.28	0.02	.40***

*** $p = .002$

Summary

The study's purpose was to assess practices that frequently associate with team cohesion in small schools. There is ample research on the best practices of team cohesion in larger organizations; thus, it was expected that the same practices would apply to cohesion in small school environments. This study showed that the same practices applied in large organizations

are similar to practices promoting team cohesion in small schools.

V. DISCUSSION

Brief Summary/Statement of the Problem

The discussion is comprised of a summary of this study, a statement of the problem, research questions, methods of research, and procedures for data collection. There are major and unpredicted results based on the analysis in Chapter IV. Lastly, the chapter includes implications for further action, suggestions for future research, and concluding statements.

Review of Methodology

Chapter I served as the introduction of the study and reviewed the methodology of the study, the research questions, and the hypotheses driving the research study. Chapter II was a review of the literature pertaining to team cohesion. Narrowing down the best practices of team cohesion in small schools was challenging in that limited research was found regarding practices promoting team cohesion in small schools. Thiss (2017) created the Framework of Cohesive Team Practices for surveying Fortune 500 companies to discover the best practices of team cohesion. Thiss' (2017) work led to the development of a complete list of cohesive team practices for large organizations. The objective of this study was to explore whether the same cohesive team practices found by Thiss (2017) correlated to the best practices of team cohesion in small schools.

Relevant literature on team cohesion listed several definitions of team cohesion and two types of cohesion. One type of cohesion was task-oriented cohesion which was, according to Boyd et al. (2014), the quantifier of how assertively each individual is added to the team to fulfill task achievement. The other type of cohesion was social-oriented cohesion which represented

the degree to which each teammate is interested in the group to meet the individual, mutual, and interpersonal needs (Boyd et al., 2014).

Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation were important factors considered to achieve team cohesion. Intrinsic motivation had a higher effect on teammates than extrinsic motivation; however, both contributed to building team cohesion. To maintain team cohesion, factors such as role clarity, commitment to objectives, a sense of belonging, group pride, and communication among teammates were all elements.

Organizational leaders play a role in creating and sustaining team cohesion among employees. Supportive leaders must motivate, communicate, and inspire team members within the group. Thiss (2017) suggested that a team should be informed of the vision and should also elect an individual to assist with day-to-day interactions and questions that arise.

Team cohesion affects schools as a whole or in part, and cohesion can affect individuals. Organizational performance, team performance, and student performance are all affected when team cohesion is not achieved (Tutolo, 2017). Team collaboration and cohesion practices of small schools were the results.

Chapter III outlined the methodology applied for this study including the procedures, sample/sample selection, instrumentation, data analysis, and analysis by research question. A survey was administered to teachers working in small private schools to determine perceptions related to team cohesion. Teachers have unique roles within the classroom, and teachers' roles are interdependent which requires team cohesion for success. The Framework of Cohesive Teams Survey by Thiss (2017) was utilized in the study. Though task-oriented cohesion and social-oriented cohesion were a part of the Framework of Cohesive Teams Survey, for the purposes of this study, only those items that were validated to a 100% level in the area of "task-

oriented” were utilized in the research instrument. Chapter IV presented the research results and analysis of the survey. The research questions were answered, and a description of the data was presented for each question.

Summary of the Results

This study was an examination of the research as well as survey data collection to determine the best practices of team building in small schools. A definition of team cohesion presented by Carron, Brawley and Widmeyer (2002 as cited in Pomohaci & Sopa, 2018) defined team cohesion as “a dynamic process in which we can observe the tendency for the members of the sport group to stick together and stay united following their purposes for satisfaction of member affective needs” (p. 58). The introduction of this study gave a synopsis of the background of team cohesion and reviewed the definitions of task-oriented cohesion and social-oriented cohesion. The purpose of the study was to establish the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. There is research on the best practices of team cohesion in larger organizations; however, research was not found concerning the best practices of promoting team cohesion among employees at small schools. Small schools must operate using teamwork among teachers, and leaders in small schools must work to accomplish team cohesion among the members of the employee teams. This study identified which practices of promoting team cohesion benefited teams at small schools.

