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PREVIEW

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Schumann, Nesha Mae, Ed.D.

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1991

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PREVIEW

**COLLEGIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SELF-ESTEEM
OF BEGINNING TEACHERS**

by

Nesha Mae Schumann

A DISSERTATION

**Presented to the Faculty of
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements
For the Degree of Doctor of Education**

**Major: Interdepartmental Area of Administration,
Curriculum and Instruction**

Under the Supervision of Professor Alvah Kilgore

Lincoln, Nebraska

December, 1991

DISSERTATION TITLE

COLLEGIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SELF-ESTEEM OF BEGINNING TEACHERS

BY

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**COLLEGIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND SELF-ESTEEM
OF BEGINNING TEACHERS**

Nesha Mae Schumann, Ed.D.

University of Nebraska, 1991

Advisor: Alvah Kilgore

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine the relationship of self-esteem and collegial relationships of beginning teachers in Lincoln, Omaha, and Class III schools in Nebraska.

The survey population was licensed teachers, employed as full-time classroom teachers in Nebraska schools during 1990-91, with no prior contractual classroom experience. A questionnaire was mailed to 236 University of Nebraska-Lincoln Teachers College graduates who met the criteria established for the study; 80 percent of the teachers responded.

The following findings were statistically significant at the .05 level:

1. Significant differences in self-esteem, collegial relationships, and the relationship of self-esteem and collegial relationships were found between beginning teachers who "frequently" were supported by their administrators and teachers who were "never" or "sometimes" supported.

2. Novice teachers who taught in public schools in Nebraska had significantly higher self-esteem scores than teachers who taught in private schools.

3. Elementary school teachers had significantly stronger personal and professional relationships with their colleagues than did junior/senior high school teachers.

4. Positive correlations indicated direct relationships between: (1) global self-esteem and role self-esteem ($r=.7491$), (2) team/department relationships and general faculty relationships ($r=.8078$), and (3) total collegial relationships and total self-esteem ($r=.4750$).

Although not statistically significant, the following findings were worthy of further research:

1. Beginning teachers' global self-esteem scores were higher than their role self-esteem scores.

2. Both global and role self-esteem scores were relatively high for the beginning teachers.

3. Beginning teachers had stronger personal and professional relationships with their team/department members than with their general faculty members.

8. There was no significant difference in self-esteem or collegial relationships between teachers who did or did not have a mentor assigned to them during their first year.

9. Support from college instructors did not provide a significant difference in the self-esteem or collegial relationships of beginning teachers.

DEDICATION

A special tribute is offered to my husband, Glen, and my son, Kyle. Their understanding, encouragement, and love were sources of inspiration throughout my graduate courses and this study. Also, the standards of personal and professional excellence set and modeled by my father, Harvey, my mother, Alta, and my brother, Kent, have inspired me to pursue this further education. Without the love from my family, I would not have been able to attain this personal and educational goal.

PREVIEW

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The writer is appreciative of the beginning teachers who took the time and made the effort to provide the needed research data.

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N.M.S.

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PREVIEW

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Context of the Problem

Enhanced self-esteem is not a luxury in the educational environment; it is an essential component for successful learning. Self-esteem provides a mental picture that prepares persons to respond with expectations of success or failure, acceptance or denial, and personal strength or weakness. This mental picture directly affects the amount of effort educators and students exert and the degree of growth they gain from various experiences.

Most of the educational research on self-esteem naturally involves students. Psychological researchers have concentrated on the formation of self-esteem primarily from childhood through adolescence and only slightly in adulthood (Wylie, 1974, 1989). One of the most widely accepted results of this research is the importance of parents, peers, and various "significant others" in developing a person's self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967; Sullivan, 1953; Webster & Sobieszek, 1974). This "significant other" concept is important when considering the self-esteem of adults, as well as children and adolescents. In addition to formation of self-esteem, studies and theories have concentrated on the effects of self-esteem on behavior, especially adolescent deviant behaviors (Mecca, Smelser, & Vasconcellos, 1989). These studies further indicate that children with high self-esteem perform better in school, are more highly motivated to learn, and are more psychologically strong in

coping with challenges (Bledsoe, 1964; Janis, 1954; Quimby, 1967). In addition, as a result of these studies, much has been written of a practical nature to assist educators in assessing self-esteem and developing classroom strategies and curriculum to enhance self-esteem (Beane & Lipka, 1984; Canfield & Wells, 1976; Hall & Hall, 1988; Pope, McHale, & Craighead, 1988; Purkey, 1970; Silvermail, 1981). Finally, recent literature on self-esteem seems to be more focused on special groups. Handicapped students (auditory, physical, and visual) learn to recognize their self-worth despite the handicap; women and minority groups define their societal roles and motivations; and athletes build esteem to be more competitive and cope with success and failure (Bousek, 1974; Dowling, 1988; Tuttle, 1984; Weaver, 1979).

