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**MEASURING MORAL DEVELOPMENT  
IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**A Dissertation**

**Submitted to the Graduate School**

**of**

**Tennessee State University**

**in**

**Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements**

**for the degree of**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**Graduate Research Series No. \_\_\_\_\_**

**Laura Lee Swisher**

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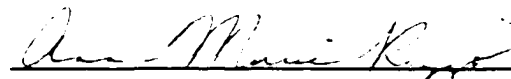
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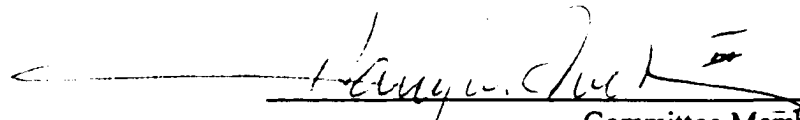
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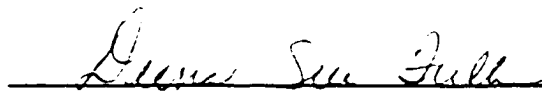
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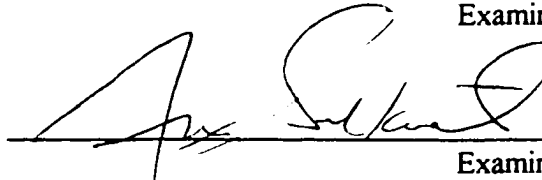
We are submitting a dissertation written by Laura Lee Swisher entitled "Measuring Moral Development in Public Administration". We recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree, Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration.

  
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## ABSTRACT

LAURA LEE SWISHER. *Measuring Moral Development in Public Administration*  
(under the direction of DR. ANN-MARIE RIZZO).

This cross-sectional study examines the relationship between age, race, gender, region, organizational location, job title, and moral development among public administrators as measured by the Defining Issues Test (DIT). In the late 1970s James Rest developed the DIT to assess moral development based on Kohlberg's six stages of moral development. Rest and his associates now view their position as "neo-Kohlbergian" and interpret their results within three "schemas" of moral thinking (Personal Interest, Maintaining Norms, and Postconventional) rather than six stages.

A computer-generated random sample of 1000 of the 9,925 members of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) was mailed a packet containing a demographic questionnaire and the short form of the DIT. Statistical analysis was performed on the resulting P and N2 (postconventional) and stage four percentage (maintaining norms) scores. Scores were compared with norms for age and educational level and with results obtained by Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall in previous studies of public administration.

Results of the study indicate that public administrators use postconventional moral

reasoning less than expected based on their level of education. Although most of the 344 respondents possessed a graduate degree, the mean P score (postconventional) of 41.45 was equivalent to adults in general. Respondents used stage four (maintaining norms) moral reasoning more frequently than expected ( 37.13%). This score was significantly higher than senior high students. These findings support Stewart and Sprinthall's findings of decreased P scores and increased stage four scores. However, this sample scored significantly higher on the P (postconventional) score and lower on stage four (maintaining norms) compared with Stewart and Sprinthall's results. In contrast to their findings, this study also found a significant difference between males and females with females scoring significantly higher on postconventional reasoning. Respondents over sixty years of age scored lower on postconventional reasoning. There were no significant differences based on organizational variables.

Results of the study indicate that public administrators use postconventional thinking less than others with comparable education. Females scored higher than males on postconventional thinking. Ramifications for public administration and implications for future research are discussed.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
	Definition of Ethics.....	4
	A Schema for Classifying Ethical Perspectives.....	8
	Locating the Study: Ethics, Public Administration, and the Schema	23
	Purpose of the Study.....	29
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....</b>	<b>33</b>
	Context for Kohlberg's Thought.....	34
	Kohlberg's Theory of Cognitive Moral Development.....	40
	Criticisms and Limitations of Kohlberg's Theory.....	45
	James Rest and the Defining Issues Test.....	52
	Neo-Kohlbergian Approach.....	53
	Theoretical Foundations:	
	The Four Component Model of Moral Behavior.....	58
	Studies Using the DIT.....	60
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>82</b>
	Research Design, Questions, Hypotheses, and Procedures.....	82
	Sample, Population, and Subjects.....	87
	Operationalization of Variables.....	90
	Validity and Reliability of the DIT.....	91
	Discriminant Validity.....	97
	Political Attitude.....	100
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>DATA AND RESULTS.....</b>	<b>104</b>
	Sample Characteristics.....	106
	Dependent Variables.....	110
	Research Questions and Hypotheses.....	111
	Comparing to Educational Norms and Other Professional Groups.	122
	Findings in Relationship to Research and Null Hypotheses.....	128
	Summary of Significant Findings.....	131

<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>133</b>
	Context for Interpretation.....	135
	Context of Public Administration.....	136
	Review and Discussion of Dissertation Findings.....	137
	Implications for Future Research.....	147
<b>Appendix A</b>	<b>Defining Issues Test.....</b>	<b>150</b>
<b>Appendix B</b>	<b>Tables 18-27.....</b>	<b>158</b>
<b>Appendix C</b>	<b>Survey Instruments.....</b>	<b>169</b>
	Cover Letter.....	170
	Survey Instructions.....	171
	Demographic Questionnaire (Part 1).....	172
	Reminder Postcard.....	173
<b>Appendix D</b>	<b>Permissions and Approvals.....</b>	<b>174</b>
	Institutional Review Board.....	175
	Permission to Use Defining Issues Test.....	176
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>.....</b>	<b>177</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<b><u>Table</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
1 Major Frameworks for Ethical Decision-Making	21
2 Dominant Social Psychological Theories of Morality 1930-1998	38
3 Kohlberg's Six Stages	41
4 Three Levels of Moral Judgment with Associated Social Perspective	42
5 Comparison of Kohlberg and Neo-Kohlbergian Approaches	56
6 DIT P Scores of Different Groups	74
7 Graduate Student Stage Four Scores and P Scores on the DIT and SSMS	76
8 Stage Four Scores and P Scores for NC and FL Managers	78
9 Highest Level of Education by Gender	108
10 Job Title by Gender	109
11 P Scores (High, Medium, Low) by Gender	112
12 ANOVA Results: Significant Differences for P and N2	113
13 P Scores (High, Medium, Low) by Education: Undergraduate Versus Graduate	114
14 P Scores (High, Medium, Low) by Education: 60 and Older Versus under 60	115
15 Correlation Coefficients for Dependent Variables N2 and P	117
16 One-Sample T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA DIT P Score (Postconventional Thinking) to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results on SSMS	121
17 One-Sample T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA Sample's DIT Stage Four (Law and Order or Maintaining Norms) to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results	125

<b><u>Table</u></b>	<b><u>Page</u></b>
18 Demographic Comparison of Sample with ASPA Membership Profile	159
19 Organizational Context, Job Title, Region: Comparison of Sample with ASPA Membership Profile	160
20 Mean P and N2 Scores for Independent Variables: Age, Race, Educational Level and Region	161
21 Mean P and N2 Scores for Independent Variables: Organizational Context and Function	162
22 T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA Mean DIT Score to Mean P Score of Other Groups	163
23 T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA (Graduate Degree) to Mean P Score of Other Groups	164
24 T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA (Doctorally Educated) to Mean P Score of Other Groups	165
25 One-Sample T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA DIT P Scores (Postconventional) to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results	166
26 T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA DIT Stage Four (Law and Order) Percentages to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results	167
27 T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA DIT Stage Two and Three (Personal Interest) Percentages to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results	168

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Since the earliest times people have sought moral wisdom in their government officials, whether kings, clerks, or senators. Accordingly, ethics, moral leadership and appropriate exercise of discretion in making judgments have been central themes throughout the history of public administration.<sup>1</sup> Public administration literature,<sup>2</sup> newspaper articles, and television news reports reflect the same interest in honest government and the ethical behavior of public officials. The concern is not, of course, new. The early writings of the republic and its founders allude to the importance of virtue and honesty among public officials. James Madison wrote in *The Federalist* about the difficulty of maintaining virtue among elected officials:

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<sup>1</sup>E. Pendleton Herring, "Public Administration and the Public Interest," from Public Administration and the Public Interest (Mc-Graw-Hill, 1936); Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration," Political Science Quarterly (June 1887); Frank J. Goodnow, "Politics and Administration," from Politics and Administration: A Study in Government (New York: Russell & Russell, 1900): 17-36; all reprinted in Jay M. Shafritz and Albert C. Hyde, Classics of Public Administration, 3d ed. (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992). See also John A. Rohr, To Run a Constitution: The Legitimacy of the Administrative State (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1986).

<sup>2</sup>Terry L. Cooper and N. Dale Wright, eds., Exemplary Public Administrators: Character and Leadership in Government (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Publishers, 1992); Peter Madsen and Jay M. Shafritz, eds., Essentials of Government Ethics (New York: Penguin Books, 1992); Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994).

The aim of every political constitution is, or ought to be, first, to obtain for rulers men who possess most wisdom to discern, and most virtue to pursue the common good of society; and in the next place, to take the most effectual precautions for keeping them virtuous, whilst they continue to hold their public trust.<sup>3</sup>

Centuries before the founding of American democracy, Aristotle<sup>4</sup> wrote about the role of virtue for citizens and especially for its leaders in the democratic republic.

Aristotle argued that good citizenship could not be reduced to being a good person.

There are unique moral abilities involved in the decisions which both leaders and citizens make:

Practical wisdom is the only virtue peculiar to a ruler; it seems that all other virtues must be common to both rulers and ruled. Wisdom, however, is not a subject's virtue, but right opinion is. The person ruled corresponds to the instrument maker, whereas the ruler corresponds to the player making use of the instrument.<sup>5</sup>

In spite of apparent agreement among the citizenry about the importance of ethics and morality in government, there are few periods of American history characterized by a common belief that government was in the hands of ethical leaders. Scandals abound in American government, and, not surprisingly, Americans have decried the moral fiber of

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<sup>3</sup>James Madison, The Federalist, No. 57 (February 19, 1788), PJM 10:521, as quoted in David B. Mattern, ed., James Madison's "Advice to My Country" (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 62.

<sup>4</sup>Aristotle, Politics, Book III in Renford Bambrough, The Philosophy of Aristotle, trans. A.E. Wardman and J.L. Creed (New York: Penguin Group, [1963]), 408-409.

<sup>5</sup>Aristotle in Bambrough, Philosophy, 409.

leadership throughout its history.<sup>6</sup> The paradoxical theme is that ethical leaders are necessary but unlikely in the political realm. As J. Patrick Dobel has noted, "The tension between moral aspirations and the demands of political achievement lead many to despair of the relationship between ethics and political leadership."<sup>7</sup>

Although most people would agree that public officials should conduct their affairs in an ethical manner, there is no agreement about measurement of moral judgment. Moral evaluation is particularly difficult in the postmodern era of pluralism.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, there is no consensus within the field of ethics regarding how one ought to approach the study of morality. There are in fact many ways to study ethics without apparent common points of agreement. The study described in this dissertation adopts a social scientific approach with the purpose of describing the moral judgment of public administrators within a public organizational context.

### **Outline of the Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce basic terms used throughout the dissertation, to provide a historical and theoretical context for the moral developmental

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<sup>6</sup>Peter Madsen and Jay M. Shafritz, eds., Essentials of Government Ethics. (New York: Meridian, The Penguin Company, 1992), 5.

<sup>7</sup>J. Patrick Dobel, "Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership." Public Administration Review 58:1 (May/June 1998): 74-81.

<sup>8</sup>Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue, 2d ed. (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

perspective used in the study, and to outline the remaining chapters of the dissertation. First, the terms "ethics" and "morality" are defined. Following the definition of ethics, the chapter outlines a schema for classifying ethical thought in public administration. The purpose of the classification schema is to forge links between various ethical theories and to provide a context within which to place the current study. The schema is then utilized to discuss the current study within the context of ethical theory in general and public administration ethics. This historical sketch within the suggested schema reveals that the dominant thinking in American public administration ethics has been from the functional paradigm, with a philosophical approach, and a normative or prescriptive purpose. In contrast, this study is developed within the radical humanist perspective from a social scientific perspective with a descriptive purpose.

### **Definition of Ethics**

Ethics has its roots in philosophy and is sometimes referred to as "moral philosophy."<sup>8</sup> Basically ethics is philosophical reflection on questions of right or wrong.

Jacques Thiroux, provides a useful definition of ethics:

Ethics . . . deals with what is right and or wrong in human behavior and conduct. It asks such questions as what constitutes any person or action being good, bad, right, or wrong, and how do we know (epistemology)? What part does self-interest of others play in making moral decisions and judgments? What theories of conduct are

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<sup>8</sup> William K. Frankena, Ethics, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 8. Parts of this description of ethics were developed for Laura L. Swisher and Carol Krueger-Brophy, Legal and Ethical Issues (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann Press, 1998).



valid or invalid and why? Should we use principles, or rules, or laws or should we let each situation decide our morality? Are killing, lying, cheating, stealing, and sexual acts right or wrong, and why or why not?<sup>9</sup>

Carol W. Lewis illustrates the pragmatic orientation of ethics in public administration:

*Ethics* involves thinking systematically about morals and conduct and making judgements about right and wrong. What makes ethics so important to public service is that it goes beyond thought and talk to performance and action . . . . In sum, the subject of ethics is action based on judgments of right and wrong. Three questions summarize the subject's pragmatic underpinnings: What counts? What is at stake? How can managers ensure professional success and ethical survival? Finer distinctions and fancier terminology are available for conceptual clarification, but they threaten to bury the subject in semantics. That is a terminal exercise; it kills interest along with utility for practical managers more concerned with deeds than definitions.<sup>10</sup>

Although some theorists distinguish between the terms ethics and morality,<sup>11</sup> in this dissertation the terms are used interchangeably. Those who distinguish ethics from morality may point out that ethics involves "systematic rational reflection" on matters of morality.<sup>12</sup> To these thinkers, *morality* refers to human conduct and values, and *ethics*

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<sup>9</sup>Jacques Thiroux, *Ethics*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1995), 2.

<sup>10</sup>Carol W. Lewis, *The Ethics Challenge in Public Service: A Problem-Solving Guide* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1991), 3.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, William H. Shaw, *Social and Personal Ethics* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), 3. Shaw and others contend that ethics involves rational, systematic reflection whereas morality may operate at a less conscious level.

<sup>12</sup>Ruth Purtilo, *Ethical Dimensions in the Health Professions*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia, PA: W.B. Saunders, Co., 1993), 6.

refers to the study of those areas.<sup>13</sup> Morality seems to these philosophers to include such broad realms as group mores, conventions, matters of taste, and simple etiquette.<sup>14</sup>

Although there may be some theoretical merit in making this distinction between ethics and morality, the terms are not distinguished in common parlance and they are not distinguished here. Ethics is simply about right and wrong in human actions. This study examines the ability of public administrators to make judgments about right and wrong in social dilemmas.

### **The Context of the Field of Ethics:**

#### **Heterogeneity and Incommensurability**

It is important to recognize the context of ethical reflection in general. The current ethical landscape is characterized by lack of agreement, pluralism, and chaos. In contrast to some historical periods, current ethical scholars have no common repository of agreed-upon epistemological, sociological, or foundational assumptions. Pluralism characterizes not only academic debate but popular discourse. Alasdair MacIntyre provides eloquent commentary to what he describes as the "incommensurability" and "heterogeneity" of ethical debates. According to MacIntyre, "There seems to be no rational way of securing

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<sup>13</sup>William H. Shaw, Social and Personal Ethics (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1993), 3.

<sup>14</sup>Frankena, Ethics, 7.

moral agreement in our culture."<sup>15</sup> He sees this illustrated by the nature of contemporary moral debates which he describes as "interminable" in which the participants advance viewpoints which are based on incompatible or "incommensurable" notions of particular values. He offers this example:

(a) Justice demands that every citizen should enjoy, so far as is possible, an equal opportunity to develop his or her talents and his or her other potentialities. But prerequisites for the provision of such equal opportunity include the provision of equal access to health care and education. Therefore justice requires that no citizen should be able to buy unfair share of such services. This in turn requires the abolition of private schools and private medical practice.

(b) Everybody has a right to incur such and only such obligations as he or she wishes, to be free to make such and only such contracts as he or she desires and to determine his or her own free choices. Physicians must therefore be free to practice on such terms as they desire and patients must be free to choose among physicians, teachers must be free to teach on such terms as they choose and pupils and parents to go where they wish for education. Freedom thus requires not only the existence of private practice in medicine and private schools in education, but also the abolition of those restraints on private practice which are imposed by licensing and regulation by such bodies as universities, medical schools, the A.M.A. and the state.<sup>16</sup>

MacIntyre remarks on the "conceptual incommensurability" of these common kinds of debates. In this debate, position "a" is based on justice while position "b" is addressing the concerns of liberty. As MacIntyre notes, there is no agreed-upon procedure for resolving these kinds of conflicts in our society.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>MacIntyre, After Virtue, 7.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 8.

This development, in MacIntyre's opinion, represents the inability of liberal individualism to sustain a viable notion of community. "For liberal individualism a community is simply an arena in which individuals each pursue their own self-chosen conception of the good life and political institutions exist to provide that degree of order which makes such self-determined activity possible."<sup>18</sup> In part, this is a result of the emphasis on universalizable principles of ethical analysis without any relationship to the moral life of the community. The following section describes a schema for classifying ethical theories in order to understand the different perspectives in the many ethical theories which characterize the current ethical landscape.

### **A Schema for Classifying Ethical Perspectives**

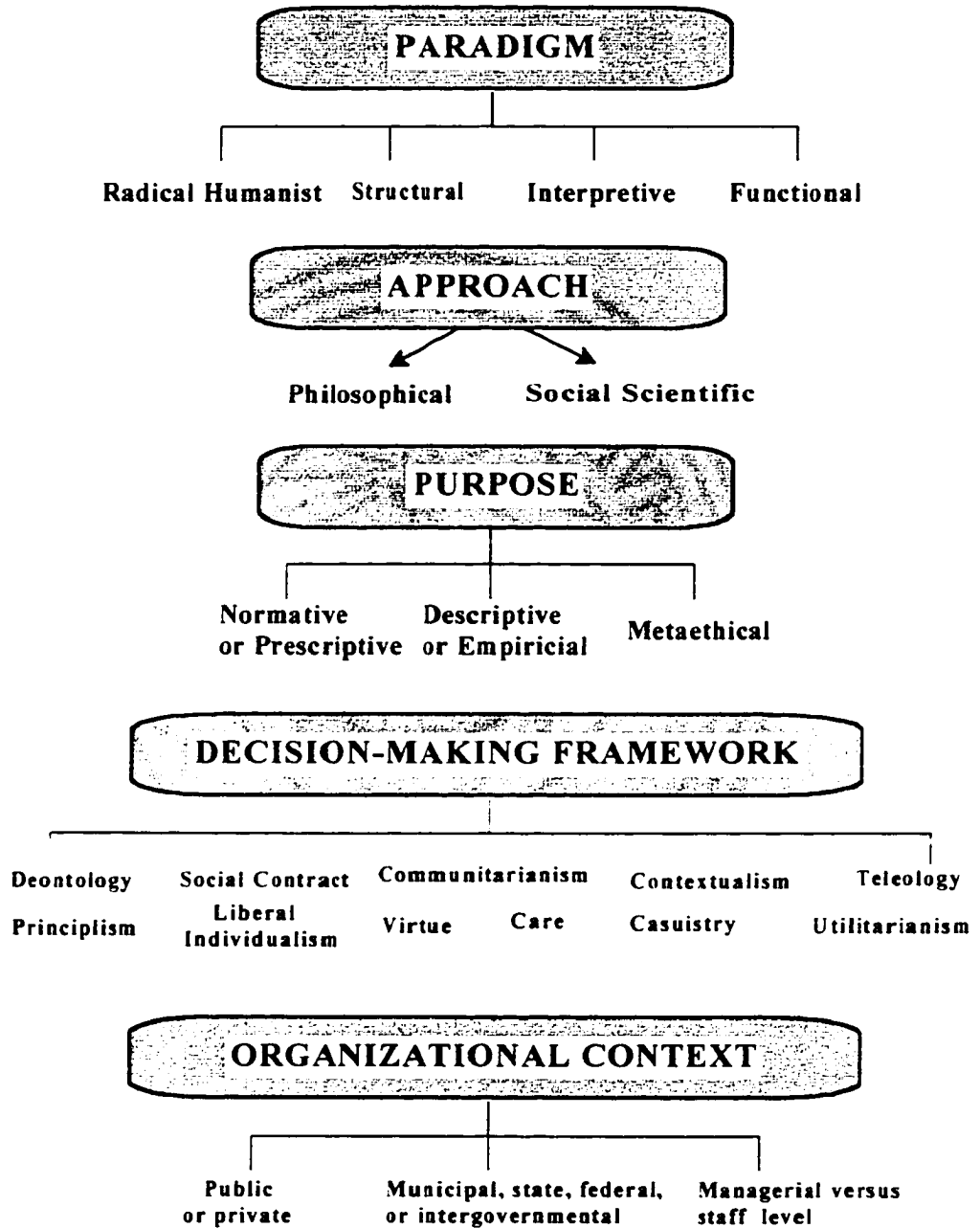
As the preceding section indicates, one consequence of ethics' philosophical roots is that the field of ethics has developed in multiple directions. Ethical theories may embrace a variety of foundational assumptions, methodological approaches, schools and levels. As a result, each ethical theory may make sense in its own right but it may be difficult to compare different theories. For example, Terry Coopers's duty buttressed by virtue and analysis ethical theory<sup>19</sup> and Dennis Thompson's ethic of neutrality versus ethic

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<sup>18</sup>MacIntyre, After Virtue, 194.

<sup>19</sup>Terry L. Cooper, "Hierarchy, Virtue, and the Practice of Public Administration: A Perspective for Normative Ethics," Public Administration Review 47:4 (July/August 1987): 320-328.

**Figure 1. Ethical Decision-Making**



of structuralism<sup>20</sup> are each logical ethical approaches. However, it is difficult to compare or integrate their positions. The suggested classification schema identifies ethical theories based on five criteria: paradigm, approach, purpose, decision-making framework, and organizational context. (See Figure 1).

### **Paradigm**

Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan note that "all theories of organization are based upon a philosophy of science," that an analysis of the underlying assumptions of paradigms in the social sciences involves four major categories: ontological, epistemological, human nature, and methodological, and that social theories may be analyzed according to two dimensions: the subjective-objective dimension and the regulation-radical change dimension.<sup>21</sup> Utilizing this framework, Burrell and Morgan suggest that any social theory may be located within four dominant paradigms: functionalist, interpretive, radical humanist, or radical structuralist. Burrell and Morgan's framework would provide the following analysis of the functionalist paradigm. The functionalist paradigm is grounded in a sociology of regulation characterized by an objectivist viewpoint operating with a realist ontology, a positivist epistemology, having a

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<sup>20</sup>Dennis F. Thompson, "The Possibility of Administrative Ethics." Public Administration Review 45:5 (September/October 1985): 555-561.

<sup>21</sup>Gibson Burrell and Gareth Morgan, "Assumptions About the Nature of Social Science." Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1985), 1, 13, 10-19.

determinist view of human nature, and using a nomothetic methodology. From this description, one would expect functionalists to see the world as composed of objective, empirical facts. One might also anticipate that functionalists would have a concern for social order and cohesion, and to utilize quantitative research tools.<sup>22</sup> As H. George Frederickson notes, research in public administration ethics has operated from within a different paradigm than that of public administration as a whole:

The dominant approach to field research in public administration as well as in virtually all other aspects of the study of administration is positivist, rational, and empirical. This approach to research in administrative ethics is emerging but is less common than interpretive-deductive treatment of ethics.<sup>23</sup>

As Frederickson suggests, while public administration as a whole has operated within the functionalist paradigm, public administration ethics research has been from within the interpretive paradigm.

Figure 2 places various public administration ethical works within Burrell and Morgan's four paradigms. The cognitive developmental perspective used in this study falls within the radical humanist paradigm because of its subjective constructivist ontology, voluntarist view of human nature, anti-positivist epistemology, and interest in change versus control issues.<sup>24</sup>

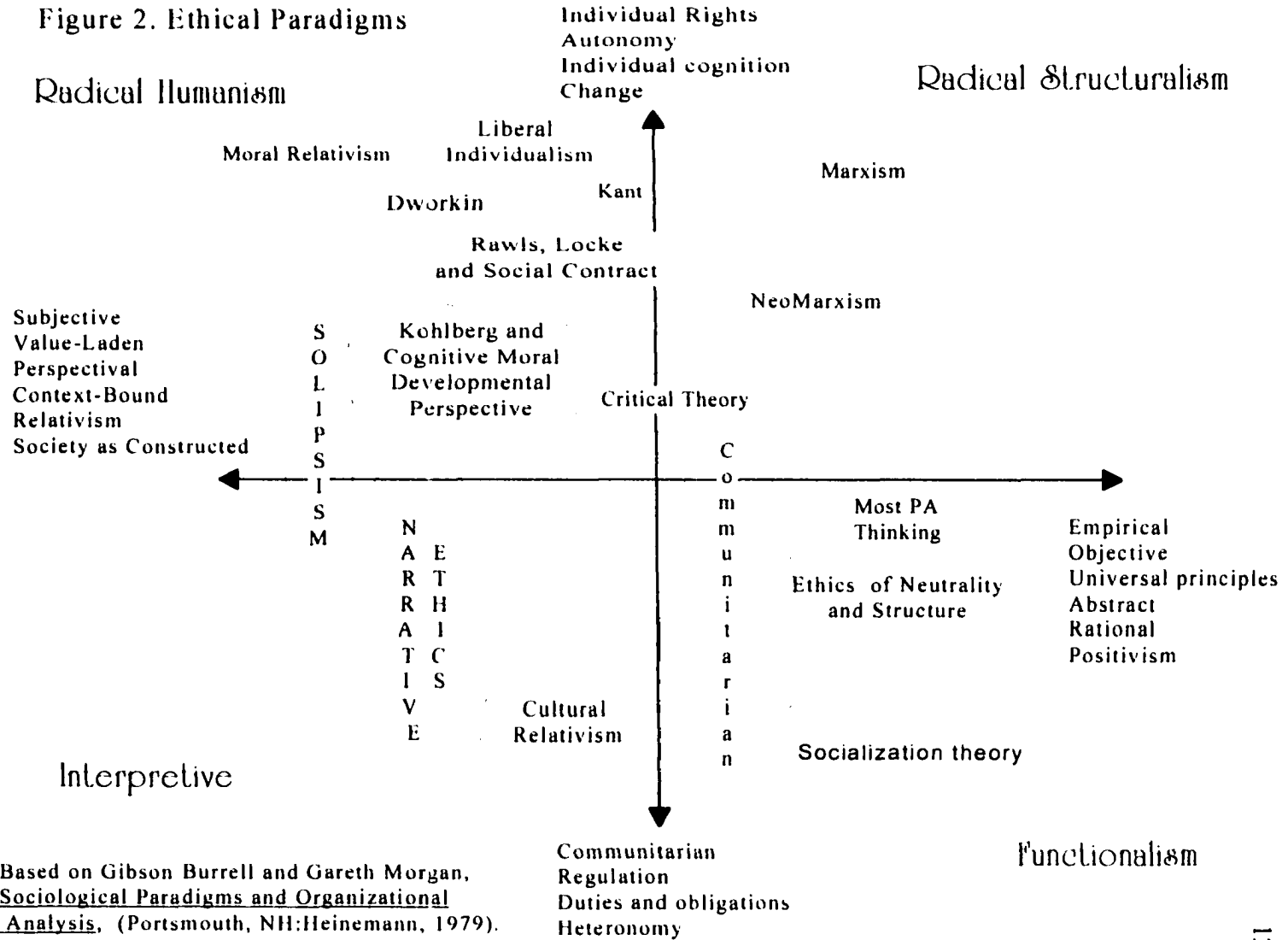
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<sup>22</sup>Burrell and Morgan, "Assumptions About the Nature of Social Science," 25 - 35.

<sup>23</sup>H. George Frederickson, in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994), 33.