Discussion by Research Question

Preceding the formal analysis of the study’s research questions, preliminary analyses were administered. The primary initial analyses administered were assessments of missing data, internal reliability, and demographic identifiers. A variation of descriptive, inferential, and measurement statistics were used in the initial analyses.

In regards to missing data, a minimal level of 0.36% ($n = 4$) was apparent. Furthermore, the missing data were considered adequately random in nature (Little's MCAR $\chi^2_{(120)} = 98.73$; $p = .92$). As a result, data imputation techniques using expectancy maximization or multiple imputations were not considered appropriate.

The internal reliability of participants' responses to the study instrument's survey was very high ($\alpha = .92$; $p < .001$). In regards to internal reliability by participant level of education, participants classified as having attained a graduate degree (master's or doctorate) showed a slightly higher level of internal consistency of response to the study's survey items ($\alpha = .90$; $p < .001$) than their peers with undergraduate degrees (bachelor's degree) ($\alpha = .88$; $p < .001$). The level of internal consistency was not significant, which showed that education level did not greatly affect the participants' responses.

Research Question 1: Overall, to what degree will study participants perceive their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization? And, was there an effect for study participants' level of education and years of experience in the teaching profession?

The magnitude of effect of study participants' responses with respect to inclusive satisfaction with their educational leader's commitment to forming a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the school was considered very large ($d = 3.35$). Although the mean score for study participants was largest for teachers in the teaching profession for less than five years (4.86; $SD = 0.38$), there was no statistically significant effect for study participants' years of experience ($F_{(4, 30)} = 0.90$; $p = .48$).

Teachers who are part of workplace teams must perceive their school leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the school. Hinton (2010) recommended that

leaders encourage teammates to individually reach their highest potential in order to be an effective team member to accomplish cohesive teams. As team members reach their potential, the job of encouraging teams, leading to team cohesion, can be shared among the team. If leaders are encouraging teams, they are building rapport with individuals fostering a sense of belonging which leads to team cohesion (Hinton, 2010).

Research Question 2: Overall, to what degree will study participants perceive they are satisfied with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization? And, was there an effect for study participants’ level of education and years of experience in the teaching profession?

The magnitude of effect of study participants’ responses with respect to overall satisfaction with their school leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization was considered very large ($d = 2.79$). Although the mean score for study participants was largest for those in the teaching profession for less than five years (4.86; $SD = 0.38$), there was no statistically significant effect for study participants’ years of experience ($F_{(4, 30)} = 0.77$; $p = .56$).

A person’s perspective is their reality; therefore, if the individual perceives the leader as having a large commitment to establishing team cohesion, the individual will believe that as truth (Betancourt, 2018). One’s involvement in the common vision of the team is valued (Thiss, 2017). If the individual believes the leader has a common vision, the perception of the individual could lead to the employee’s satisfaction of the leader’s commitment to team cohesion.

Research Question 3: Which of the identified individual elements of “task behavior” in the study’s research instrument was most related to and predictive of study participants’

perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization?

Four distinct elements represented strong ($r \geq .60$) correlates with employees' perception of their school leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization. The four elements representing strong mathematical relationships with the dependent variable of study participants' perception of their school leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization were used as independent predictor variables in a forced entry multiple linear regression model. The variable *Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization* displayed the greatest degree of mathematical relationship and predictive ability of the four independent variables with the dependent variable study participant perception of their organizational leader as effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization ($r = .41; p < .001$). The other three variables were *promotes open, honest, and complete communication; promotes a climate of mutually beneficial interdependence; and provides a clear and well-articulated vision for goal or task completion*. In Chapter II, utilizing the leadership traits of honesty and communication was mentioned by Tseng and Yeh (2013) as a way to build team cohesion. The variables found through the data analysis of this research study supported research reviewed related to team cohesion.