In addition to the abundance of research on students, some research has been conducted concerning the self-esteem of teachers, primarily beginning teachers. First, most of the research has dealt with attitude changes in beginning teachers. Their attitudes shift from idealistic and progressive during pre-service training to traditional and conservative during the first years of teaching (Hoy 1968; Zeichner, 1980). Second, some literature reports behavior changes in beginning teachers. Because of external environmental pressures, changes in behavior occur which are often contrary to the teachers' personal beliefs, such as becoming more authoritative or leaving the profession entirely (Glickman & Tamashire, 1982; Hoy, 1969; Walberg, 1968). These changes in attitudes and behaviors are often labeled as socialization of beginning teachers and they may be related to self-esteem, although the relationships are often vaguely drawn in the literature. Last, little

research has dealt directly with self-esteem of beginning teachers. Many educators, however, agree that positive self-esteem helps first-year teachers to envision themselves as professionals and to function with a relatively higher degree of success in that role (Hall & Hall, 1988). On the other hand, when new teachers become overwhelmed by the disparity between university-arranged experiences and the real world of the public school classroom, their professional self-esteem is challenged and the entire profession suffers (Armstrong, 1984; Houston & Felder, 1982; Veenman, 1984). In summary, a great deal is known about self-esteem in the educational environment, but less is known about the self-esteem of beginning teachers.

While self-esteem is important to the success of a beginning teacher during that first year of teaching, collegial relationships are also important. There is consensus in the literature that most beginning teachers rely on a few selected colleagues for support and assistance (Patancizek & Isaacson, 1981). Indeed, the significant people for a school teacher are other teachers (Waller, 1961). Researchers further agree that the interactions of beginning teachers and their colleagues in this first professional environment have definite effects. Recent studies show that the interactions shape the beginning teachers' professional behaviors (Zeichner, 1980), and these interactions exert more influence on teacher competency than teacher training experiences (Covert, 1986). Also, beginning teachers are often expected to perform as veteran teachers and not as growing professionals on the first stage of a continuum of development (Kurtz, 1983). Because of these high expectations from their colleagues, beginning teachers find their first year to be emotionally draining, frustrating, and lonely (Houston & Felder, 1982). Few studies,

however, deal with the type of collegial relationships other than with supervisors/evaluators, college support personnel, and mentors. Most information indicates that first year teachers teach in isolation from their colleagues (Arends, 1983; Forsyth & Hoy, 1978). Thus, while educators agree that collegial relationships are influential and important for development, little is known about them.

The study of the collegial relationships and self-esteem of beginning teachers contributes to educational research in several ways. An analysis of the self-esteem of beginning teachers adds to the knowledge in this area. Analyzing the collegial relationships of beginning teachers initiates information on these relationships. Finally, studying the influence of collegial relationships on the self-esteem of beginning teachers provides results where no quantitative research presently exists.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose for conducting this study was to examine the relationship of collegial relationships and the self-esteem of beginning teachers in Lincoln, Omaha, and Class III public schools in Nebraska. The goal was to provide information for university teacher educators along with public school administrators and teachers as they develop and implement teacher training and induction programs. Collegial relationships include the beginning teacher's personal and professional relationships with team/department members and members of the general school faculty. Self-esteem is defined

as the evaluative perceptions and feelings about one's self as a person and as a teacher.

Research Questions

Answers were sought to the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between collegial relationships and the self-esteem of beginning teachers?

Specifically:

2. What is the self-esteem profile of beginning teachers?

3. What is the nature of the relationships that beginning teachers have with their colleagues?

4. To what extent, if any, do the variables (age, gender, grade level, school district, mentor, administrator, and college support) relate to (a) the profile of self-esteem, (b) the nature of the collegial relationships, and (c) the relationship between collegial relationships and self-esteem of beginning teachers?