<sup>24</sup>While it may not be immediately obvious that the cognitive moral developmental approach has an interest in human emancipation, it should be remembered that the

Figure 2. Ethical Paradigms





### Approach

Beyond the “metatheoretical” assumptions of Burrell and Morgan, there are two basic historical philosophical ethical approaches to the study of ethics and morality: the philosophical approach and the social scientific approach. In the philosophical approach, the focus is upon the rational bases for determining moral behavior. Ethical conduct must be defended and justified on rational grounds. In the social scientific paradigm, the focus is upon the psychological and sociological processes involved in moral behavior. In a sense, the social scientific approach studies the social and psychological manifestations of philosophical ethics among those who have been educated in moral reasoning.<sup>25</sup> On a theoretical level, the philosophical and social scientific approaches constitute two ends of the same continuum. However, in practice, these approaches demand such different methods, skills and sciences that it is reasonable to consider the two approaches separately. While philosophical ethics asks: “What ought we to do and what kind of person should I be?,” social science asks “How does one become a person who does the right thing and possesses virtuous qualities? Even more, how shall society promote those processes?”

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stimulus for Kohlberg’s work was to understand why some were able to defy the authorities during World War II while others simply did what they were told. Why were some free of the domination of authorities while others were subject to it?

<sup>25</sup>James R. Rest and Darcia Narvaez, Moral Development in the Professions (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1994), x.

Wayne Leys was the first to call for a philosophical grounding for public administration ethics.<sup>26</sup> Since that time, public administration ethics literature has increasingly utilized a philosophical approach. Writers such as Paul Appleby, F. Neil Brady, Terry L. Cooper, Robert B. Denhardt, Kathryn Denhardt, J. Patrick Dobel, H. George Frederickson, Carol W. Lewis, John Rohr, Patrick J. Sheeran, Dennis Thompson, and Gary Woller<sup>27</sup> all represent a philosophical approach to ethics because they emphasize rational bases for ethical decision-making. While the dominant ethics tradition within the

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<sup>26</sup>Wayne A. Leys, "Ethics and Administrative Discretion," Public Administration Review 3 (1952): 10-23. See also Terry L. Cooper, "The Emergence of Administrative Ethics as a Field of Study in the United States" in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics, 3-31.

<sup>27</sup>Terry L. Cooper and N. Dale Wright, eds., Exemplary Public Administrators: Character and Leadership in Government (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Publishers, 1992); Terry L. Cooper, Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994); Terry L. Cooper, The Responsible Administrator (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990); Dennis F. Thompson, "The Possibility of Administrative Ethics," Public Administration Review 45:5 (September/October 1985: 555-569); James S. Bowman, ed., Ethical Frontiers in Public Management (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1991); J. Patrick Dobel, "Political Prudence and the Ethics of Leadership," Public Administration Review 58:1 (May/June 1998): 74-81; Harold F. Gortner, Ethics for Public Managers (New York: Praeger, 1991); Paul H. Appleby, Morality and Administration (New York: Greenwood Press, 1952); Kathryn G. Denhardt, The Ethics of Public Service: Resolving Moral Dilemmas in Public Organizations (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988); H. George Frederickson, ed., foreword by John A. Rohr, Ethics and Public Administration (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993); F. Neil Brady and Gary M. Woller, "Administration Ethics and Judgments of Utility: Reconciling the Competing Theories," American Review of Public Administration 26:3 (September 1996): 309; W.J. Michael Cody and Richardson R. Lynn, Honest Government (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1992).

field of public administration adopts the philosophical approach,<sup>28</sup> this study uses a social scientific approach.

### **Purpose**

The study of ethics may be divided into three purposes: scientific or descriptive, normative or prescriptive, and metaethical or analytic.<sup>29</sup> In scientific or descriptive ethics one uses empirical methods to study the moral behavior or customs of a particular society or group of people.<sup>30</sup> In normative or prescriptive ethics, the concern is with what we should or ought to do. Normative ethics represents “[a] systematically developed theory about the nature and the determination of moral right and wrong.”<sup>31</sup> Meta-ethics goes beyond (*meta* is Greek for beyond) normative ethics and attempts to form a rational justification for moral judgments by defining the nature of the good. Although the three realms may be separated theoretically, in practice normative ethics

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<sup>28</sup>H. George Frederickson, “Research and Knowledge in Administrative Ethics,” and Terry L. Cooper, “The Emergence of Administrative Ethics as a Field of Study in the United States” in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics, 3-31.

<sup>29</sup>There are a number of approaches to categorizing ethics. Purtilo describes two (Normative and Metaethical), Frankena utilizes three. Thiroux uses two: descriptive/ scientific and philosophical which he subdivides into normative and metaethical.

<sup>30</sup>See Thiroux, Ethics, 6 and Frankena, Ethics, 4.

<sup>31</sup>Earl R. Winkler, “Applied Ethics, Overview” in Ruth Chadwick, ed., Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics. Vol I. (San Diego: Academic Press), 191.

implicitly makes assumptions about descriptive and metaethical ethics.<sup>32</sup>

Public administration ethics literature has focused on the normative purpose, as

H. George Frederickson describes:

The normative and philosophical literature in administrative ethics is, by any measure, impressive in both quantity and quality. The conduct of field-based empirical research on administrative ethics, particularly in public management, is comparatively less common. There is, as a consequence, a much smaller literature when empirical research is compared with normative discourse.<sup>33</sup>

The writers described as philosophical in their approach also have a normative purpose. As previously stated, this study's descriptive purpose diverges from the dominant normative purpose of the vast majority of public administration ethics literature. Other examples of descriptive ethics include Donald C. Menzel's studies of ethical climates in local government and teaching of public administration ethics in programs accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration. James B. Bowman's initial study in 1988 and the 1997 follow-up with Russell L. Williams of attitudes about ethics in government, April Hejka-Ekins's study of the teaching of ethics, and the study of state government codes of ethics by Blake et al..<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Obviously approaches and purposes also have metaethical assumptions.

<sup>33</sup>H. George Frederickson. "Research and Knowledge in Administrative Ethics." in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics, 31.

<sup>34</sup>Donald C. Menzel, "The Ethics Factor in Local Government: An Empirical Analysis," in Ethical Frontiers in Public Management, ed. James S. Bowman (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1991), 191-203; Donald C. Menzel, "Teaching Ethics and Values in Public Administration: Are We Making A Difference?," Public Administration Review 57:3 (May/June 1997): 224-230; James B. Bowman and Russell L. Williams. "Ethics in

This study's specific purpose is to describe moral development among public administrators. In essence, it describes the ability of public administrators to use normative concepts applied to general scenarios. Although the results of the study may have normative implications, the study itself does not address normative considerations such as how public administrators ought to make decisions or how they should decide regarding specific issues.

### **Decision-making Frameworks**

Decision-making frameworks represent recommended ways to approach ethical dilemmas. Frameworks may be based on a specific component of ethical behavior or on a theory of human behavior. Traditional philosophical ethics employs four major components to analyze moral behavior: duties, consequences, context, and virtue.<sup>35</sup> In any ethical framework, one must deal with all four components, but particular schools of thought give primacy to one or more of the elements. In fact, each of the components has been the basis for a major ethical framework. Table 1 delineates various ethical

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Government: From a Winter of Despair to A Spring of Hope," Public Administration Review 57:6 (Nov/Dec 1997): 517-526; James S. Bowman, "Ethics in Government: A National Survey of Public Administrators," Public Administration Review 50:3 (May/June 1990): 345-353; April Hejka-Ekins, "Teaching Ethics in Public Administration," Public Administration Review 48:5 (September/October 1988), 885-891; Robert Blake, Jill A. Grob, Donald H. Potenski, Phyllis Reed, and Pat Walsh, "The Nature and Scope of State Government Ethics Codes," Public Productivity and Management Review 21:4 (June 1998): 453-359.

<sup>35</sup>Values are a consideration in ethical analysis which cuts across all categories but do not in themselves constitute a category.

frameworks with their associated bases for decisions, representative writers, and public administration examples.

The classic ethical debate has been framed in the area of ethical decision-making frameworks pitting deontological frameworks against consequentialist frameworks. Deontological approaches base ethical decisions on duties. Duties are moral responsibilities, obligations, or demands.<sup>36</sup> Some duties or obligations grow out of specific social relationships. As a parent, one has certain obligations and duties to one's children. Elected and appointed public officials also have specific obligations which grow out of public and constitutional duties. Other duties seem to be timeless and universal obligations. Justice and the prohibitions of the Ten Commandments are examples of this kind of duty. These obligations are not contingent on particular circumstances or relationships but are always "right."

Consequentialism emphasizes consequences rather than duties in determining which actions are morally correct. This approach to ethics is also called "teleological" (from the Greek word for end) because it emphasizes the outcomes or end results of our actions. Utilitarianism is the most well-known example of consequentialist ethical theory. Developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873),

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<sup>36</sup>My discussion in this passage is heavily influenced by William H. Shaw, Social and Personal Ethics (Belmont, California: Wadsworth, Inc.), 1993, 28-34. Parts of the description of Deontology and Consequentialism were developed for Laura L. Swisher and Carol Krueger-Brophy, Legal and Ethical Issues in Physical Therapy (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann Press, 1998).

utilitarianism is commonly characterized as advocating the greatest good for the greatest number. "The utilitarian says that an act is right (moral) if it is useful in 'bringing about a *desirable* or *good* end."<sup>37</sup> It has been more characteristically stated, however, as 'Everyone should perform that act or follow that moral rule that will bring about the greatest good (or happiness) for everyone concerned.'<sup>38</sup> Act utilitarians believe that the greatest good should be calculated for every action (frequently accomplished through cost-benefit analysis). Rule utilitarians, on the other hand, believe that we should follow rules which promote the greatest good. For example, rule utilitarians might agree upon a rule which prohibited killing except in self-defense.<sup>39</sup>

Neil and Woller argue that utilitarianism is implicit throughout public administration's emphasis of efficiency, bounded rationality, and cost-benefit analysis in public policy.<sup>40</sup> Although the administrative aspect of public administration may offer implicit support for utilitarian ethics, an important portion of public administration ethics emphasizes constitutional or regime values. This literature values the protection of individual rights and due process.

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<sup>37</sup>Paul Taylor, ed., Problems of Moral Philosophy, 2nd. ed., (Belmont, California: Dickenson, 1972), 137 as quoted in Thiroux, Ethics, 48.

<sup>38</sup>Thiroux, Ethics, 48.

<sup>39</sup>This example is taken from Thiroux, Ethics, 51.

<sup>40</sup>F. Neil Brady and Gary Woller, "Administration Ethics and Judgments of Utility: Reconciling the Competing Theories," American Review of Public Administration 26:3 (September 1996): 309.

While the debate between deontology and consequentialism represents a long and distinguished history in general and PA ethical literature,<sup>41</sup> the proposed schema expands beyond these two frameworks. This expansion accommodates virtue ethics, narrative ethics, feminist ethics of care, and other frameworks which may not easily fit into the deontological or consequentialist frameworks.

A significant stream of ethics literature in public administration uses middle-level or intermediate principles as the basis for normative judgments. These principles are intermediate because they are logically positioned between high-level theories such as deontology and lower level rules of conduct. These include principles such as public interest, prudence, accountability, responsibility, discretion, citizenship, civic virtue, democratic values, dirty hands, constitutional values, conflict of interest, whistle-blowing, and public service. One may contrast these intermediate principles with those of medicine: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence, justice, confidentiality, informed consent. The debate of Herman Finer and Carl Joachim Friedrich regarding the nature of administrative responsibility represents some of the earliest and most significant PA

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<sup>41</sup>See F. Neil Brady and Gary Woller, "Administration Ethics and Judgments of Utility: Reconciling the Competing Theories." American Review of Public Administration 26:3 (September 1996): 309 for a description of utilitarian emphasis in PA. However, Wheeler and Brady found no difference between public and private sector employees and failed to substantiate a preference for consequentialist approach. See Gloria F. Wheeler and F. Neil Brady, "Do Public-sector and Private-sector Personnel Have Different Ethical Dispositions: A Study of Two Sites," Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory 8:1 (January 1998): 93-115.



writing of this type.<sup>42</sup> **Table 1. Major Frameworks for Ethical Decision-Making**<sup>43</sup>

Ethical Theory	Basis for Decisions/Actions	Representative Writers	PA Examples
Deontology	Duty/ obligation Kant's categorical imperative	Immanuel Kant John Rawls	Scott and Harmon Harmon and Hart Fritz Morstein Marx
Utilitarianism	Consequences Principle of utility	John Stuart Mill Jeremy Bentham	Dominant PA tradition although few claim it
Character or Virtue Ethics	Virtue or character	Aristotle Edmund Pellegrino	Stephen Bailey Terry L. Cooper J. Patrick Dobel
Contextualism Situation Ethics Moral Relativism	Context/ situation Socialization Enculturation	Joseph Fletcher	Kathryn Denhardt Robert Golembiewski
Liberal Individualism	Individual Rights	Robert Nozick Ronald Dworkin	John Locke
Contractarianism/ Social Contract	Government as agreement to be governed	John Locke Thomas Hobbes Jean-Jacques Rousseau	John Rawls
Communitarianism	Common good Community or social goals	Alasdair MacIntyre Daniel Callahan	John Rohr Terry L. Cooper's ethics of citizenship

<sup>42</sup>Herman Finer, "Administrative Responsibility in Democratic Government." *Public Administration Review* 1:2 (1941): 335-350; Carl Joachim Friedrich, "Public Policy and the Nature of Administrative Responsibility," *Public Policy* 1 (1940): 3-24.

<sup>43</sup>Adapted from Laura Lee Swisher and Carol Krueger-Brophy, *Legal and Ethical Issues in Physical Therapy* (Boston: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1998), 18. It is possible for a writer to be associated with more than one category as different works by the same author may represent a different decision-making framework. Representative thinkers may also be associated with several categories. While some would view John Rawls as a neo-Kantian, others might describe him more as a social contract thinker.

Ethical Theory	Basis for Decisions/Actions	Representative Writers	PA Examples
Ethics of Care Feminist ethics	Relationships	Carol Gilligan	Not applicable
Casuistry	Paradigmatic cases	Stephen Toulmin Albert Jonsen	Narrative ethics
Principlism	"Intermediate" principles based in common morality	Tom Beauchamp and James Childress Medical Ethics	Pendleton Herring Carl Joachim Friedrich Herman Finer Numerous others

### Organizational Context

Organizational context is the type of organization and the job function presumed by the theory. In public administration the organization context may be public, non-profit, municipal, state, federal, or intergovernmental. The presumed organizational context also may be either supervisory or line - staff function. Is the theory directed more towards managers or other government officials? Robert Golembiewski was one of the first to call attention to the importance of organizational context for ethics.<sup>44</sup> Although it is not always possible to identify an organizational context for a particular ethical theory, organizational context can be very important. Managers and staff - line personnel may view specific situations or issues very differently, and public sector employees may see particular ethical issues differently than those in the private sector.

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<sup>44</sup>Robert T. Golembiewski, "Organization *is* a Moral Problem," Public Administration Review 52:2 (March/April 1992): 99-103. See also Kathryn G. Denhardt, "Organizational Structure as a Context for Administrative Ethics," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994), 169-182.

### Locating the Study:

#### Ethics, Public Administration, and the Schema

From the standpoint of the described schema, this study represents a radical humanist paradigm, social scientific approach, descriptive purpose, within a public organizational context. This study is also an example of applied or practical ethics as described by Winkler:

Applied ethics is a general field of study that includes all systematic efforts to understand and to resolve moral problems that arise in some domain of practical life, as with medicine, journalism, or business, or in connection with some general issue of social concern, such as employment equity or capital punishment.<sup>45</sup>

Beauchamp and Childress prefer the term practical ethics to applied ethics:

The attempt to work out the implications of general theories for specific forms of conduct and moral judgment will be called *practical ethics* here, although it is often misleadingly called *applied ethics*. The term *practical* refers to the use of ethical theory and methods of analysis to examine moral problems, practices, and policies in several areas, including the professions and public policy.<sup>46</sup>

Because the study examines the moral judgment of public administrators, it is an example of applied or practical ethics within the field of public administration.

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<sup>45</sup>Earl R. Winkler. "Applied Ethics, Overview in Ruth Chadwick, ed., Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics. Vol I. (San Diego: Academic Press), 192.

<sup>46</sup>Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress, Principles of Biomedical Ethics, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 4.

### Cognitive Moral Developmental Perspective

The main focus of this study is the measurement of moral development among members of the American Society for Public Administration. This section provides a preliminary definition of cognitive moral developmental terms used throughout the study. The cognitive moral developmental perspective is a psychological perspective which includes a specific cognitive developmental theory applied to morality. During the 1930s Jean Piaget had described a developmental approach to cognition. Lawrence Kohlberg extended this approach to morality.<sup>47</sup> The cognitive moral developmental approach argues that each individual “attempts to analyze the epistemology of how people make sense of the world, and that there is a progressive order of change in constructing these meanings.”<sup>48</sup> Kohlberg built on Piaget’s notion of developing cognitive operations involving the performance of different justice operations as one progressed from lower to higher stages.<sup>49</sup> While both Piaget and Kohlberg conceived of these stages as “hard stages,” recent thinking has been highly critical of the hard stage approach.<sup>50</sup> In addition

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<sup>47</sup>James R. Rest, “Background: Theory and Research” in James R. Rest and Darcia Narvaez, eds., Moral Development in the Professions (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1994), 2-3.

<sup>48</sup>James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Muriel J. Bebeau, and Stephen J. Thoma, Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach, Manuscript submitted for publication (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 5/23/1998), 10.

<sup>49</sup>Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 12.

<sup>50</sup>Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 13.

to the notion of development through stages, the cognitive moral perspective is also characterized by distinguishing between structure and content:

Distinguishing structure from content is basic to a constructivist, cognitive approach. The distinction is crucial for diverse purposes; distinguishing between “underlying structure,” and “surface” content; defending a “structural” approach to moral education in public schools that is constitutional; making cross-cultural comparisons when it is obvious that cultures differ in terms of specific values, customs, and practices. It is an open question, however, as to how to make the distinction . . . .<sup>51</sup>

Briefly, the cognitive moral developmental approach is individually-focused, constructivist, and stage-oriented. This position may be contrasted to “socialization” theory, the dominant thinking of Kohlberg’s day, which was socially-focused, deterministic, and conformity oriented.<sup>52</sup> The cognitive moral development perspective and the socialization perspective represent two differing paradigms which describe the process for acquiring ethical decision-making skills. In the socialization paradigm, it is society which determines moral conduct. Individuals are socialized into existing norms. As Rest describes the process of socialization, “moral development [is] a matter of learning the norms of one’s culture, accepting them and internalizing them, and of behaving in conformity to them.”<sup>53</sup> From the socialization perspective, ethical behavior is

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<sup>51</sup>Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 28.

<sup>52</sup> Rest, “Background: Theory and Research,” 2-3. “Socialization” is Rest’s term. As Rest points out, the socialization view grew out of the dominant behaviorist view of the 1950s.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 2.

simply conforming to existing societal norms and conventions. In contrast to this notion, the cognitive moral developmental perspective argues that individuals must interpret situations in order to make moral judgments. Moreover, the ability to make these types of judgments changes and develops over one's life.<sup>54</sup>

### **Description of the Study**

This dissertation is a study which measures moral measure development among public administrators using the Defining Issues Test (DIT) created by James Rest.<sup>55</sup> The Defining Issues Test (Appendix A) is an objective test of moral judgment that is based on Lawrence Kohlberg's seminal theory of moral development. During the 1950s Kohlberg proposed a six-stage theory of human moral development. In Kohlberg's descriptions individuals progress through the stage one morality of obedience to exchange, concordance, law and duty, and ultimately to the stage five and six morality of consensus and cooperation.<sup>56</sup> In the late 1970s James Rest created a multiple-choice, computer-scored instrument, the DIT, to assess moral judgment based on Kohlberg's six stages of

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<sup>54</sup>Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," 2-3.

<sup>55</sup>James R. Rest, Development in Judging Moral Issues (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979). See also James R. Rest, Guide for the Defining Issues Test, 3d ed., Version 1.3 (Minneapolis: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, University of Minnesota, January 1993).

<sup>56</sup>James R. Rest, "Background: Theory and Research." In James R. Rest and Darcia Narvaez, eds., Moral Development in the Professions (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1994), 3, 13.

moral development. Since its development, the DIT has been utilized extensively. Rest estimates that the test has been given to hundreds of thousands of individuals in numerous countries and practitioners in a variety of fields.<sup>57</sup>

While there has been extensive work on the DIT and moral development in other fields such as medicine, management, nursing, physical therapy, occupational therapy, accounting, and business disciplines, there has been little attention to this area in public administration (PA). In 1991 Debra Stewart and Norman Sprinthall<sup>58</sup> developed the Stewart-Sprinthall Management Survey (SSMS) to assess the moral development of public administrators utilizing dilemmas which were context-specific to public administration. Recently, Stewart and Sprinthall<sup>59</sup> have expanded their use of the SSMS to include work with government officials from Poland utilizing dilemmas specific to the context in Poland. Despite Stewart and Sprinthall's work, research into moral development in PA remains incomplete.

As previously stated, this study explores moral development among public administrators who are members of the American Society for Public Administration

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<sup>57</sup>Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," 13.

<sup>58</sup>Debra W. Stewart, and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Strengthening Ethical Judgment in Public Administration," in James S. Bowman, ed., Ethical Frontiers in Public Management (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 243-260; Debra W. Stewart, and Norman Sprinthall, "Moral Development in Public Administration," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994), 325-348.

<sup>59</sup>Debra W Stewart, Norman Sprinthall, and Renata Siemienska, "Ethical Reasoning in a Time of Revolution: A Study of Local Officials in Poland," Public Administration Review 57: 5 (1997): 445-453.

(ASPA). More specifically it examines the relationship between age, race, gender, region, organizational location, job title/function, and level of moral development among members of ASPA as measured by the DIT. ASPA was selected for study because it is the “largest and most prominent professional association in the field of public administration.” The American Society for Public Administration was formed in 1939 and has over 10,000 members.<sup>60</sup>

A computer-generated random sample of 1000 of the 11,185 ASPA members was obtained from Chessie Lists<sup>61</sup> which services the ASPA. Each randomly selected member of ASPA was mailed a packet (Appendix C) consisting of a short demographic questionnaire (Part 1) and the short form of the DIT (Appendix A). An addressed and stamped return envelope was provided for respondents to return both parts of the instrument. Four weeks after the initial mailing a follow-up postcard (Appendix C) was mailed to those in the random sample reminding them to complete the survey. DIT responses were sent to The Center for Ethical Development for computer scoring. P scores and other relevant scores were calculated and statistical analysis was performed on the data.

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<sup>60</sup>Information obtained from the ASPA internet web site at <http://www.aspanet.org>.

<sup>61</sup>Chessie Lists, Inc.: 13321 New Hampshire Avenue, Suite 202; Silver Spring, MD 20904; (301) 680-3633. Membership has now decreased to 9,925.



### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary purpose of the study described in this dissertation is to extend knowledge about moral development among public administrators. A second aim is to explore the relationship between age, race, gender, region, organizational location, job title/function, and level of moral development among public administrators as measured by the DIT. The existence of a large data bank of DIT results among other professions and groups provides additional opportunities to compare actual results among public administrators to anticipated results based on existing norms. Finally, the study provides an opportunity to compare DIT results to SSMS moral development results in order to evaluate Stewart and Sprinthall's finding that public administrators prefer stage four (law and order) moral reasoning to postconventional reasoning.

### **Significance of the Study**

Public administration is characterized by ambivalence regarding ethics in government. On the one hand, there is increasing emphasis on the need for public administrators to have the ability to make complex ethical decisions. On the other hand, there is a long-standing resistance to ethical reflection in public life based on the politics-administration dichotomy.<sup>62</sup> Some would argue that public administrators should merely apply the law rather than interpret the law. This ambivalence may be responsible in part

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<sup>62</sup>Peter Madsen and Jay M. Shafritz, eds., Essentials of Government Ethics (New York: Meridian, The Penguin Company, 1992), 212.

for the lack of the empirical studies of the ethical behavior of public administrators. This study is one of a very few empirical studies of this nature.

Madsen and Shafritz describe a crisis in government ethics which embraces two concerns: corruption among government officials and solving complex ethical quandaries in government.<sup>63</sup> This study of moral judgment among public administrators provides information about the ability of public administrators to make ethical judgments about hypothetical moral dilemmas. In addition, the study provides an opportunity to compare public administrators moral judgment to that of other professionals.

This study is the first study in public administration to measure the moral judgment of practicing public administrators with an extensively validated instrument, the Defining Issues Test. Although Stewart and Sprinthall validated the SSMS against the DIT with graduates students, no further study was conducted among public administrators with the DIT.<sup>64</sup> The use of the DIT permits meaningful comparison of public administrators to other professional groups and to established norms. In addition, this study is the largest single group of public administrators in the United States<sup>65</sup> studied with

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<sup>63</sup>Peter Madsen and Jay M. Shafritz, eds., Essentials of Government Ethics, 1-18.

<sup>64</sup>Stewart and Sprinthall's instrument, the SSMS, was validated against the DIT by administering both the DIT and SSMS to two student groups in an MPA program. However, their studies of the moral judgment of public administrators used only the SSMS. The only study using the DIT is Stewart and Sprinthall's sample of graduate students in public administration.

<sup>65</sup>Stewart, Sprinthall, and Siemienska interviewed 485 subjects in their study of Polish officials.

regard to moral development, and the only study of moral development to utilize a random sample.

### **Limitations and Delimitations of the Study**

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution due to limitations of the study, especially with regard to the sample. The study examines members of the American Society for Public Administration, and may not be representative of all government workers. (For example, one might argue that members of a professional organization are more interested in ethical matters.) In addition, a large number of respondents to the survey are middle or top managers and hold a master's or doctoral degree. Finally, over 65% of respondents are male. Accordingly, one must proceed cautiously in applying these findings beyond the immediate population studied. Findings from this predominantly male study cannot be generalized to female public administrators.

It should be emphasized that this study does not provide an indication as to whether public administrators are ethical or unethical. Rather, it provides information about the ability of public administrators to make moral judgments in response to hypothetical dilemmas.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

This chapter of the dissertation has provided an introduction to the study by defining terms, providing a brief overview of the study, ethics literature, suggesting limitations and delimitations, and the significance of the study for public administration.

Chapter 2 summarizes literature relevant to this study. The chapter describes the evolution of moral development literature, focusing on Kohlberg's work, the Four Component Model, and the Defining Issues Test. Chapter two concludes with a discussion of moral developmental literature in public administration.

Chapter three describes the methodology utilized in the study. Following a description of the research design, attention is directed toward an examination of the sample, population, and subjects involved in the study. The chapter also describes the instrumentation of the study with emphasis on the DIT. Extensive consideration is then given to the validity and reliability of the DIT. It concludes by delineating the variables and instrumentation in the study.

Chapter four details the data and results of the study. This includes extensive discussion of the statistical analysis of the data. Chapter 5 summarizes and interprets the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Chapter two outlines scholarly literature relevant to the study of moral development among public administrators. Although there is a significant body of literature about moral development in other disciplines, little has been written regarding moral development among public administrators.<sup>1</sup> The chapter provides an extensive review of literature related to the cognitive developmental perspective, Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development, the Four Component Model of Ethical Behavior, and the Defining Issues Test (DIT), and studies of moral judgment in public administration. This discussion includes major criticisms of the DIT and recent changes in philosophy by the designers of the DIT. Because the DIT has its historical and theoretical antecedents in the thinking of Lawrence Kohlberg, the chapter begins with a description of

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<sup>1</sup>Only four studies investigate moral development in public administration: Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Strengthening Ethical Judgment in Public Administration," in James S. Bowman, ed., Ethical Frontiers in Public Management (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 243-260; Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "The Impact of Demographic, Professional, and Organizational Variables and Domain on the Moral Reasoning of Public Administrators," in H. George Frederickson, ed., Ethics and Public Administration (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 205-219; Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Moral Development in Public Administration," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994), 325-348; Debra W. Stewart, Norman A. Sprinthall, and Renata Siemienska, "Ethical Reasoning in a Time of Revolution: A Study of Local Officials in Poland," Public Administration Review 57:5 (September/October 1997), 445-453.

Kohlberg's moral developmental theory including its historical context, theoretical foundations, and major critics. Discussion then focuses on the work of James Rest and associates at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development. This includes the Four Component Model of Ethical Behavior and the DIT and a comparison of the DIT and Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Inventory (MJI). The chapter moves to a discussion of major criticisms of the DIT and the major types of DIT studies,<sup>2</sup> and concludes by focusing on moral development literature in public administration with critical analysis of the research of Debra Stewart and Norman Sprinthall utilizing the DIT and SSMS.

### **Context for Kohlberg's Thought**

Kohlberg once described the shift toward a cognitive-developmental perspective in child psychology and education as a paradigm shift. He did not need to add that he had been largely responsible for that shift.<sup>3</sup> What were the historical factors which led Kohlberg to diverge so sharply from the mainstream of thinking about morality in 1986? The following section describes the historical context behind Kohlberg's thought from the perspective of Kohlberg's personal history, world events, and from the the field of psychology.