In Chapter II, a leader's characteristics of honesty and communication were presented by Tseng and Yeh (2013) as attributes contributing to building team cohesion, and honesty and communication are related to the finding *promotes open, honest, and complete communication* as a distinct element in the study. Gerpott et al. (2018) studied how interdependence was key to team cohesion, thus aligning with the variable *promotes a climate of mutually beneficial*

interdependence. Furthermore, the variable *provides a clear and well-articulated vision for goal or task completion* aligns with research from Thiss (2017), which had a 100% participant agreement that it contributed to team cohesion. Educational leaders should utilize the above variables in small schools to achieve team cohesion. Avoiding secretive behavior should have a significant importance in connection with nurturing team cohesion in small schools.

Research Question 4: Which of the identified individual elements of “task behavior” in the study’s research instrument was most related to and predictive of study participants’ perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization?

Five distinct elements represented strong ($r \geq .60$) correlates with study participants’ perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization. The variable *Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization* displayed the greatest degree of mathematical relationship to and predictive ability of the five independent variables with the dependent variable study participant perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader’s commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization ($r = .40; p = .002$).

The variable *Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization* is relevant to leaders of small schools because of the camaraderie and sense of family that is easier to attain in small schools (Spicer, 2016). If the leader is secretive in behavior, employees may not develop a sense of trust in the leader which, in turn, negates team cohesion. According to Soboroff (2012), trust within a team is the perception that a person will

not cause harm to a group member if the opportunity arises. Thus, secrecy can lead to the perception that a leader is not trustworthy.

Interpretation of the Findings

Promotes open, honest and complete communication; Establishes role and responsibilities of team members early in the project; Consistently asks questions of team members if unclear on a matter; Devotes adequate time preparing the team for successful goal and task achievement; and Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization were the top predictors of team cohesion. The top predictors were derived from the participants' perception of satisfaction with their organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team-building approach in leading the organization. *Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization* was the top practice of team cohesion distinguished by the study.

Communication indicates the extent to which the educational leader creates strong interaction with teachers and students. This obligation appears self-evident because suitable communication is an important feature for teams (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2018). Effective interaction is the imperative piece that Obligations of the School Leader upholds all other responsibilities of leadership (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2018). Communication is a clear piece of effective leadership. When a leader is communicating effectively, he or she is avoiding secrecy and ensuring an open and honest partnership with the team (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2018).

According to Thiss (2017), when leaders avoid secrecy in organizations, it promotes team cohesion. If the principal or leader is secretive, teams may not trust the leader, which does not

promote team cohesion. According to Soboroff (2012), trust is the thought that an individual will support teammates. Therefore, secrecy can imply the leader is not trustworthy.

Study Limitations

A limitation to the study is the use of a convenience sample of school employees in small schools within the local school district. The sample is restricted in range due to the number of schools that met the criteria to be a small school and, thus, included in the study. The restricted range can possibly limit the generalization of conclusions to educators in other geographic locations. Therefore, limited participating schools and one geographic area surveyed are limitations of the study.

Additionally, the study was a quantitative design and did not cover a more thorough investigation of individuals' perceptions through qualitative measures. A qualitative perspective developed by interviewing a small sample, conducting focus groups, or including open-ended survey items would have provided additional information. Furthermore, the diversity of the participants was not varied enough to solicit perspectives from diverse populations. There were only two demographic types of information included in the data collection, thus, limiting varying information involving items such as age, race, or gender.

Implications for Future Practice

Based on the data collected and analyzed in this study, it is apparent that leaders of small schools should apply the five practices acknowledged to promote team cohesion. Specifically, educational leaders should have open communication, establish roles early, consistently ask questions, devote adequate time to the team goals, and avoid secretive behavior if team cohesion is the ultimate goal. The five cohesion-building practices provide individuals, leaders, teams, and schools specific areas to focus on to promote and sustain team cohesion. Based on the

results of the data analysis as well as the reviewed literature, the cohesion-building practices can be, and should be, applied in small schools to help achieve team cohesion.