Theoretical Perspective

Several self-esteem theories hold critical relevance to this study of beginning teachers. Research that has been conducted in the past 40 years explains, modifies, and predicts human behavior (Wylie, 1989). One result of this research is that psychologists make a conceptual distinction between global and role (specific) self-esteem (Coopersmith, 1967; Stanwyck, 1983; Webster & Sobieszek, 1974). Global self-esteem is a relatively stable and

enduring judgment of self-worth, which is established prior to middle childhood (Coopersmith, 1967; Sullivan, 1953). "It is generally assumed that each individual's overall or global self-regard is determined by a combination of self-conceptions and self-evaluations concerning separate aspects of self in conjunction with the personal importance the individual assigns to each of these aspects" (Wylie, 1989, p. 120). Sources of self-esteem and criteria employed for defining success are: (1) power--ability to influence and control others, (2) significance--acceptance, attention and affection of others, (3) virtue--adherence to moral and ethical standards, and (4) competence--successful performance (Coopersmith, 1967).

Besides global self-esteem, one also evaluates himself or herself more specifically in relation to particular roles--role self-esteem. William James, in 1890, posed the theory that individuals may be thought of as having several selves which vary with a particular social context. Persons may think of themselves differently in different situations and with different people. Since the origin of James' theory, psychologists have extended the theory of role self-esteem through various measurements (Wylie, 1974, 1989). Evaluation of role self-esteem involves a personal judgment of performance, capacities, and values according to such aspects as one's age, sex, vocation, avocation, and family relationships (Coopersmith, 1967). "As is well known, self-concept theorists believe that one cannot understand and predict human behavior without knowledge of a person's conscious perceptions of his environment and of his self as he sees it in relation to the environment " (Wylie, 1974, p. 8).

The distinction between global and role self-esteem is important to educators and to this study of beginning teachers for several reasons. First, the teachers' global self-esteem is relatively stable, while the beginning teachers' role self-esteem is being formed and tested by new experiences and environments during this first year of teaching. Thus, the influence of collegial relationships may be different on role self-esteem than on global self-esteem. The data from this study are reported with this theoretical distinction in mind.

A second theory which is relevant to this study of beginning teachers is the importance of other persons to the development of one's self-esteem. In 1890, James theorized that a person measures his or her worth by the standards he or she applies to other persons. Cooley (1902) added that a person feels pride or shame because of the imagined effect of his or her actions on another's mind. This is a conscious awareness which determines not only how an individual reacts but also the self-image he or she holds. Later, Mead (1934) extended Cooley's theory by seeing the self as subject to modifications due to other persons, but not subject to radical changes in a very short period of time. To become a member of a group, according to Mead, a person internalizes the ideas and attitudes of the group as his or her own. No matter how isolated or independent, the person carries within himself or herself the mirror of the social group. In addition, Sullivan (1953) modified Cooley's and Mead's ideas by distinguishing between the significant and nonsignificant other people in the development of an individual's self-esteem. The "significant other" is one whose esteem and approval are valued. Finally, psychologists have extended this theory into business management. Through

the Hawthorne studies, researchers confirmed the effects that informal peer groups have on establishing norms, behaviors, and values for the group members in a work setting (Hoy & Miskel, 1987).

The theory of significant others and their influence on self-esteem is important to educators, and the theory is integral to this study of beginning teachers. Because beginning teachers are new in the education profession, their role self-esteem is particularly malleable. As beginning teachers design an image of model teachers, this image is reflected in the judgments they make about themselves. Furthermore, as beginning teachers see some of their colleagues as "significant others" in their lives, the new teachers make judgments in order to win approval and avoid disapproval from their significant colleagues. This study considers the difference between significant and nonsignificant others for the beginning teachers when gathering and reporting data. Most importantly, if collegial relationships become significant to beginning teachers, the relationships will influence the self-esteem of beginning teachers. Figure 1 is a conceptual model of this study of beginning teachers' self-esteem and collegial relationships.

Definitions

For the purpose of this study, the following terms were defined:

Beginning teacher, new teacher, and first-year teacher. A licensed teacher who is employed as a full-time, classroom teacher during the 1990-91 school year, with no prior contractual classroom experience.