An understanding of Lawrence Kohlberg's life provides an appreciation for the

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<sup>2</sup>Studies dealing with the validity and reliability of the DIT are discussed in chapter three.

<sup>3</sup>Lawrence Kohlberg, ed., Child Psychology and Childhood Education: A Cognitive-Developmental View (New York: Longman, 1987), ix.

richness and multidisciplinary nature of his thought, the personal moral journey reflected in his evolving moral theories, and his implicit understanding of moral complexity.

Kohlberg's father was a conservative businessman.<sup>4</sup> Following high school, Kohlberg enlisted in the merchant marines. His father's Jewish heritage heightened the sense of injustice which Kohlberg experienced in seeing the effects of the Holocaust. Following the war, Kohlberg helped Jewish refugees illegally cross the British blockage. By Kohlberg's own account, these experiences raised ethical questions which would shape his career:

These gropings about questions of justice were intermingled with an adolescent hedonism and relativism about society's demands on me. . . . In the end these became questions of ethical relativity. Was there a universal morality or was all moral choice relative, dependent on culture or on one's own personal and emotional choice?<sup>5</sup>

Kohlberg enrolled in the University of Chicago where he studied philosophy before pursuing graduate studies in psychology. However, he found psychology

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<sup>4</sup>Lawrence Kohlberg, "My Personal Search for Universal Morality," in The Kohlberg Legacy for the Helping Professions, eds. Lisa Kuhmerker with Uwe Gielen and Richard L. Hayes (Birmingham, Alabama: R.E.P. Books, 1991); William M. Kurtines and Jacob L. Gewirtz, eds. Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development, vol 1, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1991); Brenda Munsey, ed., with a response by Lawrence Kohlberg, Moral Development, Moral Education, and Kohlberg (Birmingham, Alabama: Religious Education Press, 1980); James R. Rest, "Epilogue: Larry Kohlberg Remembered," World Psychology 2:3-4 (1997): 413-435. Rest speculates that Kohlberg's own differences with his conservative father were part of the stimulus for Kohlberg's rejection of the socialization theory.

<sup>5</sup>Lawrence Kohlberg, "My Personal Search for Universal Morality," in The Kohlberg Legacy for the Helping Professions, eds. Lisa Kuhmerker with Uwe Gielen and Richard L. Hayes (Birmingham, Alabama: R.E.P. Books, 1991), 13.

inadequate to deal with patients' moral problems. Kohlberg increasingly felt that psychology was inadequate to address the ethical questions that had stimulated his pursuit of education. This inadequacy was due in part, Kohlberg thought, to an inadequate philosophic foundation.

Central to my own sense of how to approach the study of moral development was the assumption that the study must be guided by moral philosophy. What was to count as moral or as developmental advance must start with some philosophic definitions, assumptions, and arguments. These assumptions would be open to question in light of empirical findings, but one could not start with the effort to be value free.<sup>6</sup>

These excerpts reveal the themes that permeate Kohlberg's later writings: the melding of psychology and philosophy, an absolute opposition to moral relativism, the importance of individual construction of moral problems, and an emphasis on justice.

### **The Context of Psychology and**

#### **Kohlberg's Debt to Piaget**

Over the last sixty years study of morality using the psychological approach has been dominated by the following three major approaches:

1. Social-learning approach as delineated by Hartshorne and May in about 1928
2. Psychoanalytic approach initiated by Freud in 1933
3. Cognitive-developmental approach represented by Jean Piaget in 1932 and

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid. 14.



Lawrence Kohlberg in 1958.<sup>7</sup>

When Kohlberg was writing in the 1950s, the two dominant forces were psychoanalytic (including behaviorism) and the character education of the social learning approach. Each approach makes different assumptions about morality and emphasizes different aspects of human existence. While psychoanalytic theory emphasizes feelings, social learning emphasizes behavior and the cognitive-developmental approach emphasizes thinking.<sup>8</sup> Kohlberg's emphasis on conscious reflection is not surprising given his personal odyssey and training in philosophy.

Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of these three dominant theoretical social psychological approaches to morality:

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<sup>7</sup>Uwe Gielen, "Kohlberg's Moral Developmental Theory," in The Kohlberg Legacy for the Helping Professions, eds. Lisa Kuhmerker with Uwe Gielen and Richard L. Hayes (Birmingham, Alabama: R.E.P. Books, 1991), 18.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 18-19.

**Table 2. Dominant Social Psychological Theories<sup>9</sup> of Morality 1930-1998**

Theoretical Approach	Emphasis	Thinkers & Writers	Rational/Irrational	Definition of Morality
Social-Learning <sup>10</sup> or Character education	Behavior	Hartshorne and May William Bennett	Irrational	Morality as learned behaviors, habits, values transmitted by society. Cultural relativism.
Psychoanalytic or Ego Developmental	Feelings	Sigmund Freud Erik Erikson Jane Loevinger B. F. Skinner Haan	Irrational	Superego as the internalization of morality transmitted via parents. (Control of sexual and aggressive instincts by the superego.) Ethical relativism.
Cognitive-Developmental	Thinking	Jean Piaget Lawrence Kohlberg	Rational	Morality as an on-going process of stages through which an individual progresses

While the behavioral and socialization views prevailed prior to his work, Kohlberg changed the study of morality in the following manner:

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<sup>9</sup>Table 2 is based on Uwe Gielen, "Kohlberg's Moral Developmental Theory;" in The Kohlberg Legacy for the Helping Professions, eds. Lisa Kuhmerker with Uwe Gielen and Richard L. Hayes (Birmingham, Alabama: R.E.P. Books, 1991); Peter E. Langford, Approaches to the Development of Moral Reasoning (United Kingdom: Hove, 1995); and Lawrence Kohlberg, Child Psychology and Childhood Education: A Cognitive-developmental View (New York: Longman, 1987). See also Paul Crittenden, Learning to Be Moral (New Jersey: Humanities Press International, Inc., 1990).

<sup>10</sup>Kohlberg also refers to this as the "environmental-learning" or "cultural-transmission theory." See Lawrence Kohlberg, Child Psychology and Childhood Education: A Cognitive-Development View (New York: Longman, 1987).

Kohlberg turned the socialization view on its head. Instead of saying that society determines our values, Kohlberg said it was the individual who constructs moral values. Kohlberg said that morality had to be understood from the inside of the individual, not from the external view of socializers. Kohlberg said that there is a sense in which we are all moral philosophers. All people try to make sense of the social world, to understand how to organize cooperation, and to understand our place in the social system.<sup>11</sup>

When Kohlberg began his studies of moral development in the 1950s, the work of Piaget was almost unknown in the United States,<sup>12</sup> even though Piaget's work in this area had been completed in the 1930s. Few psychologists were interested in morality at that time, and the concept of stages was new. Jean Piaget had outlined cognitive stages of development whereby cognition developed as a stage progression involving increasingly more complex cognitive "operations."<sup>13</sup> Piaget had also given some consideration to morality. However, Piaget had not applied the stage theory to morality.<sup>14</sup> As James Rest describes it, Kohlberg attempted to meld the philosophical principle of justice with Piaget's cognitive developmental concepts:

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<sup>11</sup>James R. Rest, "Epilogue: Larry Kohlberg Remembered," World Psychology 2: 3-4 (1997): 413-435.

<sup>12</sup>James Rest, "Kohlberg in Perspective: A Backward and a Forward Look," in The Kohlberg Legacy for the Helping Professions, eds. Lisa Kuhmerker with Uwe Gielen and Richard L. Hayes (Birmingham, Alabama: R.E.P. Books, 1991), 201.

<sup>13</sup>James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Muriel J. Bebeau, and Stephen J. Thoma, Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach, Manuscript submitted for publication (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 5/23/1998). 12.

<sup>14</sup>Rheta DeVries, "The Cognitive-Developmental Paradigm," in Handbook of Moral Behavior and Development, vol. 1, eds. William M. Kurtines and Jacob L. Gewirtz. (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991), 8.

Piaget modeled the way thinking is supposed to advance on the logico-mathematical structures depicted by logicians. . . . Piaget attempted to depict the developing capabilities of people's thinking in terms of the acquisition of these abstract, formal operations (i.e., higher stages performed cognitive operations that the lower stages did not). Kohlberg seems to have been especially impressed by this type of explanation of cognitive development, and he sought to explain the development of moral stages in terms of "justice operations". . . .<sup>15</sup>

While the contribution of Piaget to Kohlberg's theory has been widely recognized, Kohlberg's thought also drew on the work of James Baldwin, Emile Durkheim, George Mead, and John Dewey.<sup>16</sup> These influences provide a depth to Kohlberg's work which makes his theory more than the extension of Piaget's theories to morality. The following section describes the cognitive moral developmental theory which Kohlberg created from philosophical, psychological, and personal influences.

### **Kohlberg's Theory of Cognitive**

#### **Moral Development**

As delineated in the Introduction, in contrast to philosophical ethics' emphasis of rational rules for behavior, moral development addresses the psychological process involved in moral behavior. Lawrence Kohlberg was one of the first thinkers to approach ethics and morality from a psychological perspective. In 1958, working from this

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<sup>15</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Thinking, 12.

<sup>16</sup>See Uwe Gielen, "Kohlberg's Moral Developmental Theory," 21; Lawrence Kohlberg, "My Personal Search for Universal Morality," 14-15.

cognitive developmental approach influenced by Jean Piaget,<sup>17</sup> Lawrence Kohlberg pioneered his work in the area of moral development. He proposed six<sup>18</sup> stages of moral development:

**Table 3. Kohlberg's Six Stages<sup>19</sup>**

Stage	Type of Morality	Characterization
1	Obedience	Do what you're told.
2	Instrumental egoism and exchange	Let's make a deal.
3	Interpersonal concordance	Be considerate, nice and kind: you'll make friends.
4	Law and duty to the social order	Everyone in society is obligated to and protected by the law.
5	Consensus-building procedures	You are obligated by the arrangements that are agreed to by due process procedures.
6	Nonarbitrary social cooperation	Morality is defined by how rational and impartial people would ideally organize cooperation .

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<sup>17</sup>James R. Rest, Development in Judging Moral Issues (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 7.

<sup>18</sup>Kohlberg toyed with an ideal stage seven in some of his works.

<sup>19</sup>James R. Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," in James R. Rest and Darcia Narvaez, eds., Moral Development in the Professions (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1994), 5; For a complete explanation of the levels see Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral Stages and Moralization: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach," in Thomas Lickona, ed., Moral Development and Behavior, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 34-35.

The six stages can also be collapsed into three moral levels which are associated with a social perspective as illustrated in Table 4:

**Table 4. Three Levels of Moral Judgment with Associated Social Perspective<sup>20</sup>**

Moral Judgment	Social Perspective
I. Preconventional (Stages 1-2)	Concrete individual perspective
II. Conventional (Stages 3-4)	Member-of -society perspective
III. Post-conventional or principled (Stages 5-6)	Prior-to-society perspective

Preconventional morality operates from the perspective of the individual without regard to societal interests. Individuals basically act out of self-interest. In conventional moral judgment, decisions are based on obeying the law. Obeying the law recognizes the social perspective of members of society. In other words, societal laws depend on individuals conforming to the law. In postconventional judgment, decisions go beyond societal laws. Decisions are based on the principles which precede and form the basis for laws. At the postconventional level of moral judgment, there is a recognition that ethical obligations go

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<sup>20</sup>Lawrence Kohlberg, "Moral Stages and Moralization: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach," in Thomas Lickona, ed., Moral Development and Behavior, (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1976), 33; Anne Colby and Lawrence Kohlberg, The Measurement of Moral Judgment, vol 1. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 17.

beyond law and may at times conflict with laws.<sup>21</sup> At the level of postconventional thinking one entertains the question as to how fair-minded people might ideally organize society.

Although Kohlberg worked within a social science approach, it is important to note that Kohlberg's stages are compatible with the philosophical approach to ethics.<sup>22</sup> In part, this is because Kohlberg constructed the categories around the concept of justice. Kohlberg described his own educational agenda as a "developmental-philosophic strategy."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, one major criticism of Kohlberg's work is that it is overly indebted to rational deontological or universalist philosophers such as Kant, Rawls, and Habermas, particularly in his development of stages five and six.<sup>24</sup> Kohlberg drew especially from the

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<sup>21</sup>Anne Colby and Lawrence Kohlberg, The Measurement of Moral Judgment, vol 1, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 17.

<sup>22</sup>Not only is Kohlberg's view compatible with philosophical ethics, Kohlberg's theory is also undergirded by a number of metaethical assumptions regarding the nature of morality. These metaethical assumptions have themselves been the target of criticism. See Lawrence Kohlberg, "From *Is* to *Ought*: How to Commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away with It in the Study of Moral Development," in Essays on Moral Development, vol I: The Philosophy of Moral Development (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1981), 101-189.

<sup>23</sup>Lawrence Kohlberg with Rochelle Mayer, "Development as the Aim of Education," in Lawrence Kohlberg, The Philosophy of Moral Development, Essays on Moral Development, vol I, (San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1981), 49-100. Charles Bailey, "Kohlberg on Morality and Feeling," in Lawrence Kohlberg: Consensus and Controversy, ed. by Sohan Modgil and Celia Modgil (Philadelphia: Falmer Press, 1986), 197-208.

<sup>24</sup>Rest, "Background: Theory and Research." 7.

social contract thinking of John Rawls<sup>25</sup> in grounding stage six in the concept of justice.

James Rest describes the synthesis of stages and justice in the following manner:

Kohlberg merged this Piagetian model of stage development (“hard” Piagetian stages defined by justice operations) with a Rawlsian philosophy of morality . . . . Rawls asked the reader to understand his meaning of justice by imaginatively constructing a hypothetical Social Contract in which the participants meet together to decide the organizing principles for society . . . . Each person is ignorant of his/her special interests in society . . . . Kohlberg’s conception of Stage 6, and the five stages leading to it, became simultaneously a developmental stage theory (a psychological theory of change over time) and also a normative theory of ethics . . . .<sup>26</sup>

### **Kohlberg’s Moral Judgment Inventory**

Kohlberg conducted extensive testing of his six-stage theory of moral development utilizing the Moral Judgment Interview (MJI), a face-to-face interview. In the MJI subjects respond to three moral dilemmas, producing a rationale for describing a particular action as either right or wrong. The subject’s response is then compared to responses in the scoring manual.<sup>27</sup> This produces a stage score for the subject.

In the MJI, the interviewer poses a dilemma. Following each dilemma, the

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<sup>25</sup>John Rawls, A Theory of Justice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971; Lawrence Kohlberg, “Moral Stages and the Idea of Justice.” in Essays on Moral Development, vol I: The Philosophy of Moral Development, (San Francisco: Harper and Row. Publishers, 1981), 97-100.

<sup>26</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 12.

<sup>27</sup>Anne Colby, Lawrence Kohlberg, Betsy Speicher, Alexandra Hewer, Daniel Candee, John Gibbs, and Clark Power, The Measurement of Moral Judgment, vol 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).



interviewer asks nine to twelve standard “probe questions” based on two issues which have been defined as the central issues. The Manual also includes suggested follow-up questions. For example, in Kohlberg’s familiar dilemma, Heinz’s wife is dying and needs a drug which the local druggist has priced too high for Heinz to buy. Should Heinz steal the drug? In this dilemma, the central moral issues, according to Kohlberg’s scoring guidelines, are life and law. Arguments in favor of stealing basically revolve around life, whereas arguments against stealing focus on the law.<sup>28</sup> Sample questions include, “Should Heinz steal the drug?” “Should the judge send Heinz to jail for stealing the drug?” or “How can you justify breaking a law to save a life?”<sup>29</sup> The interviewer matches the subject’s response to responses in the scoring manual and calculates an overall stage score.<sup>30</sup>

### **Criticisms and Limitations of Kohlberg’s Theory**

Kohlberg’s theories have been widely discussed since the publication of his early

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<sup>28</sup>Lawrence Kohlberg with Kelsey Kauffman, “Instructions for Moral Judgment Interviewing and Scoring,” in Anne Colby and Lawrence Kohlberg, The Measurement of Moral Judgment, vol 1, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 151 .

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 151-157.

<sup>30</sup>Anne Colby, Lawrence Kohlberg, Betsy Speicher, Alexandra Hower, Daniel Candee, John Gibbs, and Clark Power, The Measurement of Moral Judgment, vol 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Scoring of the MJI is extremely complex. This apparent complexity and the amount of interpretation involved have given rise to the criticism that scoring is subjective.

studies with adolescent boys. His ideas about cognitive moral development are routinely included in basic psychology texts.<sup>31</sup> However, Kohlberg's theories have also been subject to a number of criticisms. As previously noted, Kohlberg envisioned his work as both philosophical and psychological. Thomas Wren describes Kohlberg as working in the "interspace between moral philosophy and science."<sup>32</sup> This location of Kohlberg's thought, straddling the two disciplines,<sup>33</sup> opened him to criticisms from both psychology and philosophy.

### **Philosophical Criticisms of Kohlberg's Theory<sup>34</sup>**

Philosophical criticisms of Kohlberg's theory include the objection to the principle of justice as the basis for ethical decision-making, principlism as an ethical approach, Kohlberg's implied deontological normative ethic, the sexist bias of a justice-based ethics, neglect of context in dealing with ethical dilemmas, and the overall inadequacy of Kohlberg's theory of moral behavior. A number of philosophers are critical of basing any

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<sup>31</sup>James Rest, "Kohlberg in Perspective: A Backward and a Forward Look," in The Kohlberg Legacy for the Helping Professions, eds. Lisa Kuhmerker with Uwe Gielen and Richard L. Hayes (Birmingham, Alabama: R.E.P. Books, 1991), 201.

<sup>32</sup>Thomas Wren, ed., The Moral Domain, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), viii.

<sup>33</sup>Note that Kohlberg's work falls between the philosophical approach and the normative and descriptive purposes in the proposed classification schema in chapter one.

<sup>34</sup>My description of philosophical and psychological criticisms draws heavily from James Rest et al., Postconventional Thinking, 2-21.

ethical theory at all on normative ethical principles.<sup>35</sup> Over the last thirty years, ethics has moved increasingly away from the use of principles as the sole foundation for ethical decisions because of the inability of ethicists to agree on foundational principles. This is reflected not only in discussion critical of principles but also in the revival of case-based and narrative ethics.

Other philosophers are explicitly critical of Kohlberg's particular approach to the principle of justice arguing that the justice orientation is inherently sexist. Carol Gilligan<sup>36</sup> argued that justice operations did not capture the moral experience of females. Gilligan and other feminist writers advanced the theory that women's moral judgments were based more on care and compassion within relationships than on the universal principle of justice.<sup>37</sup> Nursing literature has especially embraced the care perspective of feminist

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<sup>35</sup>K. Danner Clouser and Bernard Gert, "A Critique of Principlism," The Journal of Medicine and Philosophy 15(2) (April 1990): 219-236; Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning, (Berkeley: California: University of California Press, 1988); John Arras and Bonnie Steinbock, Ethical Issues in Modern Medicine, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (Mountain View, California: Mayfield, 1995); Richard M. Zaner, Ethics and the Clinical Encounter (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1988).

<sup>36</sup>Gilligan had worked as a research assistant to Kohlberg and based her observations on the responses of female interviewees.

<sup>37</sup>Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1993); Nel Noddings, Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1984); See also Gertrud Nunner-Winkler, "Moral Relativism and Strict Universalism," in Thomas Wren, ed., The Moral Domain (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 109-126; Michael S. Pritchard, On Becoming Responsible (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1991). For a thoughtful analysis of the paradigm shift initiated by Gilligan, see also Susan

critics of Kohlberg.<sup>38</sup>

In part, Gilligan's gender-based critique reveals the inattention to context which characterize deontological ethics. Deontological ethics are concerned with universal principles. Rainer Dobert notes that Kohlberg's theory and dilemmas downplay content in favor of structure and the universal. However, justice is a particularly difficult principle to universalize<sup>39</sup> because justice is inherently about individuals. Justice speaks to fairness to each person and in particular contexts.

Still other philosophers objected to the implied normative ethics of Kohlberg's stages. For example, Michael Pritchard analyzes the Heinz dilemma in detail, concluding that the dilemma is not primarily a dilemma about justice as claimed by Kohlberg. He questions whether support for Heinz stealing the drug represents higher moral development. Pritchard demonstrates that the dilemma ironically fails to meet Kohlberg's criteria for justice: universalizability and reversibility. Pritchard observes that Kohlberg's own principles could support several different courses of action. This is contrary to Kohlberg's contention that justice operations in stages five and six would support only

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J. Hekman. Moral Voices, Moral Selves (Oxford, UK: Polity Press in association with Blackwell Publishers, 1995).

<sup>38</sup>Susan Sherwin. No Longer Patient: Feminist Ethics and Health Care (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

<sup>39</sup>Rainer Dobert, "Against the Neglect of 'Content' in the Moral Theories of Kohlberg and Habermas: Implications for the Relativism-Universalism Controversy," in Thomas Wren, ed., The Moral Domain (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 71-108.

stealing the drug. Finally, he argues convincingly that Gilligan's ethic of care is more adequate to understanding the dilemma since it revolves specifically around the special relationship between husband and wife.<sup>40</sup>

Pritchard's work reveals the weakness in Kohlberg's assumption that working from a particular foundational principle will necessarily yield consensus about one appropriate course of action. The shortcomings of this assumption are illustrated by the increasing lack of consensus within the field of philosophical ethics.<sup>41</sup>

Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin provide an excellent example of the practical relationship between ethical principles, actions, and rationales in their work with the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research between 1975 and 1978. In spite of its diversity, the Commission was able to reach consensus about specific recommendations without agreeing on the basis for those recommendations.

The Catholic members of the commission gave different reasons for agreeing from the Protestants, the Jewish members from the atheists, and so on. Even when, as a *collective*, the commission agreed about particular practical judgments, the *individual* commissioners justified their readiness to join in that consensus by appealing to different "general principles". . . .

The *locus of certitude* in the commissioners' discussions did not lie in an agreed set of intrinsically convincing *general* rules or principles, as they shared no commitment to any such body of agreed principles. Rather, it lay in a shared perception of what was *specifically* at stake in particular kinds of human

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<sup>40</sup>Michael S. Pritchard, On Becoming Responsible, 138-159.

<sup>41</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 20-21.

situations.<sup>42</sup>

These comments well illustrate the way in which working from foundational principles may prove to be a barrier in reaching consensus in ethical deliberation. While Kohlberg's assumption is that agreement on foundational principles will lead to consensus on a course of action, the commission's experience suggests otherwise.

### **Psychological Criticisms of Kohlberg's Theory**

In addition to philosophical criticisms, psychologists also criticized Kohlberg's theory for its inadequacy as a theory of moral behavior, lack of empirical data to support the stage schema, lack of subjects scoring in stage six, apparently subjective and difficult method of scoring the MJI, its underlying "hard" stage approach, and for its claims of universalism. The following section addresses each type of psychological critique.

Many psychologists and philosophers noted the inadequacy of Kohlberg's cognitive moral developmental approach as a theory of morality. Some believed that Kohlberg's theory seemed to collapse all of moral behavior into moral judgment. Although Kohlberg had an interest in the whole range of moral thought and action, the MJI basically assessed only moral judgment. Blasi was one of the first to call attention to

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<sup>42</sup>Albert R. Jonsen and Stephen Toulmin, The Abuse of Casuistry: A History of Moral Reasoning, 18; Rest et al., Postconventional, 12-16.

this lack of connection in Kohlberg's theory between moral cognition and moral action.<sup>43</sup>

Another group of criticisms focused on the MJJ itself. As a face-to-face interview, the MJJ was difficult to administer and to score. Over the years, Kohlberg revised the scoring system. The 1987 Scoring Manual<sup>44</sup> represents Kohlberg's complete overhaul of the scoring system, an attempt to make scoring more accurate and less subjective. Even so, criticisms of the scoring method continued. Other writers criticized the scope of the dilemmas used in the three-story MJJ as too narrow, wondering how these three dilemmas could possibly represent the whole of moral ability. Finally, some questioned the format which requires subjects to verbalize a clearly articulated philosophical-moral position. This "production task" format was also dependent on the probe questions of the interviewer, and therefore subjective to some degree.

Kohlberg's hard stage theory was also a target of his detractors. Kohlberg subscribed to a "staircase" view of the moral developmental process over time. At any particular time the individual utilizes the moral judgment characteristic of only one stage before moving up to the next stage of development. The metaphor of the staircase implies

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<sup>43</sup>A. Blasi, "Bridging Moral Cognition and Moral Action: A Critical Review of the Literature," Psychological Bulletin 88: 593-637; Stephen J. Thoma, "Moral Judgment and Moral Action," in James R. Rest and Darcia Narvaez, eds., Moral Development in the Professions (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1994), 199-211.

<sup>44</sup>Anne Colby, Lawrence Kohlberg, Betsy Speicher, Alexandra Hewer, Daniel Candee, John Gibbs, and Clark Power, The Measurement of Moral Judgment, vol 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

that moral development is a sequential and progressive process whereby one moves sequentially from one stair to the next. From Kohlberg's perspective individuals do not use a variety of stage approaches at a time. Rather, one's moral judgment fits predominantly into a particular stage. Kohlberg never totally abandoned the hard stage approach even as the field of psychology increasingly questioned hard stage approaches.

In addition to general scepticism about the hard stage approach, many questioned whether Kohlberg's empirical findings supported the existence of the stages which he had delineated. Especially problematic was the fact that Kohlberg's studies failed to find examples of stage six development. If stage six were an actual stage of development, then the MJT ought to have identified some subjects using stage six moral reasoning.

### **James Rest and the Defining Issues Test**

James Rest was a student of Lawrence Kohlberg who later developed the Defining Issues Test in the 1970s as an alternative to the MJT for measuring moral development. Although the DIT was an outgrowth of Kohlberg's cognitive moral developmental philosophy, James Rest and his associates have continued to develop their own perspective independently. In an attempt to respond to the increasing criticism of Kohlberg's original position, defenders of the DIT now describe their position as "neo-



Kohlbergian.”<sup>45</sup> They have also developed a broader notion of moral development, the Four Component Model. This portion of the chapter describes the neo-Kohlbergian approach adopted by Rest and associates with the Center for the Study of Ethical Development, the Four Component Model of Moral Behavior, the Defining Issues Test as compared to the MJI, the major types of studies conducted with the DIT, and studies in Public Administration using the DIT. A major theme throughout this chapter is the notion that the DIT, while having its historical roots in Kohlberg’s theory, should be evaluated on its own merits and within the revised neo-Kohlbergian approach developed by James Rest and associates at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development.

### **Neo-Kohlbergian Approach**

Recently the Center for the Study of Ethical Development has developed what they call a neo-Kohlbergian approach to moral behavior which recognizes and addresses the criticisms of Kohlberg discussed above. They generalize the three major problems as follows:

1. Kohlberg’s theory overextended Piaget’s theory.
2. Kohlberg’s theory overextended John Rawls’ normative ethical philosophy related to justice.

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<sup>45</sup>James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Muriel J. Bebeau, and Stephen J. Thoma, Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach, Manuscript submitted for publication (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1998), 34.

3. Kohlberg's research provided too little empirical evidence of postconventional thinking.<sup>46</sup>

They propose the use of three schemas (Personal Interest, Maintaining Norms, Postconventional) rather than six stages, defining schema in the following manner:

A schema is a cognitive structure that consists of the mental representation of some stimulus phenomena including the relationships among the elements. Schema are "general" cognitive structures in that they provide skeletal conception that is exemplified (or "instantiated") by particular cases or experiences. That is, a schema has "slots" that can be filled by particular instances. . . . What schemas do is enable the perceiver to identify stimuli quickly, "chunk" an appropriate unit, fill in information missing from the stimulus configuration, and provide guidance for obtaining further information, solving a problem, or reaching a goal.<sup>47</sup>

Because it is designed for adults, the DIT deals primarily with the shift from conventional to postconventional schemas. In fact, they believe that Kohlberg's theory may be viewed primarily as describing the shift from conventional to post-conventional thought. "We regard the core of Kohlberg's theory as postulating a developmental sequence from Conventional to Postconventional thinking."<sup>48</sup> In contrast to the notion of a staircase of progressive stages in which one master's increasing justice operations, Rest's neo-Kohlbergian approach sees development as shifting distributions of the schema. Where Kohlberg sought to place individuals into the stage thinking which dominated their

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<sup>46</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 34.