Chester R. Barnard was a leader who assisted in advancing thinking about groups and organizations (Singleton, 2010). Barnard wrote *Functions of the Executive* which was “a noteworthy attempt to deal with the subject of administration in an analytical and scholarly manner” (Singleton, 2010, p. 1). Barnard’s significance was designing a new theory about organizational configurations that focused on an organization as a communication system (Singleton, 2010). Formal organizations are made up of informal groups, and the informal groups deliver a balance of power within formal organizations (Singleton, 2010). In small schools, the administration must create informal groups due to the size of the teams in small schools. Thus, according to the results of this study, the leaders must be open, honest, and not secretive when communicating which will lead to team cohesion in the informal organizations and overall team goal attainment and organizational success.

Recommendations for Future Research

A suggestion for further research is to expand the total number of participants to increase the sample size of the study. By raising the number of participants, different variables or practices may be revealed through participants’ responses; likewise, increasing the number of participants may yield different results because a small sample size could produce skewed results as outliers have a more significant impact on data (Lin, 2018). Varying participant type is recommended for future research. Instead of delimiting the study participant eligibility to classroom teachers, paraprofessionals and other school staff members could be surveyed to obtain a comprehensive and diversified set of data related to the cohesion among all workers within a school.

Another suggestion for further research is to utilize an alternate methodology through a modified replication of this study. Specifically, a researcher could collect best practices of team cohesion by conducting interviews, conducting focus groups, and including open-ended survey items instead of relying on quantitative surveys to collect data. Interviews and focus groups allow a researcher to add or ask for additional information. Open-ended survey items would allow the participant to provide a qualitative rationale for quantitative answers. Additionally, an experimental design would give more information as well. Participants could be given a pre-survey about team cohesion and then be given training on team cohesion and the research behind it. Then the participants could be post-surveyed to see if the training improved or changed the results of the study. Therefore, replication of the study using a modified methodology could provide further development of themes revealed in qualitative data to support the rationale for quantitative data.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to reveal the best practices of promoting team cohesion among teachers in small schools. There was limited research available analyzing team cohesion among small school teams despite the large amount of research detailing best practices of creating team cohesion in large organizations. After analyzing data collected through quantitative surveys, the researcher determined team cohesion encompasses several aspects of a team's experience including job performance and trusting the leader. The findings of this study resulted in the best practice for promoting team cohesion in small school teams as trusting that the educational leader is not operating in secrecy. Educational leaders can benefit from the results of this study by implementing a transparent approach to leadership and team building in order to operate a small school with effective and cohesive work teams.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Digital Consent Form and Survey

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

Title: Best Practices of Team Cohesion in Small Schools

Investigator(s): Amy Bratten, EdD; Tom Gollery, EdD; Patricia Shaw, MEd

Purpose: The purpose of the research study is to find the best practices of team cohesion in small schools. You must be 18 years or older to participate.

What to Expect: This research study is administered online. Participation in this research will involve completion of one questionnaire. The questionnaire will ask you to rate your workplace on a scale based on whether you disagree, agree, or strongly agree. You may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer. You will be expected to complete the questionnaire once. It should take you about 10 minutes to complete.

Risks: There are no risks associated with this project which are expected to be greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you. However, you may gain an appreciation and understanding of how research is conducted. You may also get the opportunity to reflect on your work team in the area of team cohesion.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for your participation in this study.

Your Rights and Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusal to participate, and you are free to withdraw your consent and participation in this project at any time.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. Any written results will discuss group findings and will not include information that will identify you. Research records will be stored on a password protected computer in a locked office and only researchers and individuals responsible for research oversight will have access to the records. Data will be destroyed five years after the study has been completed.

Contacts: You may contact any of the researchers at the following addresses, should you desire to discuss your participation in the study and/or request information about the results of the study: Amy Bratten, anbratten@seu.edu; Thomas Gollery, tjgollery@seu.edu; and Patricia Shaw, pjshaw@seu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact the IRB Office IRB@seu.edu.