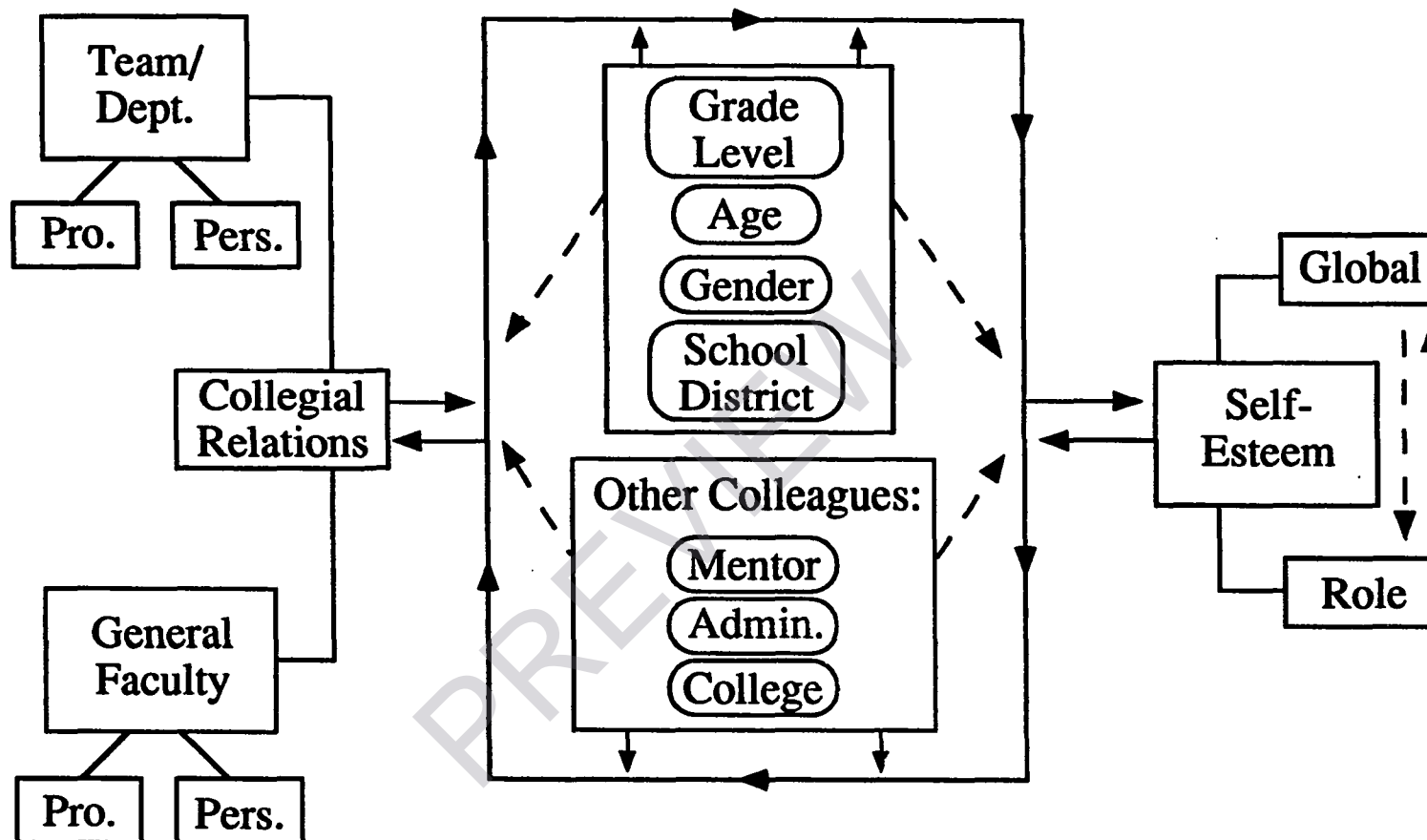


Figure 1
Collegial Relationships and
Self-Esteem Model

Self-esteem.

Global. The evaluative perceptions and feelings an individual has about himself or herself as a person which are relatively stable. This evaluation "expresses approval or disapproval, and indicates the extent to which the individual believes that he or she is capable, significant, successful, and worthy" (Coopersmith, 1967, p. 5). This is often referred to as "global self-esteem" (Stanwyck, 1983). Questions on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale measure self-respect, worthiness, and appreciation of merits (Wylie, 1989).

Role. The evaluative perceptions and feelings the individual has about himself or herself as a teacher. This evaluation involves an examination of performance, capacities, and values, with a result being a decision of worthiness (Coopersmith, 1967). This is referred to in this study as "role self-esteem". Survey questions developed for this study measured self-respect, worthiness, and appreciation of merits as a teacher.

Collegial relationships. The interactions and associations which the beginning teacher has on both professional and personal levels with (1) team/department members and (2) members of the general school faculty. Survey questions developed for this study measured respect, acceptance, and support on the professional and professional levels as displayed by team/department members and general faculty members.

Mentor. An experienced teacher in the new teacher's school, who has been formally selected by a school administrator to advise, teach, and orient the beginning teacher during the first year of teaching (A.M. Kilgore, personal communication, September 1, 1989; Reinhartz, 1989).