<sup>47</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 34.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., 75.

thought, the neo-Kohlbergians identify preferences for types of thinking. It is not inconceivable for a subject to use more than one type of thinking from the neo-Kohlbergian perspective. Table 5 compares the neo-Kohlbergian approach to Kohlberg's approach and is based on Rest and associates' description of the major points of difference.

**Table 5. Comparison of Kohlberg and Neo-Kohlbergian Approaches<sup>49</sup>**

Kohlberg	Neo-Kohlbergian Approach
1. Cognitive constructivist approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ emphasizes "internal construction of the social world."</li> <li>▶ sequential development</li> </ul>	1. Cognitive constructivist approach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ emphasizes "internal construction of the social world."</li> <li>▶ sequential development</li> </ul>
2. Six stages based on justice operations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ hard stages with "staircase" development</li> <li>▶ people in only one stage at a time</li> <li>▶ strict content-structure distinction</li> </ul>	2. Three schemas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ general knowledge structure specifies relationships of elements</li> <li>▶ shifting distributions not a staircase</li> <li>▶ content-structure not strictly distinguished</li> </ul>
3. Stage Four (Conventional) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Law and order</li> </ul>	3. Maintaining Norms Schema <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Need for norms, duty orientation</li> <li>▶ society-wide scope</li> <li>▶ uniform categorical application</li> <li>▶ partial reciprocity</li> </ul>
4. Stages five and six (Postconventional) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ based on Rawls and Kant</li> <li>▶ how impartial people would organize society</li> </ul>	4. Postconventional Schema <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ primacy of moral criteria</li> <li>▶ appealing to an ideal</li> <li>▶ shareable ideals</li> <li>▶ full reciprocity</li> </ul>
5. Combines psychological theory with normative ethics. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ favors deontological theories</li> </ul>	5. Psychological theory without normative commitments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ favors no particular ethical theories</li> </ul>
6. Method of Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ MJI</li> <li>▶ Production task</li> <li>▶ dependent on verbal expression subject</li> <li>▶ Places subjects in a stage</li> <li>▶ May underestimate ability</li> <li>▶ Little evidence for stage 6</li> </ul>	6. Method of Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ DIT</li> <li>▶ Recognition task - "tacit understanding"</li> <li>▶ degree subject uses type of thinking</li> <li>▶ May overestimate ability</li> <li>▶ Evidence for postconventional thinking</li> </ul>

<sup>49</sup>Based on James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking. See especially chapters three and six.

### Defining Issues Test

Kohlberg conducted extensive testing of moral development utilizing the Moral Judgment Interview (MJl), a face-to-face interview. In the MJl subjects respond to a moral dilemma, producing a rationale for describing a particular action as either right or wrong. The subject's response was then compared to responses in the scoring manual.<sup>50</sup> This produced a stage score for each subject.

In contrast to Kohlberg's MJl, the DIT is a written multiple choice testing instrument which can be administered to large groups and may be computer-scored.<sup>51</sup> It consists of three (short version of the DIT) or six (long version of the DIT) dilemmas followed by a series of questions and items to rate, as well as rank. After each story the subject is first asked what action should be taken. The subject then rates the importance of 12 issues raised by the dilemma from "no importance" to "great importance." Each of these issues represents a "fragment" of a particular stage of reasoning. Finally, the subject selects and ranks the four most important issues. In the six story version of the DIT, the subject produces 102 responses: six recommended courses of action, 72 issue ratings, and 24 issue rankings. In the shorter three story version DIT the subject produces 51 responses: three recommended actions, 36 issue ratings, and 12 issue rankings. Scoring

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<sup>50</sup>Anne Colby, Lawrence Kohlberg, Betsy Speicher, Alexandra Hewer, Daniel Candee, John Gibbs, and Clark Power, The Measurement of Moral Judgment, vol 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>51</sup>See Rest, "Background," 11; James R. Rest, Guide to the Defining Issues Test, version 1.3. (Minneapolis: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1993).

of the DIT produces, among other scores, a P score which essentially indicates the percentage of responses in stages five or six (postconventional thinking). Recently, a new score, the N2 index, has shown promise of replacing the P score, especially in longitudinal studies.<sup>52</sup> This study utilizes both N2 and P scores. Chapter three provides more extensive information regarding scoring of the DIT.

### **Theoretical Foundation:**

#### **The Four Component Model of Moral Behavior**

One of the major criticisms of Kohlberg's theory is its overall inadequacy as a complete view of moral behavior because Kohlberg seems to collapse all of moral behavior into moral judgment. The Four Component Model of Moral Behavior developed by James Rest and his associates at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development attempts to address this criticism by providing a more comprehensive theory. The model describes moral behavior as consisting of four psychological processes:

1. Moral Sensitivity: Recognizing and interpreting the situation.
2. Moral Judgment: Deciding which actions are right or wrong.
3. Moral Motivation: Prioritizing moral values relative to other values.
4. Moral Courage: Persevering in implementing a moral plan.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 54-55. See also chapter three for a full discussion of the DIT's validity and reliability.

<sup>53</sup>Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," 22-25.

Rest elaborates on the four processes as follows:

The basic idea behind the Four-Component Model is that various (four) inner processes together give rise to outwardly observable behavior. The four processes, briefly, are as follows: (a) moral sensitivity (interpreting the situation, role-taking how various actions would affect the parties concerned, imagining cause-effect chains of events, being aware that there is a moral problem when it exists); (b) moral judgment (judging which action would be most justifiable in a moral sense -- purportedly DIT research has something to say about this component); (c) moral motivation (the degree of commitment to taking the moral course of action, valuing moral values over other values, taking personal responsibility for moral outcomes); and (d) moral character (persisting in a moral task, having courage, overcoming fatigue and temptations, implementing subroutines that serve as a moral goal).<sup>54</sup>

It is important to note that moral judgment is merely one component of moral behavior.

The ability to make good ethical judgments does not necessarily translate into actual moral behavior. To know the good does not guarantee doing the good. The Four Component Model addresses one weakness in Kohlberg's formulation of moral development in that it makes clear that moral judgment is not cognition alone. The Four Component Model disavows a simplistic formulation of ethical behavior:

First, note that a four-component model denies that moral development or moral behavior is the result of a single, unitary process. Although one process might interact and influence others, the four processes have distinctive functions. . . . Second, note that I do not portray the basic elements of morality in terms of cognition, affect, and behavior. It is commonplace for reviewers of morality to state that cognitive developmentalists study thinking, psychoanalytic psychologists study affect, and social learning psychologists study behavior--and to assume that cognition, affect, and behavior are the basic processes and distinct elements, each having a separate track of development. In contrast, I take the view that there are no moral cognitions completely devoid of affect, no moral affects completely devoid of cognitions, and no moral behavior separable from the cognitions and affects that prompt the

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<sup>54</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 57.

behavior.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, scores obtained from the DIT do not indicate whether one engages in moral actions. DIT scores do not identify “good” people. Rather, DIT scores reflect the subject’s ability to make moral judgments. They say nothing about the ability to recognize moral problems (component one) or the courage to overcome obstacles in doing the right thing (component 4).

### Studies Using the DIT

As previously noted, the DIT has been extensively used in research. Rest estimates that there are over 1,000 studies using the DIT involving literally hundreds of thousands of subjects.<sup>56</sup> Studies involving the the DIT<sup>57</sup> will be described by examining the following five types of studies: demographic studies, studies of educational interventions, links between DIT scores and behavior, and differences within groups. Although some of these studies have implications for validity and reliability, discussion of the major studies related to validity and reliability will be reserved until chapter three of

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<sup>55</sup> James R. Rest, Moral Development: Advances in Research and Theory (New York: Praeger Press 1986), 4.

<sup>56</sup>Rest, “Background: Theory and Research.” 13.

<sup>57</sup>James Rest and Darcia Narvaez., Ideas for Research with the DIT, version 1.3. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1997). The categories and some illustrative studies used in this section are based in part on the description of studies contained in this book.



the dissertation.

### **Demographic Studies**

A number of DIT studies have examined the relationship of P scores to demographic variables such as age, education, gender, and ethnic/cultural background. In longitudinal studies the same subjects are followed for an extended period of time. As Rest notes, common sense would lead one to believe that age and education might be related to a developmental measure.<sup>58</sup> Given that the DIT is designed to assess changes in subjects' preference for different types of thinking, longitudinal studies provide critical evidence in support of the DIT's underlying theory. If the theory is correct, then the same child should have a higher P score when tested during high school than that child had during junior high school. One should also identify differences between junior high school students and graduate students. Numerous studies have demonstrated the positive correlation between education and moral development. Longitudinal studies also provide an important control to cross-sectional designs where differences in groups may be due to extraneous variables because subjects in effect serve as their own control group.<sup>59</sup> In general, research has shown that, while age and education are both associated with higher scores on the DIT, formal education is the most powerful single indicator of moral

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<sup>58</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 38.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 43.

development.

The college experience seems to be a particularly important stimulus to moral development. However, some have questioned whether college experiences at conservative Christian colleges have the same positive effect on moral development. Stephen McNeel conducted longitudinal studies of students at Bethel College, an evangelical Christian liberal arts college. A total of 216 students' DIT scores administered at freshman orientation and at the end of the senior year survived consistency checks. The mean DIT scores of students increased from 35.7 to 46.4 over the four years. McNeel calculated the effect size<sup>60</sup> of this change over four years to be 0.92, a very large effect size. McNeel then performed a meta-analysis of the literature to compare this effect size with the effect size at other 12 colleges and universities with a total of 22 samples. He found an average effect size at liberal arts colleges and universities to be about 0.80. This surpassed the effect size of cognitive (0.56), quantitative (0.24), or oral (0.60) skills. Only critical thinking (1.00), use of reason (1.00), and conceptual complexity ability (1.20) had greater effect sizes. However, McNeel did find that the bible college in the study had a small effect size of only 0.02. This may suggest that the something about the bible college educational experience works against the stimulus to moral development. Effect size also differed by major. Social work, nursing, English, and psychology had very large effect

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<sup>60</sup>Rest describes effect size as follows, "Effect size is calculated as the difference between a pretest and posttest average for a sample divided by the standard deviation of the pretest." 20.

sizes ranging from 1.01 to 1.48. Business and education had lower effect sizes (0.58) and lower mean P scores. (40.2 as compared to 49.4 in other majors). Students in these two majors were also more likely than other students to show a decrease in P scores.

Nevertheless, McNeel's longitudinal study demonstrates the overall positive relationship between college education and increases in moral judgment as measured by the DIT.<sup>61</sup>

The Center for the Study of Ethical Development has access to literally thousands of DIT scores through its scoring service. In 1995, Evens compiled a large "Mega" sample of 45,856 DIT subjects from 800 studies during 1989-1993. Cross-sectional analyses reinforce the correlation with education identified in longitudinal studies. In the megasample, increasing levels of education are accompanied by preference for higher types of moral reasoning. So pre-conventional (Stage one and two) thinking is high in rank and preference among junior high students but declines steadily, reaching its lowest among philosophy and political science graduate students. Rating and ranking of post-conventional thinking (stages five and six), on the other hand, start low and steadily increase. These findings are congruent with those of Davison's study of 1,080 subjects which differentiated the effects of education from age ( $F= 203.3, p<.001$ ), Rest's composite sample of 4,565 subjects showing that education accounted for 38-49% of DIT

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<sup>61</sup>Steven P. McNeel, "College Teaching and Student Moral Development," in James R. Rest and Darcia Narvaez, eds. Moral Development in the Professions, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 27-49.

variance, and Thoma's 1986 composite sample of 6,863 demonstrating that education was responsible for 52.5% of variance in DIT scores. In comparison, gender accounted for 0.2% of variance.<sup>62</sup> All of these studies support the importance of formal education in moral development. As Rest describes it:

[F]ormal education is by far the most powerful demographic correlate of DIT P scores, typically accounting for 30-50% of the variance in large heteronomous samples. Whereas age, *per se*, in children is confounded with formal education (older children have more education); however, in adult samples, when it is possible to have very old subjects with little formal education, the two variables can be separated. We find that formal education is much more predictive of DIT P score than age (i.e., young adults with much formal education have higher P scores than old adults with little education . . . .<sup>63</sup>

Gender has been one of the most controversial issues in research of moral development. Recall that Carol Gilligan argued that women's moral developmental differed radically from men's in its emphasis on caring relationships rather than universal principles and duties such as the justice orientation of Kohlberg's MJI. Gilligan's critique of Kohlberg marked the beginning of what has come to be called the Care perspective. (In fact, this debate is sometimes referred to as the Justice versus Care debate.) A significant number of theoretical writings address the Care approach. However, little has been done to empirically validate the theory. Since a neo-Kohlbergian approach to moral

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<sup>62</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 38-39; Mark L. Davison, "The Internal Structure and the Psychometric Properties of the Defining Issues Test, in James R. Rest, Development in Judging Moral Issues, (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 109-11.

<sup>63</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 42.

development research disavows any particular foundational principle, a Care perspective does not necessarily preclude subjects operating from within the Care perspective. In a study of dental students, Bebeau and Brabeck found no difference between males and females in attending to care over justice. However, women scored higher than men in ethical sensitivity.<sup>64</sup>

Apart from arguments about philosophical foundation, in the vast majority of studies using the DIT (and the MJT) women score slightly higher than men. James Rest's 1979 review of 22 studies found only two studies with a significant difference based on gender. In both studies females scored higher than males; however, even in these studies, gender accounted for only 6% of the total variance.<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Thoma's 1986 meta-analysis of 6,000 subjects in 56 DIT studies found that only .002 of variance could be attributed to gender. This contrasts to education which Thoma found was 250 times more powerful.<sup>66</sup> It is therefore difficult on strictly empirical grounds to reconcile the higher score of females with the notion that the test systematically discriminates against women's ways of approaching ethical dilemmas. Perhaps it is a case of women learning to think in

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<sup>64</sup>Muriel J. Bebeau and Mary M. Brabeck, "Integrating Care and Justice Issues in Professional Moral Education: A Gender Perspective," Journal of Moral Education 16:3 (October 1987): 189-203.

<sup>65</sup>James Rest, Development in Judging Moral Issues, 120.

<sup>66</sup>Stephen J. Thoma and J Rest, "Moral Judgment, behavior, decision-making," in J. Rest, Moral Development: Advances in Research and Theory ( New York: Praeger, 1986), 133-175; Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking.

multiple paradigms or translate intrinsic concerns into the dominant worldview. In spite of the extensive debate regarding sexist bias in moral development theories, gender has not been a major factor in most DIT studies. Further work is needed in this area to clarify the relationship between and influence of Care and Justice on DIT scores.

Although there is abundant literature regarding the role of age and gender on the DIT, there is less written about socioeconomic status (SES). Existing studies suggest that SES does not have a powerful relationship with DIT scores. A 1975 study by Coder found that SES had a .38 correlation with the DIT in adults ( $n = 21$ ) while Cauble found a .35 relationship between SES and DIT scores among junior and senior high school students ( $n = 90$ ).<sup>67</sup> In a summary of studies exploring the relationship between SES and DIT scores Rest found correlations as low as .02. However, Rest notes that there is a slight tendency toward higher scores among groups characterized as higher socioeconomic status. Rest concludes that further studies are needed to unravel the complex factors which contribute to SES.<sup>68</sup>

The slightly increased DIT scores of those with higher SES may be an indirect effect of education since presumably those with greater economic means may be able to afford the cost of high quality formal education. Kohlberg believed that increases in moral development were also the result of what he called “role-taking opportunities.”

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<sup>67</sup>Cauble and Coder quoted in in James R. Rest, Development in Judging Moral Issues (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 119-120.

<sup>68</sup>James R. Rest, Development in Judging Moral Issues, 119.

Individuals from lower SES may have fewer of these types of opportunities, as Kohlberg describes it:

The lower class cannot and does not feel as much sense of power in, and responsibility for, the institutions of government and economy, as does the middle class. This, in turn, tends to generate less of a disposition to view these institutions from a generalized, flexible and organized perspective based on various rules as vantage points.<sup>69</sup>

In Rest's megasample, students from a relatively affluent high school have higher postconventional and lower maintaining norms and preconventional scores than their counterparts from an impoverished junior high school or from a middle class background.

Kohlberg found that individuals from non-Western countries scored lower on the MJI. He reasoned that people from non-Western underdeveloped countries also lacked role-taking opportunities. This position engendered a significant controversy about "cross-culturalism" and is related to Turiel's critique regarding moral domains versus cultural domains. This problem will be considered in chapter three as part of the discussion regarding validity.

This section has examined studies dealing with the relationship of demographics to DIT scores. Although age, gender, and SES have some relationship to moral judgment as

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<sup>69</sup>Lawrence Kohlberg as quoted in James Rest, "Morality," (Minneapolis: Center for the Study of Ethical Development), 598; Lawrence Kohlberg, "Stage and Sequence: The Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization," in D. Goslin, ed., Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1969), 401-402. See also Lawrence Kohlberg, "From *Is* to *Ought*: How to Commit the Naturalistic Fallacy and Get Away with It in the Study of Moral Development," in Essays on Moral Development, vol I: The Philosophy of Moral Development, San Francisco: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1981), 141.

measured by DIT, formal education is by far the most powerful predictor of DIT scores. More work is needed to fully explicate the relationship of Care and Justice in moral reasoning and the relationship of the various components of SES.

### **Studies of Educational Interventions**

A number of DIT studies examine the effectiveness of various types of educational interventions on moral judgment as measured by the DIT. Rest et. al cite 60 publications related to educational interventions. These same works combine four data sets with a total sample size of 516 which demonstrates a combined t-test from pre to posttest of 11.2 ( $p < .001$ ). The effect size for educational intervention in that study was .54.<sup>70</sup> This compares to the 1985 meta-analysis by Schlaefli, Rest, and Thoma which produced these four observations regarding educational interventions:

1. Dilemma or discussion group formats are the most effective type of educational intervention with an effect size of .41. (Control group effect size is .09).
2. Traditional courses have the smallest increases in P scores.
3. Older students experienced greater gains than younger groups. That is, P scores of adults increased more than those of junior high or high school students.
4. Educational interventions that lasted less than three weeks were not effective in

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<sup>70</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 44.



producing increases in P scores.<sup>71</sup>

Rest notes that these findings are surprising to those who believe that ethical systems and values are set and established by adulthood and is good news for those engaged in the education of professionals. As Rest summarizes:

Furthermore, the meta-analysis indicates that older subjects (i.e., graduate and professional school subjects rather than junior high school subjects) are especially receptive to moral education programs designed to foster moral judgement development.<sup>72</sup>

Rest and Narvaez's 1994 book, Moral Development in the Professions, provides an overview of educational attempts in a number of different disciplines including accounting, dentistry, medicine, teaching, sports, nursing counseling, veterinary medicine, and journalism.

### **Links Between DIT Scores and Moral Behaviors**

Another type of study examines the relationship between DIT scores and behaviors assumed to be moral. These studies address the concern that moral judgment may not necessarily translate into moral behavior. In other words, do P scores mean anything about moral behavior?

Rest and Deemer describe a longitudinal study in which they followed subjects for ten years to track "prosocial" behaviors. They found that the DIT is correlated with both

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., 44.

<sup>72</sup>Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," 21.

community involvement ( $r = .31$ ) and civic responsibility ( $r = .44$ ) ( $p < .01$ ). Thoma, Rest, and Barnett reviewed 47 studies and found 32 statistically significant links to behavior. Behaviors included cheating, cooperative behavior in the Prisoner's Dilemma Game, whistle-blowing, conscientious objecting, aggression among athletes, and a number of other behaviors.<sup>73</sup> Other studies have demonstrated a link between clinical performance and DIT scores among nurses, physical therapists, and medical interns while on clinical affiliations.<sup>74</sup> It is also worth noting that high DIT scores do not necessarily bring about happiness or success. A study by Mason and Mudrack indicates that individuals with higher P scores experience greater ethical workplace conflict than others.<sup>75</sup>

Lawrence A. Ponemon and David R.L. Gabhart summarize studies in the accounting profession indicating that higher P scores may be associated with lower chances of promotion in the accounting profession. They summarize Ponemon's findings with regard to socialization in accounting:

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<sup>73</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 47; Mary Brabeck, "Ethical Characteristics of Whistle Blowers," Journal of Research in Personality 18 (1984), 41-53; For a summary of these studies see Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Moral Development in Public Administration," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics, (New York: Marcel Dekker), 325-348.

<sup>74</sup>Susan Sisola, Principled Moral Reasoning As a Predictor of Clinical Performance in Physical Therapy. Unpublished doctoral dissertation (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995).

<sup>75</sup>E. Sharon Mason and Peter E. Mudrack, "Do Complex Moral Reasoners Experience Greater Ethical Work Conflict," Journal of Business Ethics 16:12/13 (September 1997), 1311-1318. See also James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 48.

Using the DIT, the selection-socialization phenomenon was explored using a triangulated research design based on a random cross-sectional sample of 180 CPAs, a longitudinal sample of 221 auditors in one national firm over a 2-year period, and an experimental study of 23 audit manager's promotion assessments of 54 senior level auditors located in one large practice office. Findings of all three studies corroborate the existence of ethical socialization whereby those progressing to manager and partner positions within the firm tended to possess lower and more homogeneous DIT *p* scores. . . According to Ponemon, these findings implied that the ethical culture of the accounting firm stymies an individuals's development to higher levels of reasoning.<sup>76</sup>

A similar auditing study by Lampe and Finn<sup>77</sup> showed that accounting students and professionals had lower P scores than counterparts in other professional groups with relatively higher percentage of scores in stage four. They attributed this increased percentage of stage four reasoning to the rule-oriented nature of the accounting profession.<sup>78</sup> Ponemon's study points to the importance of organizational and societal context in ethical decisions. While individual moral judgment is important, it is not the whole of ethical behavior. Evidence for the inadequacy of individual moral judgment is also provided by a study in business literature which shows that groups score higher on the DIT than each individual within the group.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>Lawrence A. Ponemon and David L. Gabhart, "Ethical Reasoning Research in the Accounting and Auditing Professions," in James R. Rest and Darcia Narvaez, eds. Moral Development in the Professions, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 101-119.

<sup>77</sup>J Lampe and D. Finn, "A Model of Auditors' Ethical Decision-Making Process." Auditing: A Journal of Practice and Theory (Supplement, 1992): 1-21.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., 101-119.

<sup>79</sup>Mohammad J. Abdolmohammadi, David R.L. Gabhart, and M. Francis Reeves, "Ethical Cognition of Business Students Individually and in Groups," Journal of Business

### Studies Using the Four Component Model

Both Kohlberg and Rest rejected previous formulations that divided morality into cognition, affect, and behavior. By dividing morality into these divisions, various researchers had concentrated on different aspects without attention to their relationship. The Four Component Model represents a way to embrace the complexity and multiple methods of approaching ethical behavior and has been described previously in this chapter.

The Four Component Model of morality provides a framework for describing both the individual processes of ethical behavior, as well as the inter-relationships. Muriel Bebeau has successfully used this model to design and implement a program of professional ethics education for dentists.<sup>80</sup> Bebeau was one of the first to address component one - moral sensitivity. Working with dentists, Bebeau determined the nature of ethical problems commonly encountered in the work of dentists. She then designed cases which she used in testing sensitivity. Interestingly, she found that moral sensitivity was best measured by oral tape-recorded response rather than writing. At several points during the curriculum Bebeau uses the DIT to assess component two, moral judgment. Recently, in conjunction with David Ozar, she has constructed the Professional Role

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Ethics 16:16 (December 1997), 1717.

<sup>80</sup>This description of Bebeau's work is based on multiple sources including her written work and presentations at the Association for Professional and Practical Ethics Conference in August of 1997 and a conference held at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development in Minneapolis, Minnesota in June of 1998.

Orientation Inventory to assess component three, moral motivation, from the standpoint of professional values.<sup>81</sup> The Center for the Study of Ethical Development has encouraged research in the area of each component. However, at this point, research remains preliminary in the area of the fourth component, moral courage.

Bebeau's research has produced some interesting findings. For example, she has found that those who score high in component two, moral judgment, may not necessarily score high in component one, moral sensitivity. To illustrate this point, she tells the story of two dentists in private practice who were sent to her for remediation for professional ethics violations. While the one dentist scored well on sensitivity (component one) and poorly on moral judgment (component two), the other scored high on judgment and low on sensitivity. The one dentist failed to identify a moral problem, while the other did not have the moral judgment skills necessary to act in response to the problem. Bebeau has collected data in dental education since 1982 which provides evidence that education can increase scores in moral judgment and moral sensitivity.

### **Differences in Groups**

Bebeau's work is also representative of another type study involving the DIT, studies which focus on differences between groups. As in Bebeau's work, many studies examine the moral judgment ability of particular professions in order to compare with the norms

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<sup>81</sup>Muriel J. Bebeau, David O. Born, and David T. Ozar, "The Development of a Professional Role Orientation Inventory," Journal of the American College of Dentists 60:2 (Summer-Fall, 1993), 27-32.

established by extensive previous research with the DIT. Table 6 indicates existing values for P scores by profession:

**Table 6. DIT P Scores of Different Groups<sup>32</sup>**

Group	DIT P-Scores
Graduate students in moral philosophy and political science	65.2
Liberal protestant seminarians	59.8
Law students	52.2
Medical students	50.2
Practicing physicians	49.2
Dental students	47.6
Staff nurses	46.3
Graduate students in business	42.8
College students	42.3
Navy enlisted men	41.6
Adults in general	40.0
Senior high school students	31.8
Prison inmates	23.5
Junior high school students	21.9
Institutionalized delinquents	18.9

Some of these group studies have also explored the relationship of religion, personality

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<sup>32</sup>Based on James Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," 14.

type, political orientation, and intelligence to moral judgment as measured by the DIT. These considerations are detailed in chapter three's considerations of discriminant validity of the DIT.

### **Studies of Moral Development in Public Administration**

In one variant of research with the DIT in the professions, the researcher models an assessment tool on the DIT using scenarios specific to the context of that particular field. Assessment instruments have been designed for the fields of teaching, accounting, and other fields.<sup>83</sup> In public administration Debra W. Stewart has created two different instruments for assessing moral judgment: one for use in the United States and one for use in Poland. This section describes the three existing studies of moral judgment in public administration in the United States.

Modeling the instrument on the DIT, Stewart and Norman A. Sпрinthal developed the Stewart-Sпрinthal Management Survey (SSMS) based on the authors' discussions with public sector executives regarding ethical problems. The SSMS consists of three management dilemmas which take place in government agencies. The topics of the scenarios are promotion merit and equity, procurement and conflict of interest, and recreating a data set to cover an error. As in the DIT subjects are asked to indicate a recommended action, rate 12 issues from "no importance" to "great importance," and

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<sup>83</sup>Rest, "Background: Theory and Research."

rank the top four issues. The SSMS is scored like the DIT and produces P scores, as well as scores for individual stages.

Stewart and Sprinthall tested concurrent validity with the DIT by administering both instruments to two samples of graduate students in PA (n = 50). Table 7 displays the stage distributions and P scores for the two instruments:

**Table 7. Graduate Student Stage Scores and P scores on the DIT and SSMS**

Stage Percentage or Score (n = 50)	DIT	SSMS
1 & 2	5	5
3	11	5
4	33	47
P score	41	39
Meaningless response	7	3
P score range	0-83	17-70

Stewart and Sprinthall found that both DIT scores and SSMS scores were lower than previously established norms in other fields. They concluded that PA students exhibited lower P scores than graduate students in other fields and showed a preference for stage four thinking. Stewart and Sprinthall speculate that the tendency to score in stage four may be the result of occupational socialization and education which emphasizes



the politics-administration dichotomy and adherence to the law.<sup>84</sup> The authors' rationale is similar to the explanation provided by Ponomerov regarding the lower P scores of accountants.

Between 1988 and 1992 Stewart and Sprinthall<sup>85</sup> subsequently utilized the SSMS to study almost 485 public administrators: 136 local government managers in North Carolina, 190 city and county managers and assistant managers, 55 North Carolina budget officers, and 104 Florida county managers and assistant managers. Table 8 summarizes their findings:<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Strengthening Ethical Judgment in Public Administration," in James S. Bowman, ed., Ethical Frontiers in Public Management (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 243-260.

<sup>85</sup>Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "The Impact of Demographic, Professional, and Organizational Variables and Domain on the Moral Reasoning of Public Administrators," in H. George Frederickson, ed., Ethics and Public Administration (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 205-219; Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Moral Development in Public Administration," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker), 325-348.

<sup>86</sup>Compiled from Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "The Impact of Demographic, Professional, and Organizational Variables and Domain on the Moral Reasoning of Public Administrators," in H. George Frederickson, ed., Ethics and Public Administration (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 205-219; Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Moral Development in Public Administration," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker), 325-348.