If you choose to participate: Please, click NEXT if you choose to participate. By clicking NEXT, you are indicating that you freely and voluntarily and agree to participate in this study and you also acknowledge that you are at least 18 years of age. It is recommended that you print a copy of this consent page for your records before you begin the study by clicking below.

Survey

Directions: Using the 5 – Point Scale provided, please rate your organization’s leader in the statements below:

Promotes open, honest and complete communication
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Demonstrates consistent punctuality in all matters related to the organization
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Consistently follows through on commitments
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Displays truthfulness at all times
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Communicates clearly and consistently with the team
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Clearly articulates the goals and objectives of the organization
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Schedules meetings in a clearly communicated fashion
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Encourages teamwork and collegiality
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Meeting protocols are clearly defined and communicated
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Values staff input in meetings
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Ensures the input of all members of the team who wish to provide input on a matter
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Ensures all team members having a stake in organizational goal setting
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Establishes role and responsibilities of team members early in the project
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Maintains focus upon issues, not personalities
 5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Encourages open communication amongst team members	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Demonstrates consistent “follow-through” on commitments	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Consistently follows up on statements and commitments to team members	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Promotes team members working together to achieve a common organizational goal	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Provides training and necessary professional development opportunities	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Demonstrates an awareness of team member strengths and weaknesses	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Promotes a climate of mutually beneficial interdependence	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Consistently asks questions of team members if unclear on a matter	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Promotes staff member professional growth and achievement of individual goals	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Respects team member non-opinion on a matter without negativism	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Accentuates and highlights team member strengths through compliment and recognition	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Provides a clear, well-articulated vision for goal or task completion	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Devotes adequate time preparing the team for successful goal and task achievement	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Regularly engages team members in discussions about professional goals and objectives	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree
Effectually uses document-sharing sites for enhanced member access while ensuring anonymity of team members	5- Strongly Agree	4- Agree	3- Uncertain	2- Disagree	1- Strongly Disagree

Effectively communicates results of organizational efforts to team members

5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Avoids secretive behavior in matters pertaining to the team members and the organization.

5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

*Overall, my organizational leader is effective in nurturing cohesive working relationships within the organization

5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

*Overall, I am satisfied with my organizational leader's commitment to establishing a cohesive, team building approach in leading the organization

5- Strongly Agree 4- Agree 3- Uncertain 2- Disagree 1- Strongly Disagree

Appendix B: Permission from Thiss (2017)

SOUTHEASTERN
UNIVERSITY

Shaw, Patricia <pjshaw@seu.edu>

Framework of Cohesive Team Practices

Barbara Thiss <barbthiss@gmail.com>
To: "Shaw, Patricia" <pjshaw@seu.edu>

Wed, May 22, 2019 at 11:55 PM

Tricia,

Congratulations on your dissertation journey! I am glad you were enjoyed my study. Let me start with...
Yes, you may use the Framework of Cohesive Team Practices survey I created in my dissertation for your dissertation research.

I had struggled in my dissertation research to find an instrument I could use. This required me to do a survey test before could do my actual Delphi study. You had asked about validity and reliability. Pulling from page 82 in the dissertation, "This (survey text) presented an opportunity to check the wording of the survey, instructions, reliability and validity of results, and whether information obtained was consistent (Simon, 2011). It used the Delphi technique to allow for consensus-building and anonymity of participants (Yousuf, 2007)." The tool allowed for consensus-building after the 2nd round in the Delphi study.

I have led teams for years and was very interested in identifying cohesive practices used to build teams. I have worked in restaurants and the public sector and was interested to see if Fortune 500 companies used the same practices that I had been using. While that was not a part of my study, it personally validated my results. I enjoyed the research I did for this study and was glad I was able to achieve results that others could use.

If there is anything else I can do to help, please feel free to reach out. I would love to read your dissertation when you are done.

Enjoy the journey,

Barb Thiss

[Quoted text hidden]