**Table 8**      **Stage Scores and P scores for NC and FL Managers**

<b>Stage Percentage or Score</b>  <b>n = 560</b>	<b>North Carolina City &amp; Budget Managers</b> <b>n = 245</b>	<b>Florida City and County Managers</b> <b>n = 104</b>	<b>North Carolina Local Managers</b> <b>n = 136</b>	<b>Graduate Students</b>  <b>n = 75</b>
Stage 4 Percentage	42	44	45	46
P score	38-39	38	39	40

In describing the North Carolina samples, the authors report no significant difference for race, gender, or educational level. A significant difference was found for age in the student group. They describe the level of principled reasoning to be comparable to that of persons with a college degree but significantly higher than adults in general in the southern region.<sup>87</sup> Due to the recognition format of the SSMS, the authors speculate that the scores may actually overestimate the moral judgment ability of public administrators in the samples.

The base rate for our sample is similar to college educated adults in general and is higher than adults in general from the South and Southeast. The actual level of reasoning, however, is probably one stage lower than the level obtained by a recognition test.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "The Impact of Demographic, Professional, and Organizational Variables and Domain on the Moral Reasoning of Public Administrators" in H. George Frederickson, ed., Ethics and Public Administration (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 207.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid, 208.

The underlying assumption is that people will abstractly choose about one level higher than they will actually behave in a situation. However, the context-specific format of the SSMS may also lower scores. Rather than overestimation due to recognition task, the SSMS may yield lower scores because they are more "real."<sup>89</sup>

Stewart and Sprinthall's work provides an important contribution to the ethics literature in public administration. However, this work also raises methodological concerns. One concern is related to concurrent validity which rests on the 1991 study comparing DIT scores with SSMS scores. This study was administered only to public administration graduate students. While Stewart and Sprinthall describe their results as displaying a "moderately positive overall correlation"<sup>90</sup> between the SSMS and the DIT, the total correlation between the two instruments was .42.<sup>91</sup> Concurrent validity of the SSMS with the DIT has not been established in a sample of PA practitioners. Although the typical student profile described by Stewart and Sprinthall basically resembles some PA practitioners with respect to demographics (white male in the early thirties), practitioners may not resemble students in other important respects. In particular students may not have comparable decision-making abilities. Another possible difference may be in

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<sup>89</sup>Conversation with Muriel J. Bebeau, June 1998.

<sup>90</sup>Debra W. Stewart. and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Strengthening Ethical Judgment in Public Administration," in James S. Bowman, ed., Ethical Frontiers in Public Management (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 250.

<sup>91</sup>Stewart and Sprinthall. "Strengthening Ethical Judgment, 251.

the greater “role-taking opportunities” of the experienced managers.

Another methodological concern relates to the use of stage scores and preferences. The authors conclude that public administrators have a preference for stage four reasoning. Stage four percentages on the SSMS were well over 42% on all of the samples in the studies. In the test of concurrent validity with the DIT, however, DIT stage four percentage was 34% compared to 48% on the SSMS. Given the moderate level of correlation between the SSMS and the DIT, does this 14% difference represent a difference in the two instruments’ ability to measure stage four? The implication is that the SSMS may overestimate the percentage of stage four reasoning.

A final concern relates to the use of stage preference in the three story version form of the DIT. The indices of P scores of the three story version of the DIT range from about .70 to .80. However, indices of stage scores are considerably lower, as low as .50. For that reason, the Guide to the DIT recommends caution in using stage scores with the three story version:

Therefore, much caution needs to be exercised in using the stage scores. I recommend using the stage scores only when the 6-story form has been used, and only when the information is presented in terms of group means or when the standard error of measurement has been taken into account....<sup>92</sup>

This is compounded by the decreased test-retest correlation of the three -story

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<sup>92</sup>James R. Rest, Guide to the Defining Issues Test, version 1.3 (Minneapolis: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1993), 26.

version which ranges from about .48 to .54 for stage four.<sup>93</sup> These methodological concerns do not negate Stewart and Sprinthalls' findings. Rather, they suggest the need for further research to clarify the findings.

### **Conclusion to the Literature Review**

This chapter has reviewed the literature of moral development relevant to public administration with a view toward providing a context for the current study. It traced the historical antecedents of the Defining Issues Test in the philosophy of Lawrence Kohlberg, and described the major psychological and philosophical criticisms of Kohlberg's theory, as well as the MJI which Kohlberg utilized to measure moral judgment. One of Kohlberg's students, James Rest, designed the DIT as an alternative to the MJI and has continued research in moral development using the DIT. The chapter described literature related to the DIT and the evolving neo-Kohlbergian position. Finally, the chapter reviewed literature related to public administration, focusing on the work of Debra Stewart and Norman Sprinthall.

The following chapter describes the instrumentation of this study. It begins by describing the research design used in the study. The sample, population, and subjects are then described. The chapter proceeds with a thorough description of the validity and reliability of the DIT, and concludes with an explication of the research questions, hypotheses, and operationalization of variables in the study.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid. 26.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study of the moral judgment of public administrators. The chapter begins with a general description of the study and proceeds with a statement of the hypotheses being tested. Discussion then focuses on the population, sample, and subjects. Section three describes the operationalization of variables in this study. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the instrumentation of the study, including a detailed examination of the validity and reliability of the DIT.

#### **Research Design,**

#### **Questions, Hypotheses, and Procedures**

This study used a cross-sectional design of the survey type to test the research hypotheses. The cross-sectional design was selected because it is most congruent with the descriptive purpose of the study and its large geographically dispersed sample.<sup>1</sup> The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the mean level of moral development among public administrators as measured by the P and N2 scores on the Defining Issues Test in a random sample

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<sup>1</sup>Elizabethann O'Sullivan and Gary R Russell, Research Methods for Public Administrators, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (White Plains, New York: Longman Publishers, 1995), 23.

of members of the American Society for Public Administration?

2. Are there significant differences in moral development as measured by P and N2 scores between groups within the ASPA sample based on age, gender, race, formal education, organizational context, or organizational function?
3. What is the relationship between age, gender, race, formal education, organizational context, or organizational function and level of moral development as measured by P and N2 scores in a random sample of members of ASPA?
4. Are there significant differences between mean moral development as measured by P scores using general scenarios (DIT) and the mean moral development P scores obtained by context-specific scenarios (Stewart and Sprinthall's SSMS)?
5. Are there significant differences in P and N2 scores between the random sample of ASPA members and established DIT norms for educational level, gender, age, and vocation?
6. Is there a significant difference in stage four preference in the random ASPA sample compared to existing norms obtained from DIT research?

It was anticipated that the DIT scores would conform to results of previous DIT research. Therefore, the research hypotheses were that:

1. In a random sample of ASPA members there will be a significant difference between group mean DIT and SSMS scores. It was hypothesized that DIT scores would be higher than SSMS scores.
2. Mean DIT P scores of a random sample of ASPA members will not be significantly

different from expected norms obtained from previous DIT research.

3. The ASPA group will not demonstrate higher preference for law and order (Stage 4 or Maintaining Norms) as compared with empirically derived DIT norms.
4. There will be no significant difference in DIT P and N2 scores among ASPA members based on race, region of the country, gender, organizational context, or job title/function.
5. There will be a significant relationship between formal level of education and moral development as measured by P and N2 scores on the DIT with increased educational level associated with higher scores.

### **Procedures**

Prior to initiating the study, the author obtained approval from the institutional review board (IRB) at Tennessee State University. The Center for the Study of Ethical Development also granted permission to use the copyrighted DIT in the study and this dissertation.

After consulting ASPA, a computer-generated random sample of 1000 of the 11,185 ASPA members was obtained from Chessie Lists who services the ASPA. In early June, each randomly selected member of ASPA was mailed a packet consisting of a short demographic questionnaire (Appendix C) and the short form of the DIT (Appendix A).

Time to complete the short form of the DIT survey has been estimated to be from 20 to 30



minutes based on previous administrations.<sup>2</sup> (The long form of the DIT would have taken 35 to 45 minutes.)

Respondents were asked to provide their answers for the DIT on xeroxed copies of the computer scoring sheet<sup>3</sup> and to return the survey in the addressed, stamped return envelope. Four weeks after the initial mailing, the author sent a reminder postcard (Appendix C) to all subjects in the sample. (Expense of the DIT prohibited mailing another survey). To protect the anonymity of responses, the study did not track individual responses to the mailing.

Following receipt of 344 returned surveys, individual DIT responses were transferred onto computer scoring sheets. The three hundred forty-four completed computer scoring sheets were subjected to three separate checks for accuracy in copying the responses. In the first two checks, the screener examined each individual response to compare it with the original answer sheet. The third check was a random “spot check” of about twenty percent of answer sheets that revealed no errors on the answer sheets.

Twelve weeks following the initial mailing, the computer scoring sheets were sent to the Center for the Study of Ethical Development (CSED) for scoring according to the

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<sup>2</sup>James R. Rest, Guide to the Defining Issues Test, version 1.3, (Minneapolis: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1993): 3.

<sup>3</sup>The use of copies decreased cost since each discarded DIT cost more than a dollar apiece and also prevented damage to the DITs. Damage to scoring sheets makes computer scoring more difficult, slows the scoring process, and decreases scoring accuracy.

system developed by James Rest and described in the Guide to the Defining Issues Test<sup>4</sup> CSED scores the raw data, tabulates responses, and performs consistency checks on the data. (Consistency checks are discussed more extensively below.) Tabulated data was then placed into separate computer files for each score. The computer files included P scores, N2 scores, stage scores, U scores, M scores, and D scores for each of the 344 individual subjects. The scored data also indicated the forty-four individuals who had unacceptable levels of inconsistencies in their scores or unacceptable numbers of meaningless responses. The file cleaned of these scores is called the “purged” file because it has been purged of invalid subjects. Data from CSED was translated from ASCII or database form into a spreadsheet format and subsequently merged with the demographic data using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS).<sup>5</sup> This yielded two SPSS files: “purged” and “scored.” The purged file contained the demographic data and relevant DIT scores for the 264 - 267<sup>6</sup> subjects who pass consistency and checks for meaningless responses. The scored file yielded the same data for all 344 subjects.

Descriptive statistics were calculated on the demographic and DIT data. The data was then subjected to statistical analysis to determine significant differences and

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<sup>4</sup>James R. Rest, Guide to the Defining Issues Test, version 1.3, (Minneapolis: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1993).

<sup>5</sup>SPSS, version 7.0. Statistical Program for the Social Sciences, Chicago, Illinois.

<sup>6</sup>N2 scores require more data and yield fewer scores than the consistency checks for P scores.

relationships using SPSS. Chapter four reports the results of statistical analysis of the data.

### **Sample, Population, and Subjects**

The membership of the American Society for Public Administration served as the sampling frame for this study. ASPA was chosen because it is the oldest and most widely known association for public administrators. In addition, ASPA has a diverse membership with members from all fifty states; from municipal, state and federal organizational contexts; and working in a variety of occupational functions.<sup>7</sup> Chessie Lists describes ASPA as follows:

Since its inception in 1939, the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) has advanced the science, processes and art of public administration. It is the only organization of its kind in the U.S., aiming broadly to improve administration of public service at all levels of government and in all functional and program fields. ASPA joins together public administrators from all levels of government and professional disciplines, as well as educators, researchers and consultants, to promote continued professional growth.<sup>8</sup>

ASPA's population has unique characteristics that distinguish it from the general population. Chessie Lists describes ASPA's membership as 65% male, 50% holding a graduate degree, and 30% being top or middle managers. This demographic profile was reflected in subjects who responded to the survey. Of those who responded to the

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<sup>7</sup>Data Card, Chessie Lists, Inc.; 13321 New Hampshire Avenue, Suite 202; Silver Spring, MD 20904; (301) 680-3633. 1998.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

demographic survey, 67.3% were male, 55.1% were middle or top managers, and 85.7% held a graduate degree. Characteristics of the respondents and the ASPA population are discussed in further detail in chapter four.

### **Instrumentation**

Instrumentation of this study involved two parts: a brief demographic questionnaire and the DIT. The demographic questionnaire asked respondents to provide information regarding age, gender, race, formal education, region, organizational context, and organizational function or title. The questions on this portion of the survey were based in part on previous DIT research that had established correlations with education, age, and gender. Organizational context and function items (items six and seven) were developed to link to the previous work of Stewart and Sprinthall<sup>9</sup> who had examined moral development in relationship to organizational context and function. These items, as well as item five regarding region, were based on the categories used by Chessie Lists.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Debra W. Stewart. and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Strengthening Ethical Judgment in Public Administration" in James S. Bowman, ed. , Ethical Frontiers in Public Management. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 243-260; Debra W. Stewart. and Norman Sprinthall, "Moral Development in Public Administration," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994), 325-348; Debra W Stewart, Norman Sprinthall, and Renata Siemienska, "Ethical Reasoning in a Time of Revolution: A Study of Local Officials in Poland." Public Administration Review 57: 5 (1997): 445-453.

<sup>10</sup>Chessie Lists, Inc.; 13321 New Hampshire Avenue, Suite 202; Silver Spring, MD 20904; (301) 680-3633. 1998.

Section two of the survey was the short form of the DIT (Appendix A). The short form of the DIT is a multiple choice testing instrument that consists of three story-dilemmas followed by a series of questions and items to rate and rank. After each story the subject is first asked what action should be taken. The subject then rates the importance of twelve issues raised by the dilemma from “no importance” to “great importance.” Each of these issues represents a “fragment” of a particular stage of reasoning. Finally, the subject indicates which of these items are the four most important issues. In the long version of the DIT, the subject produces 102 responses: 6 recommended courses of section, 72 issue ratings, and 24 issue rankings. In the short form of the DIT the subject produces 51 responses: 3 recommended actions, 36 issue ratings, and 12 issue rankings.

Scoring of the DIT produces, among other scores, a P score which essentially indicates the percentage of responses in stages five or six (postconventional thinking). The P score has been considered the “gold standard” index for the last twenty years. Recently, a new score, the N2 index, has shown promise of replacing the P score, especially in longitudinal studies. In contrast to the P score which primarily considers the *rankings* of postconventional items; the N2 score also considers the difference in *rating* stage 2 and 3 from rating postconventional items. In a sense it evaluates the ability to select and distinguish postconventional items from lower stage items. The N2 index is considered a more sensitive index in tracking longitudinal gains than the P score because of its ability to

detect shifts toward postconventional ratings and rankings.<sup>11</sup> Although some data has been rescored to obtain N2 scores, there is still significantly more research using P data than N2 data. In addition, research over the last 20 years has focused on P scores while the N2 score appeared only a few years ago. Given the cross-sectional nature of this study and the need to compare to validated norms, the main index for measurement is the P score. However, this study also utilized N2 scores.

### Operationalization of Variables

This study examined the following independent variables: age, gender, race, formal education, region, organizational context, and organizational function or title. Age was scored as a continuous ratio type of variable, operationalized as the written response provided by the subject to the item “age in years” on the demographic survey. The remaining independent variables are nominal variables except education, which is an ordinal variable.

Variables were operationalized as the subject’s response to close-ended questions with limited selections. Level of formal education was operationalized as the subject’s choice to the item “Please indicate your **HIGHEST** level of education completed by checking the appropriate box.” The independent variable organizational context attempted

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<sup>11</sup>James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Muriel J. Bebeau, and Stephen J. Thoma, Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach, Manuscript submitted for publication (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 5/23/1998).

to determine the type of organization in which the subject worked. Organizational function sought to determine the type of work which the subject performed utilizing the categories used by Chessie Lists in servicing the ASPA list. Organizational function was operationalized as response by the subject to item seven. The dependent variable in this study is moral development or moral judgment, operationalized as P score or N2 score on the DIT. This is a ratio or interval level of variable.<sup>12</sup>

### **Validity and Reliability of the DIT**

This section discusses the validity and reliability of the DIT,<sup>13</sup> addressing construct validity, discriminant validity, challenges to validity, and issues of reliability. Although DIT validity and reliability have been extensively researched over the last twenty years, this section focuses only on the most critical issues of validity and reliability. Given the criticisms of Kohlberg's theories, construct validity is probably the most important type of validity challenge to the DIT. That is to say, does the DIT really measure moral development?

Chapters one and two described theoretical responses to construct validity

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<sup>12</sup>One might question whether a score of zero in moral development is meaningful although the DIT produces scores of zero.

<sup>13</sup>This section draws heavily on James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Muriel J. Bebeau, and Stephen J. Thoma, Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach, Manuscript submitted for publication (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 5/23/1998), 35 - 55.

challenges. Although theoretical responses are important, they must also be buttressed by empirical support for construct validity. From this perspective, one might pose the question as to what data is necessary to support the DIT's claims of construct validity.

James Rest has recently described it in the following manner:

Here is our proposal for defining construct validity for the DIT: a test of moral judgment should: (1) differentiate groups assumed to be of greater or lesser expertise in moral reasoning (e.g., moral philosophers are expected to show higher scores than junior high school students); (2) show significant upward change in longitudinal study; (3) be sensitive to interventions designed to improve moral reasoning (e.g., show pre-post test gains on moral education programs); (4) show evidence of a developmental hierarchy (i.e., that higher is "better" or more advanced); (5) significantly predict to "real life" moral behavior; (6) significantly predict to political attitudes, political choices, and the way in which a person participates in the larger society; (7) have adequate reliability.<sup>14</sup>

Chapter two described a number of studies which provided evidence of the first five criteria of differentiation of experts, longitudinal changes, improvements via educational intervention, and links to behavior. This section focuses on criteria four, six and seven: developmental hierarchy, prediction of political attitudes, and reliability.

Rest's fourth criterion for construct validity is to provide evidence that the higher stages of moral judgment are in fact better. Especially in studies involving adults, the concern is to demonstrate that postconventional thinking is better than conventional thinking. Even if one establishes that subjects do in fact progress through the stages, one

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<sup>14</sup>James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Muriel J. Bebeau, and Stephen J. Thoma, Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1998), Manuscript submitted for publication), 36-37.



must also provide evidence that the higher stages are better. Rest, Turiel and Kohlberg conducted studies in the area of moral comprehension in which subjects were asked to paraphrase statements reflecting the various stages of moral development. Next, subjects were asked to rate the statements. The authors found that subjects' understanding was cumulative so that if the subject understood stage 5 thinking then the subject also understood stages 1 to 4. So it was not simply a case of a different (but not better) type of thinking displacing another. Finally, the authors found that subjects preferred the thinking at the highest level of their understanding.<sup>15</sup>

The finding of interest here was that of the statements that were comprehended, participants preferred the ones that represented the highest stage comprehended. Even though concepts at the less advanced stages were usually highly comprehended, the lower stage statements were not preferred. Although the lower stages were accessible, they were not preferred.<sup>16</sup>

Darcia Narvaez has recently employed an interesting strategy using moral narratives with college and eighth grade students. Subjects were asked to read four complex moral dilemmas. Later subjects were asked to recall the narratives. In both groups, students with high P scores demonstrated a better ability to recall and reconstruct moral arguments. Subjects with higher P scores were able to recall higher level

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<sup>15</sup>James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Muriel J. Bebeau, and Stephen J. Thoma, Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach, Manuscript submitted for publication (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1998), 45.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 45.

arguments, and added higher-stage moral reasoning not in the original narrative. This was true even after controlling for education and reading comprehension.<sup>17</sup>

Rest's sixth criterion for construct validity requires a positive relationship between DIT scores and political attitude. Why should DIT scores be associated with political attitudes? Recall that Kohlberg described moral development as the manner in which rational individuals might impartially organize cooperation in society. This suggests that political relationships implicitly have a moral dimension. As Rest describes it:

The political realm is concerned distinctively with how people relate to each other in society. In personal moral issues, we are concerned with the web of personal relationships; in the political realm we are concerned with a wider web of relationships. In the democratic state, individuals have the opportunity to participate in forming the policy and practices of the state that determine mutual destiny. . . . Political choices (e.g., an election or referendum) involve choosing to establish a law or policy direction that affects the whole body-politic; it is a decision about how the society is supposed to work generally.<sup>18</sup>

McClosky and Brill describe empirical evidence of this logical connection between moral development and notions of societal organization. Their research found that formal education was associated with an increase in the civil libertarian orientation and toleration

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<sup>17</sup>Darcia Narvaez, "The Influence of Moral Schemas on the Reconstruction of Moral Narratives in Eighth Graders and College Students," Journal of Educational Psychology 90:1 (1998), 13-24; James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Muriel J. Bebeau, and Stephen J. Thoma, Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach, Manuscript submitted for publication (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1998), 46.

<sup>18</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 48.

of others' rights.<sup>19</sup> DIT scores have consistently demonstrated a positive correlation with political tolerance and negative correlation with law and order mentality. Rest cites over twenty studies from the 1970s to the 1990s which demonstrated correlations of up to .66 between political attitude and DIT scores.<sup>20</sup>

The final criterion of construct validity relates to reliability. That is, a measure which is not reliable cannot be valid. Test-retest reliability of the DIT is .7 to .8. Over the twenty years of DIT testing, Chronbach alpha for the P score and the N2 scores on the DIT are also in the range of .76 to .80 with N2 slightly out-performing the P score.<sup>21</sup>

Rest and associates have developed internal checks which eliminate "unreliable" scores. These checks are incorporated in the scoring process at the Center for the Study of Ethical Development. For example, some items on the DIT represent meaningless items whose purpose is to screen subjects who are simply choosing items with philosophical language without regard to meaning. If a subject chooses more than four meaningless items, the subject's score will be "purged" for inconsistencies.

Another kind of consistency check eliminates subjects with more than four consistency errors in one story or more than two stories with consistency errors. An example of an inconsistency is the instance in which a subject rates an item as of "no"

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<sup>19</sup>H. McClosky and A. Brill, Dimensions of tolerance. What Americans believe about civil liberties (New York: Russell Sage, 1983).

<sup>20</sup>James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 45.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., 53.

importance but ranks that item as “most important.” These consistency checks decrease the number of scores in which subjects may not have followed the instructions or may have randomly marked answers. In this study consistency checks identified sixty-seven subjects with inconsistencies or meaningless scores. Five subjects had both inconsistency and meaningless scores so that sixty-six subjects were purged for inconsistency. This study primarily used scores which survived consistency checks.

The “utilizer” score provides another type of consistency check for the DIT. A 1987 study by Lawrence found that fundamentalist conservative seminarians had lower P scores than their liberal counterparts. In interviews she found that the seminarians’ moral comprehension exceeded their P scores. Their religious beliefs dictated that they should follow God’s laws rather than their own judgments about social dilemmas.<sup>22</sup> They were not likely to “utilize” moral judgment to act. To detect this kind of response, Thoma developed the “utilizer” score which basically indicates the degree to which ratings and rankings agree.<sup>23</sup>

The work of Eliot Turiel and Richard Shweder (see chapter two) also represent challenges to the construct validity of the DIT because they call into question the notion of

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<sup>22</sup>Jeannette A. Lawrence, “Verbal Processing of the Defining Issues Test by Principled and Non-Principled Moral Reasoners.” Journal of Moral Education 16: 2 (May 1987): 117-130; James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 58.

<sup>23</sup>Stephen J. Thoma, James R. Rest and Mark L. Davison, “Describing and Testing a Moderator of the Moral Judgment and Action Relationship,” Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 61:4 (1991), 659-669.

morality that the DIT attempts to measure. Turiel distinguishes separate “domains” for morality and convention. Shweder describes the complex relationship between notions of convention and morality questioning whether postconventional thought actually follows conventional thought. In different ways Turiel and Shweder challenge the abstract universal notion of morality in Kohlberg’s thought. Their work highlights the cultural specificity of morality in everyday life. The neo-Kohlbergian position attempts to integrate Turiel’s and Shweder’s concerns through “soft” domains (in answer to Turiel’s hard domains which eliminate developmental processes) and through the “parallel-process” proposal.<sup>24</sup> Overall, the work of Turiel and Shweder suggests that we should proceed cautiously in using the DIT to study non-western non-industrialized countries.

### **Discriminant Validity**

Discriminant validity has been the source of significant debate in DIT research. Because formal education, political attitude, and other concepts correlate with DIT scores, some have suggested that the DIT actually measures something other than moral judgment. In particular, it has been suggested that the DIT directly or indirectly measures verbal ability, political attitude, or gender. Chapter two addressed the concern of gender. This section considers discriminant validity with regard to verbal ability and political

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<sup>24</sup>This proposal suggests that moral thinking has an autonomous element (moral judgment) and a heteronomous element (culture). See J James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 98.

attitude.

Sanders, Lubinski and Benbow recently advanced the thesis that the DIT actually measures only verbal ability, recommending that DIT users routinely test verbal ability in order to separate the two variables.<sup>25</sup> In responding to this claim, Thoma, Narvaez, and Rest cite studies over the last twenty years that support a differentiation between cognitive and moral ability. Rest's 1979 study of 62 junior high students found a .51 correlation ( $r = .51, p < .01$ ) between the DIT and the Moral Comprehension Test, even after accounting for the Differential Aptitude Test score. Rest also reports on a study that compared students' moral developmental gains in a logic class with gains made in an ethics class. Increases were specific to the course content. That is, students in the ethics class demonstrated increased DIT scores but no improvement in Cornell Critical Thinking Test (CCTT) scores. Students in the logic class increased in CCTT scores but not in DIT scores ( $\text{Chi square} = 6.9, p < .01$ ). This supports the notion that the DIT and CCTT measure different abilities.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to this empirical evidence for the distinction between cognitive and moral ability, Thoma et al. also allude to the logical separation between these variables.

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<sup>25</sup>Cheryl Sanders, David Lubinski, and Camilla Benbow, "Does the Defining Issues Test Measure Psychological Phenomenon: An Examination of Lykken's Query," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 69:3 (September 1995): 498-504.

<sup>26</sup>Stephen Thoma, Darcia Narvaez, and James Rest, "Does the Defining Issues Test Measure Psychological Phenomena Distinct from Verbal Ability. Some Relevant Data," Manuscript submitted for Publication, 1997: James Rest, Development in Judging Moral Development (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 207-211.

There are numerous examples of intelligent people who lack the ability to formulate intelligent moral arguments. Echoing Kohlberg, the authors describe cognitive ability as a necessary but not sufficient condition for moral judgment.<sup>27</sup> They cite Darcia Narvaez's 1993 study to illustrate this relationship. While students with high cognitive ability displayed a wide range of DIT scores, no student with low cognitive ability had a high DIT score.<sup>28</sup> The results support the notion that cognitive ability is a "necessary but not sufficient condition" for moral ability.

Jeanette A. Lawrence's study involving conservative seminarians lends further support to the notion that cognitive and moral ability are distinct. Lawrence found that conservative seminarians understood postconventional items on the DIT but self-consciously rejected these in favor of religious rationale for moral actions. Lawrence's study lends further support to the idea that moral judgment may be separated from cognitive ability.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 6.

<sup>28</sup>Darcia Narvaez, "High-achieving Students and Moral Judgment," Journal for the Study of the Gifted, 16 (3), 1993, 268-279 cited in Stephen Thoma, Darcia Narvaez, and James Rest, "Does the Defining Issues Test Measure Psychological Phenomena Distinct from Verbal Ability. Some Relevant Data," Manuscript submitted for publication, 1997.

<sup>29</sup>Jeanette A. Lawrence, "Verbal Processing of the Defining Issues Test by Principled and Non-Principled Moral Reasoners." Journal of Moral Education 16: 2 (May), 1987, 117-130.

### Political Attitude

A significant stream of research argues that the DIT actually measures political identity. This kind of challenge finds its theoretical basis in Kohlberg's liberal philosophy and its logical basis in the conceptual shift which occurs between conventional and postconventional thinking:

The carryover of this conceptual development to political attitude is that the conceptual shift from stage 4 to stage 5 (from Maintaining Social Norms to Postconventional schema) is accompanied by a shift in attitude towards authorities (shifting from unquestioning support to holding authorities accountable) and the priority of maintaining established social norms (shifting from supporting all established practices and norms to supporting only those norms and practices that serve the community's shared ideals). In other words, conceptual development in how to organize cooperation leads to attitudinal differences in political matters.<sup>30</sup>

Chapter two described a number of studies which found a correlation between political attitude or public policy position and P scores. While both supporters and detractors of the DIT agree that there is a relationship between the DIT moral judgment scores and political attitude, they disagree about the extent and nature of that relationship. Emler, Renwick, and Malone<sup>31</sup> argue that the DIT is merely a measure of liberal "politico-moral ideology."

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<sup>30</sup>Stephen Thoma, Darcia Narvaez, and James Rest, "How Does Moral Judgment Relate to Political Attitudes?" Manuscript submitted for Publication, 1997, 6.

<sup>31</sup>Nicholas Emler, Stanley Renwick, and Bernadette Malone, "The Relationship Between Moral Reasoning and Political Orientation," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 45:5 (1983): 1073-1080. See also Dann G. Fisher and John T. Sweeney, "The Relationship Between Political Attitudes and Moral Judgment: Examining the Validity of the Defining Issues Test," Journal of Business Ethics 17:8 (June, 1998): 905-918.



In support of this theory, Emler et al. studied political attitude and moral judgment in seventy-three students. Subjects completed the DIT on two occasions, once from their own perspective and once from a designated extreme right wing or left wing perspective. Between DIT administrations, subjects also completed the New Left Scale in which subjects rate their political orientation on a seven-point Likert scale. On the second administration subjects were asked to take the DIT as if they were a liberal or conservative. Results of the study indicated that moderates and those on the right were able to increase their P score by taking the DIT as if they were a radical while moderates decreased their P scores by responding as if they were conservative. They draw the following conclusion from the study: "Indeed, we believe that much of the variation in adult moral judgment that has previously been attributed to structural-developmental differences is more adequately interpreted as variation in political orientation."<sup>32</sup>

In response to this criticism, Thoma et al. contend that moral judgment and political identity are complex variables which are related but not identical and cannot be reduced to one another.<sup>33</sup> Narvaez, Getz, Rest, and Thoma advance the hypothesis that moral development and socialization into cultural ideology (including political identity) are

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<sup>32</sup>Nicholas Emler, Stanley Renwick, and Bernadette Malone, "The Relationship Between Moral Reasoning and Political Orientation," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 1983 45(5): 1073-1080, 1079.

<sup>33</sup>Stephen J. Thoma, Darcia Narvaez, and James Rest, "Moral Judgment and Political Attitude," Manuscript submitted for publication. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development. 1997).

parallel related processes. In this process moral judgment provides an epistemological foundation for cultural ideology and ideology forms moral judgment.

Each person does not invent culture anew. However--this is our main point--the acquisition of cultural ideology is conditioned by what makes sense to the individual. Individual cognitive development provides the conceptual bedrock for certain ideologies ("bedrock" in the sense of providing the basic epistemological categories by which to interpret cultural ideologies). In turn, cultural ideology affects the course of moral judgment. The question--we believe--is not whether individual moral judgment or group-based cultural ideology determines moral thinking, but rather the question is how do they interrelate. Our strategy is to show that when measures of cultural ideology and moral judgment are separately measured, then combined, the combination predicts more powerfully to moral thinking than either one alone.<sup>34</sup>

In support of this theory, the authors studied political identity, moral judgment, and religious ideology in two church congregations (one liberal, one conservative) and among undergraduates in a public university. Results of the study indicated that the three variables together predicted to .79 on a measure of attitudes toward human rights in public policy issues. However, each variable also predicted independently to human rights attitude. The authors believe that this provides support for their theory of parallel and reciprocal processes.<sup>35</sup> Thoma provides further evidence for this position by reviewing

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<sup>34</sup>Darcia Narvaez, Irene Getz, James Rest, and Stephen J. Thoma, "Moral Judgment and Cultural Ideology," (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development), 1.

<sup>35</sup>Darcia Narvaez, Irene Getz, James Rest, and Stephen J. Thoma, "Moral Judgment and Cultural Ideology." See also James Rest et al., Postconventional Moral Thinking, 63.

studies according to the six validity criteria.<sup>36</sup> In every case, the DIT related to the validity criterion after partialling out or controlling for political attitude.<sup>37</sup>

Although some have challenged the discriminant validity of the DIT with regard to cognitive ability and political attitude, current research suggests that the DIT has adequate discriminant validity. While cognitive ability and political attitude have strong theoretical and empirical relationships with moral judgment, moral judgment cannot be reduced to cognitive ability or political attitude.

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<sup>36</sup>Correlation with moral comprehension, distinguishing experts from novice, longitudinal gains, correlation with political attitudes, and links to behavior.

<sup>37</sup>Stephen Thoma, Darcia Narvaez, and James Rest, "How Does Moral Judgment Relate to Political Attitudes?" Manuscript submitted for publication. (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development. 1997).

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **DATA AND RESULTS**

The purpose of this study was to examine moral development among members of the American Society for Public Administration. Previous chapters have examined the concept of moral development, literature related to moral development, and the methodology used in the study. Chapter four describes the empirical results and statistical analysis of empirical data in this study. The first section of chapter four describes the sample, survey data, and Defining Issues Test (DIT) results using descriptive statistical techniques. Section two of the fourth chapter analyzes the study results using inferential statistical techniques. Attention focuses first on research questions and hypotheses, and then on individual variables. The final portion of the chapter summarizes the significant findings of the study as they relate to the research and null hypotheses.

#### **Description of Sample**

The desired sample size was determined by calculating a minimum sample size for a population of 11,185<sup>1</sup> based on standard sample size tables. Size of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) was obtained from Chessie Lists. For a confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 5%, the suggested sample size is

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<sup>1</sup>The membership of ASPA has now decreased to 9, 925.

estimated to be 369<sup>2</sup>-371.<sup>3</sup> The survey was mailed to 1,000 of ASPA members.<sup>4</sup> Response rate to the DIT survey was 34.4%. This response rate, 14% less than response to ASPA's member survey, may reflect the complexity or timing of the survey. (The survey was mailed in late May when some respondents may have been on vacation.) Consistency checks eliminated another seventy subjects, leaving a sample of 274 subjects. While this figure was less than the minimum sample size of 369, it is larger than any single previous study of moral development in public administration in the United States. Stewart and Sprinthall's three studies of public administrators in the United States involved groups of 55-190 with all groups totaling 485.

Given the response rate, it is important to consider whether this sample is representative of the ASPA population. Tables 18 and 19 in the appendix compare this sample with membership data available from ASPA.<sup>5</sup> Demographic findings are congruent with the profile of ASPA. That is, the sample was composed predominantly of middle-aged white males who were middle or top managers, most of whom held a graduate

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<sup>2</sup>Elizabethann O'Sullivan and Gary R Russell, Research Methods for Public Administrators, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (White Plains, New York: Longman Publishers, 1995), 150.

<sup>3</sup>Sample Size Calculator, Creative Research Systems obtained via the Internet at <http://www.surveysystem.com/sscal.htm#terminology>..

<sup>4</sup>ASPA's member survey of 1997 experienced a return rate of 48% and was sent to a sample of 800 members. It was felt that this survey would have a lower return rate than the ASPA member survey, thus necessitating the larger initial mailing of 1000.

<sup>5</sup>Demographic information obtained from the American Society for Public Administration, 11/13/98.

degree. However, ASPA demographics were based on incomplete data. The organization had information about race for only 58% of members, on organizational context for only 59%, educational level for only 59%, age for only 58%, and job title for only 56%. For example, of the 58% of ASPA members whose race is known, 84.2% are white. In this DIT random sample of ASPA members, Caucasians comprised 93.8% of the sample. However, the race of 42% of ASPA's membership is unknown. In theory, the true percentage of Caucasians could be as low as 49% or as high as 90.8%. Given the large number of members whose race is not known, it is difficult to know how representative this sample is.

### **Sample Characteristics**

Of the 264 subjects who responded to the gender question, 67% were males. Sample respondents were predominantly white, with 93.8% of the 258 respondents selecting white for race. Only sixteen respondents identified themselves as other than white; eleven of the minority respondents were female. Overall, 64.3% of the 258 subjects who responded to both race and gender items were white males. This compared with 29.5% white females, 4.3% non-white females, and 1.9% non-white males.

Mean age of the sample was 48.45 years ( $n = 262$ ,  $s.d. = 10.31$ ) with ages ranging from 23 to 82 years of age. Age was further described by the recoded variable "agecat" which divided respondents into six categories: under 30 years, age 30 to 39, age 40 to 49, age 50 to 59, and age 60 to 69, and age 70 and over. Table 18 (Appendix B)

summarizes the demographic characteristics related to age, race gender, and formal education of the sample. As Table 18 illustrates, 69.1% of the sample was between the ages of forty and fifty-nine years of age.

### **Region of the Country**

Response to the survey was greatest in the northeastern and the southern part of the country, with 28.8% from the northeast and 30.3% from the south (n = 264). The west and midwest had a lower number of respondents with 22.7% from the west and 18.2% from the midwest. (See Table 19 in Appendix B). Given that this was a random sample, this difference in frequency may also be a function of the geographic distribution of ASPA's membership. That is, one might expect more respondents in the northeast and south due to the high number of government agencies and density of population in those areas. Information obtained at the ASPA website indicates that the ASPA membership may have greater numbers in the northeast and west, with fewer members in the midwest.<sup>6</sup>

### **Education**

Respondents in the sample possessed a high level of formal education. More than 85% of respondents who answered the education question (n = 263) held a graduate degree. While approximately equal percentages of men (85.1%, n = 262) and women

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<sup>6</sup>Information obtained at <http://www.aspanet.org>, 11/11/98.

(86.2%) held graduate degrees, men were 12.5% more likely than women to hold a doctorate. Females were 12.5% more likely to have a master's degree. Table 9 summarizes the highest level of formal education of sample respondents by gender:

**Table 9.      Highest Level of Education by Gender**

Education (three categories)	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Undergraduate Degree or less	14.9%	13.8%	14.5%
Master's Degree	57.7%	71.3%	62.2%
Doctoral Degree	27.4%	14.9%	23.3%
Total	100% n = 175	100% n = 87	100% n = 262

Comparison of minorities and non-minorities was not appropriate given the small number of minorities who responded to the survey (n = 16). However, 81.3% of minorities held a master's degree. None of the sixteen minority respondents held a doctoral degree.

### **Organizational Variables: Organizational Context and Job Title/Function**

Respondents were also asked to identify the organizational context in which they performed most of their work. Most respondents (30.7%, n = 264) worked in municipal



government. Of the remaining respondents, 17% worked in a college/university, 16.7% in state government, 14.4% in county government, 10.2% in federal government, 6.8% business organization, 3.4% nonprofit organization, and .8% in other or multiple organizations.

The demographic survey also asked respondents to identify their function or job title. More than 55% of those who responded to this question identified themselves as top or middle managers, with 35.2% describing themselves as top managers. Cross-tabulations of job title with gender and race reveal that minorities and women were less likely to be top managers. Women were 14.5% less likely to be top managers than men. Table 10 describes the relationship between job title and gender.

**Table 10. Job Title by Gender**

Job Title n = 263	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Professional/Technical Specialist	14.7%	26.7%	18.6%
Middle Manager	18.1%	25.5%	20.5%
Top Management	40.1%	25.6%	35.4%
College/University Teacher or Administrator	15.8%	10.5%	14.1%
Other	11.3%	11.6%	11.4%
Total	100% n = 177	100% n = 86	100% n =263

White respondents were 23.6% more likely to be top managers than minorities. Minority respondents were 12% more likely to be professional/technical specialists than white respondents.

### **Dependent Variables**

The dependent variables in this study relate to moral development as measured by indices of the Defining Issues Test: P (stages five and six or postconventional percentage)scores, N2 (stages five and six or postconventional) scores, and stage four (maintaining norms or law and order) scores. Recall that the P and N2 scores are both indicators of the importance that subjects assign to stages five and six or postconventional thinking. The P score is essentially the percentage of time that a subject selected a high rating for stage five or six items. For the last twenty-five years, the P score has been the most important index for measuring DIT results. The N2 score, a more recently developed index, considers both ratings and rankings of postconventional items. Given the bulk of research behind the validity and reliability of the P score, it is important to look at both the P and N2 score. This study uses P and N2 scores (postconventional) and stage four percentage (law and order or maintaining norms) scores.

The descriptive data provided a foundation for addressing the research questions and hypotheses. The next section of chapter four focuses on the inferential statistical analysis used to address each of the research questions and hypotheses of the study.

## **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The first research question asked, "What is the mean level of moral development among public administrators as measured by the P and N2 scores on the Defining Issues Test in a random sample of members of the American Society for Public Administration?" The mean P score for this sample of ASPA members was 41.45 (s.d. = 16.95), with a median of 40.0. The mean for males was 39.73, for females 45.23. The mean N2 score was 45.70 for males, 48.40 for females, and 46.42 overall. Tables 20 and 21 list the mean P and N2 scores by the various levels of the independent variables (See Appendix B). In most cases, the scores of females were greater than scores for the males in that category. N2 scores demonstrate a similar pattern of higher scores for females than males. This indicates that females used postconventional reasoning with greater frequency in solving the dilemmas on the Defining Issues Test.

Cross-tabulation analysis illustrates the higher scores of females on P scores. Using the values suggested by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development,<sup>7</sup> P scores were recoded into the variable "Ptercile." This variable divided subjects into three categories of P scores: high (P score of 45.1 or greater), medium (P score of 28 to 45), and low (P score of 0 to 27.9). Only 43.9% of the ASPA sample as a whole had high P

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<sup>7</sup>James Rest and Darcia Naravez, Ideas for Research with the DIT, version 1.3 (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 1997), 52.

scores, but even fewer males had a high P score. Only 39% of males had a high P score. In contrast, 43.9% of females had a high P score. Females were 15% more likely to have a high P score than males. (See Table 11).

**Table 11. P scores (High, Medium, Low) by Gender**

P score by Thirds n = 264	Gender of Respondent		Total
	Male	Female	
Low third	23.2%	18.4%	21.6%
Middle third	37.9%	27.6%	34.5%
High Third	39.0%	54.0%	43.9%
Total	100%	100%	100%
	n = 177	n = 87	n = 264

### Analysis of Differences

The second research question asked, “Are there significant differences in moral development as measured by P and N2 scores between groups within the ASPA sample based on age, gender, race, formal education, organizational context, or organizational function?” The analysis of variance (ANOVA) statistical test was used to evaluate possible differences between group means. ANOVA compares the variability within groups with variability between groups and expected variability.<sup>4</sup> Table 12 delineates the

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<sup>4</sup>Marija J. Norusis, *SPSS 6.1: Guide to Data Analysis* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, no year), 285.

significant differences in P and N2 scores between the various groups. Note that gender is significantly different for P scores, but not for N2 scores. This may reflect the different scoring method involved in the two measures.

**Table 12. ANOVA Results: Significant Differences for P and N2**

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Measure</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>Signif.</u>
Gender	P	6.353	.012
Age by category	P	3.358	.006
Age by category	N2	3.175	.008
Race	N2	3.219	.013
Education by two categories	N2	5.45	.020

No significant differences were found on P or N2 scores between groups based on organizational context, region, or organizational function. Initial analysis also showed no difference between educational groups analyzed with the original six levels. When the educational categories were collapsed to form two categories, undergraduate and graduate education, a significant difference emerged between the two groups in the N2 score. Given the high level of formal education of the sample and the strong relationship between formal education and P scores, the lack of significant differences in P scores based on level of formal education is surprising.

Cross-tabulation analysis reflects the significant difference between educational

groups on N2 found by ANOVA. Respondents with a graduate degree were 12.6% more likely to have high N2 scores than those with an undergraduate education. Although ANOVA found no significant difference in P score based on education, cross-tabulation also demonstrated a difference between educational groups, as Table 13 displays. Subjects with a graduate degree were 17.3% more likely to have a high P score and 11.2% less likely to have a low P score.

**Table 13. P scores (High, Medium, Low) by Education: Undergraduate Versus Graduate**

P score by Thirds n = 263	Formal Education of Respondent		Total
	Under-Graduate	Graduate	
Low third	31.6%	20.4%	22.1%
Middle third	39.5%	33.3%	34.2%
High Third	28.9%	46.2%	43.7%
Total	100% n = 38	100% n = 225	100% n =263

Cross-tabulation also illustrates the significant difference found between age groups on P score. Respondents 60 years of age or older were 11.3% more likely to have a low P score than those who were under 60. Similarly, those over 60 were 14.4% less likely to have a high P score, as shown by Table 14.

**Table 14. P scores (High, Medium, Low) by Age: 60 and older versus under 60**

P score by Thirds n = 262	Age of Respondent		Total
	Under 60	60 and older	
Low third	20.0%	31.3%	21.4%
Middle third	34.3%	37.5%	34.7%
High Third	45.7%	31.3%	43.9%
Total	100% n = 230	100% n = 32	100% n =262

Two-way ANOVA was performed to detect possible interactive effects between gender and age category. This confirmed the main effects for both variables with no significant interaction between the two ( $F = .538$ , signif. = .748).

Although ANOVA indicated a significant difference on N2 score based on race, this result was not considered meaningful. The sample size was deemed too small to generalize to the ASPA population. When collapsed into two categories (white and non-white), no significant differences were found between the groups. The difference found by ANOVA may have been due to a few very low scores. Two minority respondents had N2 scores under 10. Because of the small numbers in each minority group, these scores may have unduly influenced the mean.

### **Analysis of Relationships**

In contrast to the second research question concerning differences, question three was concerned with relationships between variables. The third research question posed the question: “What is the relationship between age, gender, race, formal education, region, organizational context, organizational function and P or N2 scores?” Pearson correlation coefficient, Kendall’s tau-b, and Spearman coefficients were used to analyze relationships. Pearson correlation is most appropriate for interval data; Kendall’s tau-b and Spearman coefficients are appropriate for ordinal data.<sup>9</sup> Here, the dependent variables were interval level measurements and the independent variables were ordinal or nominal level variables. Table 15 summarizes the findings from correlation analysis:

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<sup>9</sup>Marja J. Norusis, SPSS 6.1: Guide to Data Analysis (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall), 435.



**Table 15. Correlation Coefficients for Dependent Variables N2 and P**

<b>Independent Variable</b>	<b>Dependent Variable</b>	<b>Correlation Measure</b>	<b>Coefficient</b>	<b>Signif.</b>
Gender	P	Pearson	.154	.05
Gender	P	Kendall's tau b	.117	.05
Gender	P by terciles	Kendall's tau b	.120	.05
Gender	P	Spearman's rho	.140	.05
Stage 4 Percent	P	Pearson	-.690	.01
Stage 4 Percent	P	Kendall's tau b	-.518	.01
Stage 4 Percent	P	Spearman's rho	-.683	.01
Stage 4 Percent	N2	Kendall's tau b	-.327	.01
Educate (2 categories)	N2	Spearman's rho	.127	.05
	P by terciles		.129	.05

These correlations provide further support for the importance of gender in this sample. Where ANOVA found significant differences between groups based on gender, correlation measures found significant associations based on gender.

Although analysis of difference did not identify a significant difference in N2 scores between groups based on education, Spearman's rho identified a correlation between N2 and P by high, medium, and low and level of education (graduate versus undergraduate or less). Analysis of difference revealed a significant difference in P scores between groups based on education (two categories)( $p < .02$ ). Analysis of relationships found a relationship between education (two categories) and N2 scores and P by terciles ( $p < .05$ ).

An interesting finding in the correlation analysis is the strong negative relationship between stage four scores (law and order or maintaining norms) and P or N2 (postconventional) scores ( $p < .01$ ). This may provide support for the neo-Kohlbergian perspective that in well-educated populations postconventional thinking replaces conventional thinking. Increased moral development is characterized by a shift from preference for stage four (maintaining norms) reasoning to postconventional thinking. Theoretically, the proportion of stage four thinking decreases as postconventional or stage five/six thinking increases. From this perspective, the negative correlation is quite logical. Those with higher P scores should have lower stage four scores.

Analysis of relationship also identified other logical associations between various measures of postconventional thinking: P, N2, Ptercile (P divided into high, medium, and low), and N2 tercile (N2 divided into high, medium, and low). Given that each of these measured the same phenomenon, their association is to be expected. P and N2 should be highly correlated since they both measure postconventional thinking. Validity and reliability were discussed in chapter three. The associations between these measures will not be further discussed. No other relationships were found between the independent variables and the dependent variables, P and N2.

## **Comparison to Expected P (Postconventional)**

### **Measures in Public Administration**

Research questions four and five explored differences between this sample's level of moral development and other research regarding public administration or other known norms. Question four asked, "Are there significant differences between mean moral development as measured by P scores using general scenarios (DIT) and the mean moral development P scores obtained by context-specific scenarios (Stewart and Sprinthall Management Survey [SSMS])?" The fifth research question asked, "Are there significant differences in P and N2 scores between the random sample of ASPA members and established DIT norms for educational level, gender, age, and vocation?" In each case a one-sample t test was used to evaluate equality of means between the obtained mean and the expected mean or known value. The one-sample t test is used to test an obtained mean against a known mean. It is used when "you have a single sample of data and want to test whether your sample comes from a population with a known mean."<sup>10</sup> The one-sample t test is also used when the population deviation is not known making it impossible to use the independent samples t test.<sup>11</sup> See Tables 22 - 24 in Appendix B for results of the t tests.

Question four asked whether there is a significant difference between scores on a

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<sup>10</sup>Marija J. Norusis, SPSS 6.1: Guide to Data Analysis, 223.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 217.

context-specific test of moral development (SSMS) as compared with results of a test with general scenarios (DIT). This question relates to Stewart and Sprinthall's previous findings using the SSMS based on scenarios that are in a context specific to public administration management. Using the SSMS with county, municipal, and state managers, Stewart and Sprinthall had obtained P scores of 38 and 39. One-sample t tests compared the SSMS scores with the sample mean of 41.45 obtained in the current study. The ASPA sample mean of 41.45 was significantly different from the SSMS scores of 38 ( $p < .001$ ) and 39 ( $p < .017$ ). The public administration graduate student score of 40 was not significantly different (Tables 16 and 22).

**Table 16. One-sample T Test Results:  
Comparison of ASPA DIT P Score (Postconventional Thinking)  
to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results on SSMS<sup>12</sup>**

<b>SSMS Results</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>t</b>	<b>Signif.</b>
Local Government Managers on SSMS (n = 136)	39	2.39	.017
City/County Managers on SSMS (n = 190)	38	3.37	.001
Graduate MPA students on SSMS (n = 75)	40	1.42	.158

Stewart and Sprinthall also used the DIT to establish construct validity with the SSMS, obtaining a score of 40 among 75 graduate students in public administration. Stewart and Sprinthall's DIT score was not significantly different from the mean obtained in this sample ( $p < .214$ ). These findings support the notion that context-specific instruments may obtain different scores than instruments using general scenarios.

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<sup>12</sup>Debra W. Stewart. and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Strengthening Ethical Judgment in Public Administration," In James S. Bowman, ed., Ethical Frontiers in Public Management. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 243-260; Debra W. Stewart. and Norman A. Sprinthall, "The Impact of Demographic, Professional, and Organizational Variables and Domain on the Moral Reasoning of Public Administrators." In H. George Frederickson, ed. Ethics and Public Administration. (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 205-219; Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Moral Development in Public Administration," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics, (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994), 325-348.

### **Comparing to Educational Norms and Other Professional Groups**

The fifth research question asked, “Are there significant differences in P and N2 scores between the random sample of ASPA members and established DIT norms for educational level, gender, age, and vocation?” Chapter two discussed the extensive research regarding moral development in thousands of subjects and in a number of vocations. The intention of this question was to compare the ASPA DIT findings to some of the results of these studies. Tables 22-24 (Appendix B) provide a summary of one-sample t test comparisons to existing DIT research. In general, the findings demonstrate that the mean P score for this ASPA sample is approximately equivalent to the score of college students or graduate students in business. The mean P score is significantly less than graduate students in moral philosophy and political science ( $p < .0001$ ), and not significantly different from college students ( $p < .407$ ) or adults in general ( $p < .158$ ). Given that 85% of the sample held a graduate degree, it is surprising that the group differed significantly from graduate students. As Tables 19-21 indicate, the mean P score was also significantly less than other groups with comparable education: college students, staff nurses, dental students, physicians, and law students.

Comparison to existing norms also demonstrated the impact of gender seen previously in analysis of difference and relationships. Recall that the mean P score for females in this study was 5.5 points higher than for males. Even with this higher P score, the scores of females were not significantly different from those of college students, dental

students, or staff nurses. The mean P score of women was not different than the norm (44.9) for graduate students used by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development. Women's mean score was significantly higher than adults in general but was not different from graduate business students. On the other hand, the mean P score for males was significantly lower than graduate business students ( $p < .011$ ) and not different from adults in general ( $p < .824$ ). Most surprising, none of the groups (sample as a whole, women, or men) differed significantly from Navy enlisted men whose level of formal education would undoubtedly be lower than in this sample.

Similar analysis examined the mean P score for respondents with graduate degrees and respondents who had earned a doctoral degree. Although these groups fared better than the sample as a whole, neither group's P score was equal to those with comparable levels of education. (See Tables 23 and 24 in Appendix B). Respondents who held a doctoral degree had P scores comparable to staff nurses but significantly less than dental students ( $p < .04$ ). Those who held graduate degrees had P scores approximately equivalent to business students, but significantly less than staff nurses.

### **Comparison to Expected Stage Four (Law and Order)**

#### **Percentages in Public Administration**

The final research question addressed Stewart and Sprinthall's findings that public administrators score disproportionately in stage four (law and order or maintaining norms). "Is there a significant difference in stage four preference in the random ASPA sample compared to existing norms obtained from DIT research?" The raw stage four

score was compared against norms reported by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development. Raw stage four scores were then converted to a percentage score. Percentage scores were used to compare with Stewart and Sprinthall's work.

The mean raw stage four score for the sample was 22.28. Unlike the P score, where a higher score is desirable, a lower stage four score indicates increased preference for stage four reasoning. The mean stage four score of 22.28 compared to existing norms of 20.24 for senior high students, 19.17 for junior high students, 17.01 for college students, 17.97 for graduate students, and 11.40 for graduate students in philosophy. The mean score of 22.23 places the ASPA sample at a level comparable to that of junior high students. T tests were significant for each of these groups at the  $p < .0001$  level.

Females scored lower than males on raw stage four score with a score of 20.14, as compared with the mean score of 23.40 for males. These differences were also reflected when raw scores were converted to percentage score. The mean percentage stage four score was 37.13. ANOVA demonstrated a significant difference ( $F = 7.22$ ,  $p < .008$ ) in stage four percentage based on gender and age category ( $F = 3.211$ ,  $p < .014$ ), with those over sixty years age scoring higher in stage four percentage than those under sixty. Two way ANOVA confirmed the main effects for gender and age category with no interaction effect between the two variables.

In their work, Stewart and Sprinthall found P (postconventional) scores among public administrators on the SSMS ranging from 38-40 and stage four (law and order or maintaining norms) percentage of about 42 to 46% (Table 17). However when Stewart



and Sprinthall used the DIT, stage four percentage scores were 34% (n = 75).<sup>13</sup> One-sample t test comparison of the SSMS stage four percentage of 48% showed a significant difference with ASPA sample's DIT stage four percentage of 37.13% (p. < .0001). However, the ASPA sample mean was also significantly higher than the 34% for graduate students reported by Stewart and Sprinthall (p. < .001).

**Table 17. One-sample T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA sample's DIT Stage Four (Law and Order or Maintaining Norms) to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results**

Previous Finding	Stage 4 %	t	Signif.
Local Government Managers on SSMS (n = 136)	45	-8.31	.0001
City/County Managers on SSMS (n = 190)	42	-5.14	.0001
Graduate MPA students on SSMS (n = 75)	46	-9.36	.0001
Graduate MPA students on DIT (n = 75)	34	3.301	.001

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<sup>13</sup>Debra W. Stewart. and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Strengthening Ethical Judgment in Public Administration," In James S. Bowman, ed.. Ethical Frontiers in Public Management. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1991), 243-260; "The Impact of Demographic, Professional, and Organizational Variables and Domain on the Moral Reasoning of Public Administrators." In H. George Frederickson, ed. Ethics and Public Administration. (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 205-219.

Tables 25 through 27 (Appendix B) summarize the findings of this study with respect to the findings of Stewart and Sprinthall. As these tables illustrate, gender is a significant factor in the results of this study. When the results of this study are compared to Stewart and Sprinthall's results according to gender, P scores are not significantly different for males. However, the scores of females are significantly different in almost every case. This is a striking finding in light of the results of Stewart and Sprinthall's studies in the United States. Stewart and Sprinthall found no differences based on gender in her U.S. studies. As she describes the effects of gender,

A second point is that across all of the samples of public administrators considered to date the factors of demography (including gender), function and level of responsibility and organizational context have had virtually no influence on level or moral reasoning.<sup>14</sup>

### Summary of Findings

#### Compared with Expected Findings

Based on existing norms and the educational background of this sample, one would expect to find P scores (postconventional) ranging from about 43 to over 60, raw scores for stage four of about 18 and stage four percentages (law and order or maintaining

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<sup>14</sup>Debra W. Stewart and Norman A. Sprinthall, "Moral Development in Public Administration," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics, (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994), 325-348; Debra W. Stewart, Norman A. Sprinthall, and Renata Siemienska, "Ethical Reasoning in a Time of Revolution: A Study of Local Officials in Poland," Public Administration Review 57:5(September/October, 1997), 445-453. Stewart and Sprinthall in Cooper, 342. The authors found a significant difference based on gender in the study of Polish government officials..

norms) of about 30%. This sample demonstrated significant differences from each of these expected norms. In general, previous research using the DIT has found education to be the single best predictor of moral development as measured by P scores. Although females typically score slightly higher than males, this difference is seldom a significant difference. In this sample of members of ASPA, the mean P score was 41.45 with females scoring significantly higher than males. The mean stage four percentage score for the sample was 37.13, significantly higher than expected.

#### Utilizer Score

Rest, Thoma, and Davison developed the utilizer score (U score) as a measure of justice orientation and to predict a connection between P scores and action. Since the DIT is based on justice concepts, the underlying theory was that those who used justice interpretive systems would be more likely to act on their judgments. The U score essentially evaluates the degree of fit between the subject's action choice and the choice of most important consideration.<sup>15</sup> U scores are normally in the range of .14 to .15 for college students and .18 for graduates. The mean U score in this sample was .27. The U score for the sample as a whole and for each gender was significantly different than the expected norms ( $p < .0001$ ).

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<sup>15</sup>James Rest, Darcia Narvaez, Muriel J. Bebeau, and Stephen J. Thoma, Postconventional Moral Thinking: A Neo-Kohlbergian Approach, Manuscript submitted for publication (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Center for the Study of Ethical Development, 5/23/1998), 59.

### **Findings in Relationship to Research and Null Hypotheses**

The first research hypothesis predicted a significant difference between the SSMS and the DIT, hypothesizing that Defining Issues Test (DIT) scores would be higher than Stewart and Sprinthall Management Survey (SSMS) scores. The first research hypothesis stated, "In a random sample of ASPA members there will be a significant difference between group mean Defining Issues Test and Stewart and Sprinthall Management Survey (SSMS) scores. It was hypothesized that DIT scores would be higher than SSMS scores." The null hypothesis was that there would be no significant difference between the mean scores of the two instruments. When the entire sample was compared, the mean DIT P score of 41.45 was shown to be significantly higher ( $p < .017$ ) than the P score of 38 and P score of 39 ( $p < .017$ ) on the SSMS. The ASPA sample's DIT score was not significantly different than the P score of 40 obtained by Stewart and Sprinthall's graduate students. When looking only at males, only the P score of 33.5 for the Polish officials was significantly different ( $p < .0001$ ). Women were significantly higher than the mean P score of each of SSMS samples, but not significantly different than the mean DIT score for graduate students. Tables 25 through 27 summarize t test results. The null hypothesis of no difference is therefore rejected for the entire sample and for females, but not for males.

The second hypothesis was a null hypothesis which predicted no significant difference between P scores and existing norms for gender, age, and level of formal education. It stated, "Mean DIT P scores of a random sample of ASPA members will not

be significantly different from expected norms obtained from previous DIT research.”

Based on existing norms, it was predicted that there would be no difference between males and females or between age groups. It was anticipated that there would be significant differences between groups based on formal education and that mean scores would not be different from groups with comparable education. This study found significant differences based on gender, with females scoring significantly higher than males. The null hypothesis is not supported.

The third research hypothesis predicted that the sample would not demonstrate a higher than expected preference for stage four thinking. “The ASPA group will not demonstrate higher preference for law and order (Stage four or maintaining norms) as compared with empirically derived DIT norms.” The null hypothesis was that there would be no difference between the sample and the expected norm (raw score of 17, percentage of about 18-28%) for stage four thinking. The study found a significant difference between the mean score (22.8 raw score, 37.13 percentage) and existing norms. The mean stage four score was lower than Stewart and Sprinthall’s stage four scores on the SSMS but higher than the DIT scores in Stewart and Sprinthall’s DIT student sample and higher than existing norms for the educational level of the sample. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

The final two research hypotheses predicted that the results would follow the bulk of past research on the DIT. It was hypothesized that there would be no difference in P scores based on race, region, gender, organizational context, or job title. “There will be

no significant difference in DIT P and N2 scores among ASPA members based on race, region of the country, gender, organizational context, or job title/function.” Again, the prediction was that the null hypothesis of no difference would be supported. Although no difference was found based on the organizational or regional variables, there was a significant difference in this study with regard to gender. The null hypothesis is accepted with regard to organizational context, job title, and region and rejected with regard to gender. These results were congruent with those of Stewart and Sprinthall who found no differences based on organizational determinants. The study presented insufficient data to draw conclusions about possible differences with regard to race due to the small number of minority respondents.

Similarly, it was hypothesized that the study would find relationships and differences based on level of education. In previous DIT research, level of formal education has been the single best predictor of P scores. The research hypothesis stated, “There will be a significant relationship between formal level of education and moral development as measured by P and N2 scores on the DIT with increased educational level associated with higher scores.” The null hypothesis was that there would be no difference in P score based on level of formal education. Although the study found several associations based on education (after recoding the variable), the sample as a whole scored significantly lower than the expected range for respondents’ level of formal education. The research hypothesis is not supported.

### Summary of Significant Findings

The most significant findings from this study are summarized in the points below:

- Significant differences between males and females on P (postconventional) score and stage four (law and order or maintaining norms) percentage.
- Lack of strong pattern of significant differences in P score based on level of formal education. Previous research had established formal education as the single most powerful predictor of P score.
- Significant difference between mean scores of public administrators on P and stage four and norms based on education among both males and females in this study.

The mean P score for our group of 41.45 was well below the expected score of 43.2 for college students and 44.9 for graduate students.<sup>16</sup> P scores were also significantly lower than other professions. Stage four percentages were significantly higher than other groups.

- Significant difference between the scores obtained by the DIT in this sample when compared to the scores obtained by Stewart and Sprinthall on the SSMS, more pronounced for females.
- No significant difference between Stewart and Sprinthall's DIT P scores with graduate students and those obtained in this study.

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<sup>16</sup>Norms recommended by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development based on empirical results..

- Significant difference based on age category, with those over 60 scoring lower on P scores.
- No significant differences based on region, organizational context, or job title.
- U score significantly higher than expected norms.

Chapter five discusses the findings of the study and their implications for future research in public administration.



## **CHAPTER V**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION**

This final chapter of the dissertation summarizes the results of the study, reviews the dissertation, provides an interpretation of the findings, describes limitations of the study, and delineates implications for future research. Chapter five begins with a review of the dissertation and provides the context for interpretation of the study's findings. The chapter proceeds with a summary of the findings of this study of moral development among members of the American Society for Public Administration. Discussion then focuses on interpretation and explanation of the major findings, as well as limitations of the study. The dissertation then addresses the significance of the study for public administration, concluding with implications for future research.

#### **Review of the Dissertation**

Chapter one introduced the purpose of this study and provided a theoretical framework for interpreting the study. This theoretical schema suggested that ethical theories could be classified by five criteria: paradigm, approach, purpose, decision-making framework, and organizational context. Although the functionalist paradigm has dominated the work of public administration, this study assumed the radical humanist perspective. From the viewpoint of ethical theory classification schema, the study used a social scientific approach with a descriptive purpose. This contrasts to the philosophical

approach and normative purpose of the majority of public administration literature on ethics. The organizational context for the study is the public organizational context, embracing a variety of levels. Briefly, this study represents the radical humanist paradigm with a social scientific approach, descriptive purpose within the public context.

The primary purpose of this study was to extend knowledge of moral development in public administration by administering the Defining Issues Test to a random sample of members of the American Society for Public Administration. A further goal of the study was to compare empirical findings to existing norms of moral development for age groups, levels of education, and gender. A final purpose of the study was to provide a basis for comparison to the work of Stewart and Sprinthall, the authors of existing literature on moral development in public administration.

To accomplish these purposes, the study utilized insights from several fields: ethics (both philosophical and practical), psychology, and public administration. Indeed, this research takes place at the overlapping boundaries of those fields.

Chapter one introduced the ethical framework for the dissertation, basic concepts related to cognitive moral development, and the purposes of the dissertation. Chapter two reviewed literature relevant to ethics in general, ethics in public administration, cognitive moral development, and cognitive moral development in public administration. The third chapter described the methodology used in the study. Chapter four presented the empirical results and statistical analysis of those results.

### **Context for Interpretation**

The proper context for interpretation of this research is the Four Component Model of Moral Behavior. From this model's perspective, moral behavior has four components: ethical sensitivity, moral judgment, moral motivation and moral courage. No single component alone accounts for moral behavior. This study examined only the second component of moral behavior: moral judgment. Data from the this study contributes to knowledge about the process by which public administrators make ethical decisions. Specifically, it informs our understanding of the ability of public administrators to use normative concepts in making ethical decisions. It does not provide information about implementation of ethical decisions or perseverance in ethical action. Most importantly, this study does not tell us whether public administrators, individually or collectively, behave morally.

Results from this dissertation should also be viewed from a neo-Kohlbergian perspective of cognitive moral development. Although Kohlberg's work formed the initial stimulus for development of the Defining Issues Test (DIT), the neo-Kohlbergian perspective provides the proper context for interpretation of DIT results. In particular, the neo-Kohlbergian perspective endorses shifting preferences between three schemas: Personal Interest, Maintaining Norms, and Postconventional Thinking. This contrasts to Kohlberg's six hard stages. The revised perspective has also shifted away from a strict emphasis on "justice operations" and the abstract universal cross-cultural claims of

Kohlberg. DIT results therefore represent the relative proportions of types of ethical thinking about how societal justice ought to be organized. For adult populations the important shift is between the conventional (maintaining norms) schema and the postconventional schema. Findings of this study suggest that public administrators use a smaller proportion of postconventional thinking and greater percentage of maintaining norms schema thinking than would be expected relative to their level of formal education.

### **Context of Public Administration**

Results of this dissertation build upon the work of Stewart and Sprinthall which provides the public administration context within which this study should be interpreted. Although this work extends Stewart and Sprinthall's research, there are significant differences in perspective between their work and this study. Where this study works from a neo-Kohlbergian perspective, their work appears to operate from the Kohlbergian perspective. For example, their most recent work in Poland may reflect Kohlberg's confidence in universally applicable moral stages rather than the neo-Kohlbergian reservations about cross-cultural studies. In general, their work is more concerned with the six stages and assumes more rigidity in stages than this study. In part, this is a function of timing since the neo-Kohlbergian perspective is relatively new.

Notwithstanding the differences, this research is highly indebted to the pioneering work of Stewart and Sprinthall in this area. Their observations remain pertinent to public administration. They describe their work as beginning from a fundamental question:

First, whether public administrative tasks require the ability to understand the ethical dimension of decision-making; second, whether ethical, yet practical, reasoning can be measured empirically on a sequence of stages.<sup>1</sup>

Not everyone would agree that the work of public administrators requires ethical-decision skills. Some public administrators would interpret the politics-administration dichotomy as eliminating the role of ethical discretion.

### **Review and Discussion of Dissertation Findings**

Major findings of this study can be grouped into three categories: general findings, DIT findings about as compared to the SSMS, and DIT findings as compared to expected norms. This study found significant differences in moral judgment based on gender that cut across all three categories of results. This section reviews the major findings of the study and discusses possible explanations for these findings.

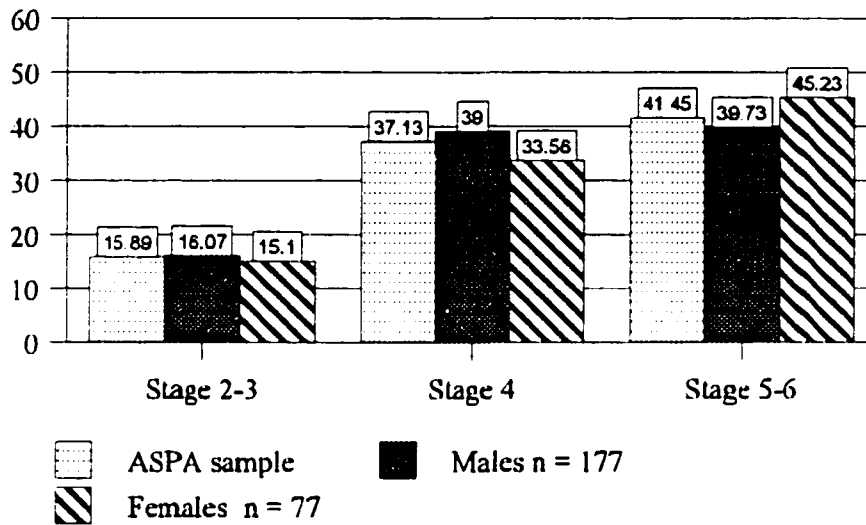
Generally, this study found a mean level of P score of 41.50. Women had a mean P score of 45.23 and men scored a mean of 39.73. The mean stage four percentage for the entire sample was 37.13%. Women's stage four percentage was about 34%. This contrasted to men's stage four percentage of 34%. The stage two and three percentage was about 16%, with women scoring 15% and men 16%. Based on these findings, it is possible to establish a stage profile for each group which illustrates the relative importance for each type of thinking. As Chart 1 illustrates, the P score for women is significantly

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<sup>1</sup>Debra W. Stewart and Norman Sprinthall, "Moral Development in Public Administration," in Terry L. Cooper, ed., Handbook of Administrative Ethics (New York: Marcel Dekker, 1994), 336.

**Chart 1. ASPA Stage Profile**

n = 274



larger than their stage four maintaining norms score. However, the P score for men is approximately equal to their maintaining norms score. Conceptually this would seem to indicate that women prefer postconventional thinking to maintaining norms thinking. Men seem to have an equal preference for the two different types of thinking.

What could account for these findings? One explanation could be in the organizational culture, socialization, and culture of public service. Success in public service may require different skills for women than for men. Or it may be that public service attracts different kinds of women than men.

A study of the accounting profession indicated that low mean P scores (38.05) were related to the organizational culture of the accounting business. Ponemon found that socialization and promotion patterns tended to produce a lower but more homogeneous

group at the highest levels. He summarizes his findings as follows:

In summary, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies yield consistent findings. That is, DIT P scores increase from 40 to 42 for staff and seniors and then sharply decrease from 42 to 36 for seniors and managers. As advanced earlier, the root causes of this are two-fold. First, socialization pressures cause auditors to leave the firm rather than develop to higher levels. This was reflected by auditors with lower DIT P scores leaving the firm one year after promotion to senior. Second, and perhaps more disconcerting, selection-socialization results in only certain types of auditors being promoted within the firm. Evidence of this process was revealed in audit manager promotions where only those seniors with relatively low DIT P scores were advanced.<sup>2</sup>

Recalling that women and minorities were less likely in this sample to be managers, it is possible that a similar process is at work in government service.

The significantly lower P scores among men over 60 may also be evidence for this kind of a socialization effect since presumably these men were most socialized. On the other hand, the difference in their score may also represent a change in socialization patterns and attitudes toward gender within public administration.

Another possible explanation resides in the politics-administration dichotomy. Do women view this problem differently than their male counterparts? Or do situational factors require women to reason differently? Are both politics and administration different for females? Or do males and females bring different issues to the problems of politics and administration?

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<sup>2</sup>Lawrence A. Ponemon, "Ethical Reasoning and Selection-Socialization in Accounting," Accounting, Organizations, and Society 17:3/4 (April/May 1992): 239-258, 252.

A second group of conclusions addressed the relationship of these findings to previous findings by Stewart and Sprinthall. This study found a significant difference in DIT P and stage four scores when compared to the SSMS results among public administrators (P score = 38-39). However, when compared to graduate students scores on the SSMS and DIT (P score = 40-41), results from the ASPA sample were not significantly different. A different pattern emerged with regard to stage four scores. ASPA stage four scores were significantly different when compared to SSMS results among public administrators (Stage 4 percentage = 46-48) and from the graduate students with the SSMS (Stage 4 = 46). Importantly, when compared to Stewart and Sprinthall's DIT stage four results, there was also a significant difference.

While the results of this study both produced lower P scores and higher stage four scores than expected, the stage profiles are different. In this study the P and maintaining norms are about equal. However, in Stewart and Sprinthall's study, the maintaining norms score is actually higher than the P score.

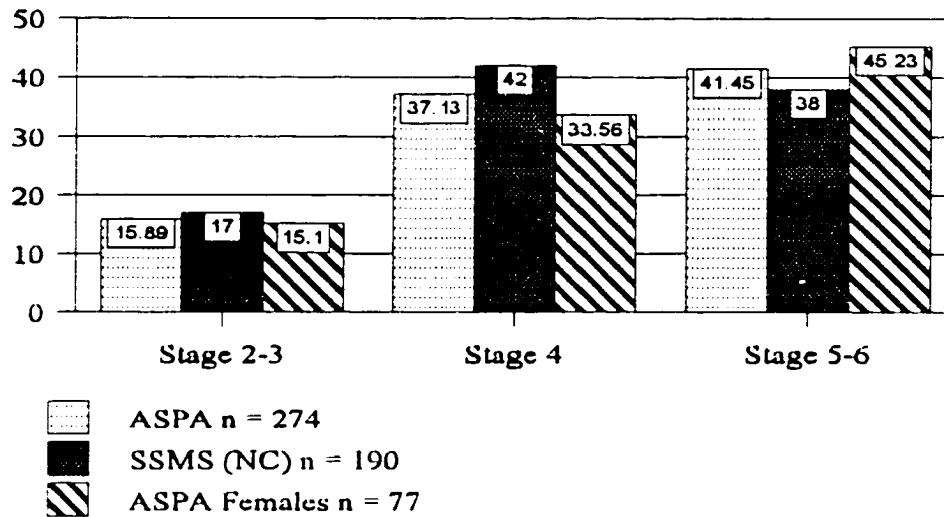
Consideration of gender adds another dimension to this picture. The P scores of males in the ASPA sample were not significantly different from the scores obtained by Stewart and Sprinthall. The scores of females were significantly different from all of Stewart and Sprinthall's except graduate students on the DIT (P score = 41). When one considers stage four percentage scores, the scores for ASPA males and females were all significantly different from the SSMS stage four scores. The stage four score of ASPA females was not significantly different than Stewart and Sprinthall's DIT stage four results.



One possible explanation for this pattern of results is that the samples represent different populations. The ASPA sample was a random sample of members of a professional organization. Stewart and Sprinthall's samples were seminar participants consisting primarily of managers. Stewart and Sprinthall's samples also seemed to have fewer females, with approximately 20% being female. This compares to 32% in the ASPA sample. A significant portion of Stewart and Sprinthall's sample also consisted of city and county budget officers. This group may differ significantly from the ASPA sample.

Another possible explanation for this pattern of results is that the SSMS and DIT may not produce equivalent measures moral judgment. In particular, the results may suggest that the SSMS overestimates the stage four score. Chart 2 compares the stage profile of the ASPA sample to that of Stewart and Sprinthall's ASPA group. When ASPA males are compared to SSMS scores, there is no difference between P scores of the two groups. However, stage four percentage differences are significant for both males and females in each case. While the ASPA sample also produced higher than expected stage four scores, the SSMS score was significantly higher than the DIT stage four score. This may provide evidence that the SSMS overestimates stage four scores.

One other possible explanation for this variation is the reliability of SSMS and DIT stage four scores. In general stage scores are not as reliable on the DIT as P scores or N2

**Chart 2. Stage Profile: ASPA versus SSMS**

scores. In addition, stage score reliability is reduced by using the short form.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, differences may reflect the decreased reliability of using the three-story instrument.

In general, Stewart and Sprinthall's graduate group produced results more comparable to results of the ASPA sample than the management groups. The graduate student P scores were not significantly different in either SSMS results or DIT results. While Stewart and Sprinthall describe this group as similar to most public administration graduate students, their group was composed of approximately 50% females. (In contrast, this ASPA study was only 33% female.)

The third category of findings in this study related comparison of the ASPA's sample DIT results to expected norms based on previous empirical research. The ASPA

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<sup>3</sup>James R. Rest, Guide to the Defining Issues Test, 6.2.

sample scored significantly lower than expected in P score based on the groups' formal level of education. Female subjects' P scores were not significantly different than graduate students. However, none of the sample compared favorably to other professional groups. The group's overall mean P score was comparable to adults in general and Navy enlisted men.

The group's stage four percentage was also significantly higher than comparison norms. This might support the notion that public administrators see their role as enforcing the law and rules rather than making interpretive ethical judgments. If the groups were operating on a framework other than justice, one would expect to see low U scores because U scores represent the extent that subjects would be expected to act on their justice-based convictions. This sample's U score was significantly higher than expected indicating a justice orientation and a tendency to act on their judgments.

Organizational culture and professional socialization may also contribute to this tendency toward a "law and order" stage or "maintaining norms schema." Another possible explanation may reside in the educational programs for public administrators. Are programs in ethical education for public administrators comparable to that of other professional groups?

### **Limitations of the Study**

The results of this study should be interpreted with an understanding of the study's limitations. Although this study represents the largest single sample of public administrators in the United States and the only random sample, the sample may not be

representative of all public administrators. Members of ASPA may differ from other public administrators. In addition, respondents to the survey may differ from members in general or from other public administrators. This is especially true given the 34% response rate to the survey.

Caution should be exercised in generalizing these results to minority public administrators. Only sixteen minorities responded to the survey. It is therefore not appropriate to draw conclusions about minorities from this study. Similarly, the results of this study cannot be generalized to countries other than the United States. Shweder's work has called attention to the manner in which ethical considerations interweave with cultural notions of convention and religion. Such considerations are by nature culture-specific and this study provides no insight into the work of public administrators outside of the United States.

Survey respondents included only two elected officials. No conclusions can be drawn with regard to the moral judgment of elected officials from this study.

The purpose of the study provides a significant limitation in the interpretation of this dissertation. The purpose of this dissertation was to examine moral judgment as one component in moral behavior among public administrators. Results of the study suggest that public administrators may not have the moral judgment skills which might be anticipated in a group with this level of education. The data provide no insight into the other three components of moral behavior, and no conclusions may be drawn with regard to public administrators' ability to recognize ethical problems or persevere in solving

ethical dilemmas.

### **Significance for Public Administration**

This research extends our knowledge about the moral behavior among public administrators and builds on the work of Stewart and Sprinthall. Since the DIT measures how subjects' ability to organize justice and cooperation in society, the results of the DIT may seem inherently valuable to the work of public administration. However, public administration is characterized by a dual mind-set on the subject of ethics. On the one hand, there is increasing recognition that public administrators make complex ethical decisions. Madsen and Shafritz summarize this view:

As can be seen, public officials are confronted with a host of issues, problems, and dilemmas of an ethical nature, all of which require sharp skills of critical thinking. Put another way, it seems as if a new requirement for public administration is the ability to solve a moral problem. Hence, there may have been some truth in Plato's famous dictum found in his *Republic* that holds: "Unless kings become philosophers or philosophers become kings, there is no hope for humanity." We might say that at a bare minimum, what *is* necessary is that public administrators become proficient at moral reasoning.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, there is a long-standing resistance to ethical reflection in public life. Although it may seem logical to assume that it is important for public administrators to have the ability to make sound moral judgments, the fact-value dichotomy of logical positivism continues to exert a strong influence on the field of public administration. Douglas Amy examined this resistance to ethical analysis in public policy. Although

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<sup>4</sup>Peter Madsen and Jay M. Shafritz, ed. Essentials of Government Ethics. (New York: Meridian, The Penguin Company, 1992), 212.

positivism provides a philosophical basis for this resistance, Amy concludes that other factors play a more important role in rejecting ethical analysis. In this environment, Amy contends, cost-benefit analysis is embraced *because* of its limitations as a form of ethical analysis. Madsen and Shafritz conclude the following regarding resistance to ethical analysis:

To sum up, the standard arguments against the integration of ethics and public policy analysis are clearly weak. Professional, political, and institutional factors provide a much more plausible explanation for the neglect of ethics. Ethical analysis is shunned because it frequently threatens the professional and political interests of both analysts and policymakers. The administrator, the legislator, the bureaucrat, and the policy analyst all shy away from the risks involved in ethical inquiry.<sup>5</sup>

At the present time, widespread concern exists about the “problem of government ethics.” Madsen and Shafritz note that the crisis in government ethics embraces two concerns: corruption among government officials and solving complex ethical quandaries in government.<sup>6</sup> This study of moral judgment among public administrators sheds light on the second type of concern. Results from the survey suggest that public administrators are not as skilled in moral judgment as many other professional groups including physicians, law students, and nurses. In fact, the results suggest that public administrators’ moral judgment on the whole is similar to adults in general. However, women public

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<sup>5</sup> Douglas J. Amy, “Why Policy Analysis and Ethics are Incompatible,” In Peter Madsen and Jay M. Shafritz, ed. Essentials of Government Ethics. (New York: Meridian, The Penguin Company, 1992), 317 - 338.

<sup>6</sup>Madsen and Shafritz, 1-18.

administrators are significantly more skilled in making moral judgments.

### **Implications for Future Research**

This study is one of a very small number of empirical studies of ethics in public administration and has numerous implications for future research in this area. In general, the study points to the need for further research concerning the impact of gender on ethical judgment, the process of ethical decision-making, the role of politics in ethical dilemmas, development and comparison of instruments to assess moral judgment, the three other components of ethical behavior, links between judgment and action, and ethics education.

The strong effect of gender on the results of this study indicates the need for research in the area of gender and ethical-decision-making. Why did women score so much higher than men in this study of moral judgment in public administration? In the absence of significant differences based on organizational context, job title, region, or education, what other factors contribute to this difference? What is the nature of the organizational culture and socialization process for public administrators? Do men and women in public administration become socialized in the same way?

Further research is also needed to examine the ethical decision-making process in public administration. How do public administrators make ethical decisions? What are the organizational, social, cultural, and political factors which shape their approach to the process? How do these factors compare to those in other professions? What role does

politics play in the process of ethical decision-making?

This study also points to the need for research in the other three components of moral behavior among public administrators. This research has examined the second component, moral judgment, among public administrators and builds on previous work on the same component. No work to date has been done in measuring the ethical sensitivity, moral motivation, and moral courage of public administrators. The Center for the Study of Ethical Development is in the process of developing instruments to evaluate each of the other three components of moral behavior for different professional groups. Muriel Bebeau has developed a test of ethical sensitivity and a professional role inventory for dentists which address components one and three. Similar work in public administration would shed light on the process by which public administrators make ethical decisions.

Another area for future research suggested by the current study relates to instruments for measuring moral judgment. This study produced significantly different mean P scores and stage four scores for all the groups using the DIT or the SSMS. This suggests the need for further research to compare SSMS results and DIT studies in the same population. The Center for Ethical Development has recently released the DIT2 which is shorter and has more current dilemmas. The authors claim that the DIT2 has comparable or better validity and reliability than the original DIT. Comparison of DIT1 and DIT2 to the SSMS in the same sample would provide the opportunity to evaluate the effect of using a context-specific versus general approach to the evaluation of moral



development.

Less than five percent of respondents to this survey were minorities. Although some respondents expressed anger at the suggestion that race would play any role in ethical decision-making, little is known about the process by which minorities approach ethical dilemmas. Given the complex interaction between social, cultural, religious, and political determinants in moral matters, might minorities have a different approach? Are there differences in ethical sensitivity between minorities and non-minorities?

The findings of this study also have implications for ethics education. If public administrators have lower scores than expected in moral judgment, does this have implications for ethics training? What is the pre-professional ethics training for public administrators? Do ethics training programs have an impact on moral judgment or moral sensitivity?

### Conclusion

This dissertation examined moral judgment among a sample of members of the American Society for Public Administration. The sample scored significantly lower than would be expected based on educational background. Women scored significantly higher than men. DIT scores were significantly different than previous results from the SSMS. This conclusion to the dissertation has explored the possible explanations for the findings of this study, as well as implications for future research. Overall, this dissertation demonstrates the need for further research. At the current time, little empirical data exists about the manner in which public administrators make ethical decisions.

## **APPENDIX A**

# DIT

DEFINING ISSUES TEST  
University of Minnesota  
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## Opinions about Social Problems

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help us understand how people think about social problems. Different people have different opinions about questions of right and wrong. There are no "right" answers to such problems in the way that math problems have right answers. We would like you to tell us what you think about several problem stories.

You will be asked to read a story from this booklet. Then you will be asked to mark your answers on a separate answer sheet. More details about how to do this will follow. But it is important that you fill in your answers on the answer sheet with a #2 pencil. Please make sure that your mark completely fills the little circle, that the mark is dark, and that any erasures that you make are completely clean.

The Identification Number at the top of the answer sheet may already be filled in when you receive your materials. If not, you will receive special instructions about how to fill in that number.

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In this questionnaire you will be asked to read a story and then to place marks on the answer sheet. In order to illustrate how we would like you to do this, consider the following story:

### FRANK AND THE CAR

Frank Jones has been thinking about buying a car. He is married, has two small children and earns an average income. The car he buys will be his family's only car. It will be used mostly to get to work and drive around town, but sometimes for vacation trips also. In trying to decide what car to buy, Frank Jones realized that there were a lot of questions to consider. For instance, should he buy a larger used car or a smaller new car for about the same amount of money? Other questions occur to him.

We note that this is not really a social problem, but it will illustrate our instructions. After you read a story you will then turn to the answer sheet to find the section that corresponds to the story. But in this sample story, we present the questions below (along with some sample answers). Note that all your answers will be marked on the separate answer sheet.

First, on the answer sheet for each story you will be asked to indicate your recommendation for what a person should do. If you tend to favor one action or another (even if you are not completely sure), indicate which one. If you do not favor either action, mark the circle by "can't decide."

Second, read each of the items numbered 1 to 12. Think of the issue that the item is raising. If that issue is important in making a decision, one way or the other, then mark the circle by "great." If that issue is not important or doesn't make sense to you, mark "no." If the issue is relevant but not critical, mark "much," "some," or "little" --depending on how much importance that issue has in your opinion. You may mark several items as "great" (or any other level of importance) -- there is no fixed number of items that must be marked at any one level.

Third, after you have made your marks along the left hand side of each of the 12 items, then at the bottom you will be asked to choose the item that is the most important consideration out of all the items printed there. Pick from among the items provided even if you think that none of the items are of "great" importance. Of the items that are presented there, pick one as the most important (relative to the others), then the second most important, third, and fourth most important.

**SAMPLE ITEMS and SAMPLE ANSWERS:**

FRANK AND THE CAR: ● buy new car    0 can't decide    0 buy used car

Great    Some    No  
 Much    Little

- 
- |   |   |   |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ● | 1. Whether the car dealer was in the same block as where Frank lives.  |
| ● | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2. Would a used car be more economical in the long run than a new car. |
| 0 | 0 | ● | 0 | 0 | 3. Whether the color was green, Frank's favorite color.                |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ● | 4. Whether the cubic inch displacement was at least 200.               |
| ● | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5. Would a large, roomy car be better than a compact car.              |
| 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | ● | 6. Whether the front connibillies were differential.                   |

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	-----											
Most important item	0	0	0	0	●	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Second most important	0	●	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Third most important	0	0	●	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fourth most important	●	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note that in our sample responses, the first item was considered irrelevant; the second item was considered as a critical issue in making a decision; the third item was considered of only moderate importance; the fourth item was not clear to the person responding whether 200 was good or not, so it was marked "no"; the fifth item was also of critical importance; and the sixth item didn't make any sense, so it was marked "no".

Note that the most important item comes from one of the items marked on the far left hand side. In deciding between item #2 and #5, a person should reread these items, then put one of them as the most important, and the other item as second, etc.

Here is the first story for your consideration. Read the story and then turn to the separate answer sheet to mark your responses. After filling in the four most important items for the story, return to this booklet to read the next story. Please remember to fill in the circle completely, make dark marks, and completely erase all corrections.

---

#### HEINZ AND THE DRUG

In Europe a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$1,000, which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz got desperate and began to think about breaking into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should Heinz steal the drug?

---

#### ESCAPED PRISONER

A man had been sentenced to prison for 10 years. After one year, however, he escaped from prison, moved to a new area of the country, and took on the name of Thompson. For eight years he worked hard, and gradually he saved enough money to buy his own business. He was fair to his customers, gave his employees top wages, and gave most of his own profits to charity. Then one day, Mrs. Jones, an old neighbor, recognized him as the man who had escaped from prison eight years before, and whom the police had been looking for. Should Mrs. Jones report Mr. Thompson to the police and have him sent back to prison?

---

#### NEWSPAPER

Fred, a senior in high school, wanted to publish a mimeographed newspaper for students so that he could express many of his opinions. He wanted to speak out against the use of the military in international disputes and to speak out against some of the school's rules, like the rule forbidding boys to wear long hair.

When Fred started his newspaper, he asked his principal for permission. The principal said it would be all right if before every publication Fred would turn in all his articles for the principal's approval. Fred agreed and turned in several articles for approval. The principal approved all of them and Fred published two issues of the paper in the next two weeks.

But the principal had not expected that Fred's newspaper would receive so much attention. Students were so excited by the paper that they began to organize protests against the hair regulation and other school rules. Angry parents objected to Fred's opinions. They phoned the principal telling him that the newspaper was unpatriotic and should not be published. As a result of the rising excitement, the principal ordered Fred to stop publishing. He gave as a reason that Fred's activities were disruptive to the operation of the school. Should the principal stop the newspaper?

### DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

A lady was dying of cancer which could not be cured and she had only about six months to live. She was in terrible pain, but she was so weak that a good dose of pain-killer like morphine would make her die sooner. She was delirious and almost crazy with pain, and in her calm periods, she would ask the doctor to give her enough morphine to kill her. She said she couldn't stand the pain and that she was going to die in a few months anyway. Should the doctor give her an overdose of morphine that would make her die?

---

### WEBSTER

Mr. Webster was the owner and manager of a gas station. He wanted to hire another mechanic to help him, but good mechanics were hard to find. The only person he found who seemed to be a good mechanic was Mr. Lee, but he was Chinese. While Mr. Webster himself didn't have anything against Orientals, he was afraid to hire Mr. Lee because many of his customers didn't like Orientals. His customers might take their business elsewhere if Mr. Lee was working in the gas station.

When Mr. Lee asked Mr. Webster if he could have the job, Mr. Webster said that he had already hired somebody else. But Mr. Webster really had not hired anybody, because he could not find anybody who was a good mechanic besides Mr. Lee. Should Mr. Webster have hired Mr. Lee?

---

### STUDENT TAKE-OVER

Back in the 1960s at Harvard University there was a student group called Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). SDS students were against the war in Viet Nam, and were against the army training program (ROTC) that helped to send men to fight in Viet Nam. While the war was still going on, the SDS students demanded that Harvard end the army ROTC program as a university course. This would mean that Harvard students could not get army training as part of their regular course work and not get credit for it towards their degree.

Harvard professors agreed with the SDS students. The professors voted to end the ROTC program as a university course. But the President of the University took a different view. He stated that the army program should stay on campus as a course.

The SDS students felt that the President of the University was not going to pay attention to the vote of the professors, and was going to keep the ROTC program as a course on campus. The SDS students then marched to the university's administration building and told everyone else to get out. They said they were taking over the building to force Harvard's President to get rid of the army ROTC program on campus for credit as a course.

Were the students right to take over the administration building?

---

Please make sure that all your marks are dark, fill the circles, and that all erasures are clean.

THANK YOU.



GREAT  
MUCH  
SOME  
LITTLE  
NO

NEWSPAPER:  Should stop it  Can't decide  Should not stop it

1. Is the principal more responsible to students or to parents?
2. Did the principal give his word that the newspaper could be published for a long time, or did he just promise to approve the newspaper one issue at a time?
3. Would the students start protesting even more if the principal stopped the newspaper?
4. When the welfare of the school is threatened, does the principal have the right to give orders to students?
5. Does the principal have the freedom of speech to say "no" in this case?
6. If the principal stopped the newspaper would he be preventing full discussion of important problems?
7. Whether the principal's order would make Fred lose faith in the principal.
8. Whether Fred was really loyal to his school and patriotic to his country.
9. What effect would stopping the paper have on the student's education in critical thinking and judgment?
10. Whether Fred was in any way violating the rights of others in publishing his own opinions.
11. Whether the principal should be influenced by some angry parents when it is the principal that knows best what is going on in the school.
12. Whether Fred was using the newspaper to stir up hatred and discontent.

Most important item  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

Second most important  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

Third most important  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

Fourth most important  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

GREAT  
MUCH  
SOME  
LITTLE  
NO

DOCTOR'S DILEMMA:  He should give the lady an overdose that will make her die  Can't decide  Should not give the overdose

1. Whether the woman's family is in favor of giving her the overdose or not.
2. Is the doctor obligated by the same laws as everybody else if giving an overdose would be the same as killing her.
3. Whether people would be much better off without society regimenting their lives and even their deaths.
4. Whether the doctor could make it appear like an accident.
5. Does the state have the right to force continued existence on those who don't want to live.
6. What is the value of death prior to society's perspective on personal values.
7. Whether the doctor has sympathy for the woman's suffering or cares more about what society might think.
8. Is helping to end another's life ever a responsible act of cooperation.
9. Whether only God should decide when a person's life should end.
10. What values the doctor has set for himself in his own personal code of behavior.
11. Can society afford to let everybody end their lives when they want to.
12. Can society allow suicides or mercy killing and still protect the lives of individuals who want to live.

Most important item  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

Second most important  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

Third most important  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

Fourth most important  1  2  3  4  5  6  7  8  9  10  11  12

**PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA**



GREAT  
MUCH  
SOME  
LITTLE  
NO

WEBSTER: ● Should have hired Mr. Lee    ○ Can't decide    ○ Should not have hired him

- ○ ○ ○ ○ 1. Does the owner of a business have the right to make his own business decisions or not?
- ○ ● ○ ○ 2. Whether there is a law that forbids racial discrimination in hiring for jobs.
- ● ○ ○ ○ 3. Whether Mr. Webster is prejudiced against orientals himself or whether he means nothing personal in refusing the job.
- ● ○ ○ ○ 4. Whether hiring a good mechanic or paying attention to his customers' wishes would be best for his business.
- ○ ○ ○ ● 5. What individual differences ought to be relevant in deciding how society's rules are filled?
- ○ ○ ○ ● 6. Whether the greedy and competitive capitalistic system ought to be completely abandoned.
- ○ ● ○ ○ 7. Do a majority of people in Mr. Webster's society feel like his customers or are a majority against prejudice?
- ○ ○ ○ ○ 8. Whether hiring capable men like Mr. Lee would use talents that would otherwise be lost to society.
- ○ ● ○ ○ 9. Would refusing the job to Mr. Lee be consistent with Mr. Webster's own moral beliefs?
- ○ ● ○ ○ 10. Could Mr. Webster be so hard-hearted as to refuse the job, knowing how much it means to Mr. Lee?
- ○ ○ ● ○ 11. Whether the Christian commandment to love your fellow man applies to this case.
- ○ ○ ○ ● 12. If someone's in need, shouldn't he be helped regardless of what you get back from him?

- Most important item    ● (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12)
- Second most important    (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) ● (9) (10) (11) (12)
- Third most important    (1) (2) (3) ● (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12)
- Fourth most important    (1) (2) ● (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12)

GREAT  
MUCH  
SOME  
LITTLE  
NO

STUDENTS: ○ Take it over    ○ Can't decide    ● Not take it over

- ○ ● ○ ○ 1. Are the students doing this to really help other people or are they doing it just for kicks.
- ○ ○ ○ ○ 2. Do the students have any right to take over property that doesn't belong to them.
- ○ ○ ● ○ 3. Do the students realize that they might be arrested and fined, and even expelled from school.
- ○ ○ ○ ● 4. Would taking over the building in the long run benefit more people to a greater extent.
- ● ○ ○ ○ 5. Whether the president stayed within the limits of his authority in ignoring the faculty vote.
- ○ ○ ● ○ 6. Will the takeover anger the public and give all students a bad name.
- ● ○ ○ ○ 7. Is taking over a building consistent with principles of justice.
- ● ○ ○ ○ 8. Would allowing one student take-over encourage many other student take-overs.
- ○ ● ○ ○ 9. Did the president bring this misunderstanding on himself by being so unreasonable and uncooperative.
- ○ ○ ● ○ 10. Whether running the university ought to be in the hands of a few administrators or in the hands of all the people.
- ○ ○ ○ ● 11. Are the students following principles which they believe are above the law.
- ○ ○ ○ ○ 12. Whether or not university decisions ought to be respected by students.

- Most important item    (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) ●
- Second most important    (1) ● (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12)
- Third most important    (1) (2) (3) (4) ● (6) (7) (8) (9) (10) (11) (12)
- Fourth most important    (1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7) ● (9) (10) (11) (12)

**PLEASE DO NOT WRITE IN THIS AREA**

## **APPENDIX B**

**Table 18. Demographic Comparison of Sample with ASPA Membership Profile<sup>1</sup>**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>ASPA</b>	<b>DIT Sample</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	61.1	67
Female	38.9	33
	n = 9703	n = 264
<b>Race</b>		
African American	7.6	7.6
Caucasian	84.2	84.2
Hispanic	2.7	2.7
Asian	1.8	1.8
Other	3.7	3.7
	n = 5793	n = 258
<b>Age</b>		
Under 30	11.1	3.8
30-39	22.8	14.9
40-49	37.9	32.8
50-59	20.0	36.3
60 and over	8.2	12.2
	n = 5783	n = 262
<b>Educational Level</b>		
<b>Undergraduate</b>		
Degree or less	19.1	14.4
Master's Degree	54.8	62.4
Doctorate	24.8	23.2
Other	1.2	
	n = 5817	n = 263

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<sup>1</sup>Figures obtained from the American Society for Public Administration, 11/13/98. Percentages do not include subjects with missing data.

**Table 19. Organizational Context, Job Title, Region:  
Comparison of Sample with ASPA Membership Profile<sup>2</sup>**

Variable	ASPA	DIT Sample
<b>Organizational Context</b>		
College/University	22.9	17
Federal Government	10.0	10.2
Municipal Government	19.5	30.7
County Government	9.9	14.4
State Government	10.4	16.7
Business	3.4	6.8
Non-profit	5.6	3.4
Student	8.8	-
Other	9.5	.8
	n = 5829	n = 264
<b>Organizational Function/ Job Title</b>		
Staff	12.0	7.2
Professional/Technical Specialist	6.8	18.6
First Line Supervisor	5.3	1.5
Middle Management	17.0	20.5
Top Management	23.1	35.2
Elected Official	.8	.8
College/University Teacher	17.1	9.8
College/University Administrator	4.8	4.2
Other	13.0	2.2
	n = 5592	n = 264
<b>Region</b>		
Northeast	Not	28.8
South	available	30.3
Midwest		18.2
West		22.7
		n = 264

---

<sup>2</sup>Figures obtained from the American Society for Public Administration, 11/13/98. Percentages do not include subjects with missing data.

**Table 20. Mean P and N2 Scores for Independent Variables:  
Age, Race, Educational Level and Region**

Group	Sample (n = 264)		Males (n = 177)		Females (n = 87)	
	P	N2	P	N2	P	N2
<b>Sample</b>	41.45	46.42	39.73	45.70	45.234	48.40
<b>Age</b>						
Under 30	43.00	42.31	30.03	29.57	48.56	47.76
30-39	35.87	44.47	34.13	44.98	37.53	44.04
40-49	43.79	48.22	41.45	46.88	48.39	50.95
50-59	44.26	48.71	42.88	48.30	48.10	49.82
60 and over	34.84	40.66	33.21	39.37	46.25	49.72
<b>Race</b>						
White	42.24	47.11	40.36	45.93	46.35	49.63
Black	36.81	43.84	31.10	55.61	38.71	41.22
Other	27.50	31.60	23.35	28.75	31.65	34.44
<b>Educational Level</b>						
Undergraduate or less	36.93	42.05	37.52	43.37	35.66	39.19
Master's Degree	41.97	47.60	39.39	45.64	46.59	49.85
Graduate Degree	42.14	47.25	39.98	46.06	46.76	49.89
Doctoral Degree	42.58	47.71	41.23	47.04	47.55	50.09
<b>Region</b>						
Northeast	41.95	46.31	40.92	46.01	44.58	47.66
Midwest	44.62	47.07	41.20	44.94	50.87	50.94
South	39.05	47.27	40.37	47.41	42.20	47.03
West	41.49	45.46	37.02	44.11	45.71	49.70

**Table 21. Mean P and N2 Scores for Independent Variables:  
Organizational Context and Function**

Group	Sample (n = 264)		Males (n = 177)		Females (n = 87)	
	P	N2	P	N2	P	N2
<b>Sample</b>	41.45	46.42	39.73	45.70	45.23	48.40
<b>Organizational Context</b>						
Municipal Government	38.78	44.32	38.92	44.63	38.51	43.74
State Government	44.92	48.59	45.74	49.81	43.34	46.23
County Government	38.72	43.94	34.99	41.49	47.88	49.95
Federal Government	44.02	48.09	40.77	45.44	49.54	52.58
Non-profit	49.62	52.71	44.43	50.13	60.00	57.86
Business	46.33	52.02	40.04	48.00	58.90	59.39
College/University Other or Multiple	40.21	46.29	37.81	45.76	47.75	49.43
	43.30	47.06	43.30	47.06	--	--
<b>Organizational Function/ Job Title</b>						
Staff	37.43	45.55	45.77	52.73	27.27	37.57
Professional/Technical	41.56	45.33	38.26	43.45	45.28	47.44
First Line Supervisor	35.83	45.31	32.20	45.28	46.70	45.40
Middle Management	43.10	48.14	41.88	47.48	44.88	49.09
Top Management	41.75	46.37	39.38	44.59	49.43	52.01
Elected Official	35.00	40.96	35.00	40.96	--	--
College/Univ. Teacher	40.10	45.85	37.12	45.12	50.03	48.33
College/Univ Administrator	47.54	49.40	43.33	46.39	58.77	56.42
Researcher	33.33	53.98	33.33	53.98	--	--
Student	39.20	42.92	43.30	47.03	37.15	48.43

**Table 22. T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA Mean DIT Score to Mean P Score of Other Groups**

Group	P Score	ASPA Sample (n = 274)		ASPA Males (n = 177)		ASPA Females (n = 87)	
		Mean Diff.	Signif	Mean Diff.	Signif	Mean Diff.	Signif
Graduate students - moral phil or poli sci* <sup>3</sup>	65.2	-23.75	.0001	-25.47	.0001	-19.98	.0001
Law students	52.2	-10.75	.0001	-12.47	.0001	-6.98	.001
Medical students	50.2	-8.75	.0001	-10.47	.0001	-4.98	.012
Practicing physicians	49.2	-7.75	.0001	-9.47	.0001	-3.98	.043
Dental students	47.6	-6.15	.0001	-7.87	.0001	-2.38	.222
Staff nurses	46.3	-4.85	.0001	-6.57	.0001	-1.08	.580
Graduate Students*	44.9	-3.45	.001	-5.17	.0001	.325	.867
College Students*	43.2	-1.75	.089	-3.47	.004	2.03	.298
Grad business students	42.8	-1.35	.188	-3.07	.011	2.43	.213
College students	42.3	-.85	.407	-2.57	.033	2.93	.134
Navy enlisted men	41.6	-.15	.883	-1.87	.121	3.63	.064
Adults in general	40.0	1.45	.158	-.27	.824	5.23	.008
Accountants <sup>4</sup>	38.1	3.35	.001	1.63	.174	7.13	.0001

<sup>3</sup>Asterisked items represent the group and norm values used by the Center for the Study of Ethical Development. Other values, except as noted, are taken from James R. Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," in James R. Rest and Darcia Narvaez, eds., Moral Development in the Professions, (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994) 14.

<sup>4</sup>Lawrence A. Ponemon, "Ethical Reasoning and Selection-Socialization in Accounting," Accounting, Organizations and Society 17:3/4 (1992), 239-258, 247.

**Table 23. T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA (Graduate Degree) to Mean P Score of Other Groups<sup>5</sup>**

Group	P Score	ASPA Sample (n = 225)	
		Mean Diff.	Signif
Graduate students - moral philosophy or poli sci	65.2	-23.064	.0001
Female Graduates	63.0	-20.86	.0001
Male Graduate	61.0	-18.86	.0001
Liberal seminarians	59.8	-17.66	.0001
Law students	52.2	-10.06	.0001
Medical students	50.2	-8.06	.0001
Practicing physicians	49.2	-7.06	.0001
Dental students	47.6	-5.45	.0001
Staff nurses	46.3	-4.16	.0001
Female College stud.	45.9	-3.76	.001
Male College student	44.1	-1.96	.086
Grad business students	42.8	-.66	.560
College students	42.3	-.16	.886
Navy enlisted men	41.6	.54	.638
Adults in general	40.0	2.14	.062
High School Students	31.8	10.34	.0001
Prison Inmates	23.5	18.64	.0001

<sup>5</sup>Based on James Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," 14.



**Table 24. T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA (Doctorally Educated) to Mean P Score of Other Groups<sup>6</sup>**

Group	P Score	ASPA Sample (n = 61)	
		Mean Diff.	Signif.
Graduate students - moral phil or poli sci	65.2	-22.62	.0001
Female Graduates	63.0	-20.42	.0001
Male Graduate	61.0	-18.42	.0002
Liberal seminarians	59.8	-17.22	.0001
Law students	52.2	-9.62	.0001
Medical students	50.2	-7.62	.002
Practicing physicians	49.2	-6.620	.006
Dental students	47.6	-5.02	.036
Staff nurses	46.3	-3.72	.118
Female College stud.	45.9	-3.32	.162
Male College student	44.1	-1.52	.519
Grad business students	42.8	-.22	.926
College students	42.3	.280	.905
Navy enlisted men	41.6	.980	.677
Adults in general	40.0	2.58	.275
High School Students	31.8	10.78	.0001
Prison Inmates	23.5	19.08	.0001

<sup>6</sup>Based on James Rest, "Background: Theory and Research," 14.

**Table 25. One-sample T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA DIT P Scores (Postconventional) to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results**

Stewart's Groups	P Score	ASPA DIT SAMPLE			
		Compare	Diff.	T	Signif.
NC PA Grad Students (n = 75)	40	All	1.45	1.42	N.S.
Males (n = 36)	39	Males	.73	.61	N.S.
Females (n = 38)	42	Females	6.23	3.22	.002
		Males	-2.27	-1.89	N.S.
		Females	3.23	1.67	N.S.
DIT (n = 34)	41	All	.45	.44	N.S.
NC Local Government Executives (n = 136)	39	All	2.45	2.39	.017
Males (n = 95)	39	Males	.73	.61	N.S.
Females (n = 41)		Females	6.23	3.22	.002
NC City/County Managers and Assistant Managers (n = 190)	38	All	3.45	3.37	.001
Males (n = 174)	38	Males	1.73	1.45	N.S.
Females (n = 16)	39	Females	7.23	3.74	.0001
		Males	.73	.61	N.S.
		Females	6.23	3.22	.002
Florida Managers and Assistant Managers (N = 104)	38	All	3.45	3.37	.001
Males (n = 94)	38	Males	1.73	1.45	N.S.
Females (n = 9)	40	Females	7.23	3.74	.0001
		Males	-.27	-.22	N.S.
		Females	5.23	6.69	.008
Polish Officials (n = 485)	34.6	All	6.85	6.69	.0001

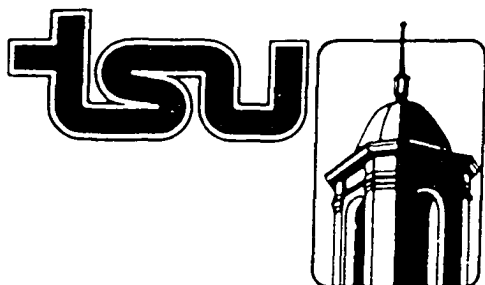
**Table 26. T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA DIT Stage Four (Law and Order) Percentages to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results**

Stewart's Groups	Stage Four	ASPA DIT SAMPLE			
		Compare to	Diff.	T	Signif.
NC PA Graduate Students (n = 75)	46	Males	-7.00	-5.90	.0001
		Females	-12.44	-7.83	.0001
	48	All	-10.87	-11.47	.0001
		Females	-14.44	-9.09	.0001
NC PA Graduate Students DIT (n = 75) (DIT. Two different scores published.)	33	Males	6.00	5.06	.0001
	34	Females	.60	.35	N.S.
NC Local government executives (n = 136)	45	Males	5.00	4.22	.0001
		Females	-.44	-.28	N.S.
NC City/County Managers and Assistant Managers (n = 190)	42	All	-4.87	-5.14	.0001
		Males	-3.00	-2.53	.012
		Females	-8.44	-5.32	.0001
Florida Managers and Assistant Managers (n = 104)	44	All	-6.87	-7.25	.0001
		Males	-5.00	-4.21	.0001
		Females	-10.44	-6.58	.0001
Polish Officials (n = 485)	47.0	Males	-8.00	-6.74	.0001
		Females	-13.44	-8.46	.0001
Males (n = 324)	47.2	Males	-6.80	-5.73	.0001
Females (n = 158)	45.8	Females	-12.25	-7.71	.0001

**Table 27. T Test Results: Comparison of ASPA DIT Stage Two and Three (Personal Interest) Percentages to Stewart and Sprinthall's Results**

Stewart's Groups	Stage 2-3	ASPA DIT SAMPLE			
			Diff.	T	Signif.
NC PA Graduate Students SSMS (n = 75)	10	All			
		Males	6.07	6.51	.0001
		Females	5.10	4.44	.0001
NC PA Graduate Students DIT (n = 50)	16	All			
		Males	.07	.08	N.S.
		Females	-.90	-.78	N.S.
NC Local government executives (n = 136)	13	All	2.89	4.04	.0001
		Males	3.07	3.29	.001
		Females	2.10	1.83	.071
NC City/County Managers and Assistant Managers (n = 190)	17	All	-1.11	-1.54	N.S.
		Males	-.93	-1.00	N.S.
		Females	-1.90	-1.65	N.S.
Florida Managers and Assistant Managers (n = 104)	15	All	.89	1.25	N.S.
		Males	1.07	1.15	N.S.
		Females	.10	.09	N.S.
Polish Officials (n = 485)	9.4	All			
		Males	6.67	7.15	.0001
		Females	5.70	4.96	.0001

## **APPENDIX C**



Institute of Government  
Tennessee State University  
330 10th Avenue North  
Nashville, TN 37203-3401

170

Telephone: (615) 963-7241  
FAX: (615) 963-7245

May 28, 1998

Dear Colleague:

The attached questionnaire is designed to study how public administrators deal with dilemmas. You were selected to participate in this study because you are a member of the American Society for Public Administration. This survey is part of my research to fulfill the requirements for a Ph.D. in Public Administration at Tennessee State University.

Your responses to the questions will remain confidential. The number on the questionnaire will be used only to match the two parts of the questionnaire. Your responses are also anonymous; there is no way for me or anyone else to identify individual responses. In addition, survey results will be reported only in the aggregate. The results of this survey will be used in writing my dissertation and may be submitted for publication in journals.

The survey will require about 25-35 minutes to complete. Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Laura Lee Swisher".

Laura Lee Swisher  
Student in the Ph.D. Program in Public Administration  
Institute of Government  
Tennessee State University

## **SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS**

Steps to complete the survey:

1. Complete Part 1 on the back of this page.
2. Read the instructions for Part 2 (the DIT booklet).
3. Provide your answers for Part 2 on the answer sheet by marking your responses. It is not necessary to completely fill the bubbles. Stop after the third story at the "Stop Here" box.
4. Place the entire survey packet (Parts 1 and 2 and the answer sheet) in the addressed, stamped return envelope and mail back to me  
at the following address:

Dissertation Research  
PO Box 150667  
Nashville, TN 37215-0667

**THANKS!!**

**PART 1**

1. Age in Years: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Gender (Circle one):      Male      Female
3. Race (Circle one):      Black      White      Other: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Please indicate your **HIGHEST** level of education completed by checking the appropriate box.
  - Less than high school graduate
  - High school graduate
  - Junior college graduate or more than one year undergraduate school
  - Undergraduate degree
  - Master's degree
  - Doctoral degree
5. Region in which you reside:
  - Northeast
  - Midwest
  - South
  - West
6. Please indicate the type of organization in which you do the **MAJORITY** of your work. (Check only **ONE** box)
  - Municipal Government
  - State Government
  - County Government
  - Federal Government
  - Non-profit Organization
  - Business Organization
  - College/University
7. Mark the **ONE** selection which best describes your job title or function:
  - Staff person
  - Professional/Technical specialist
  - First Line Supervisor
  - Middle manager
  - Top management
  - Elected official
  - College/University Teacher
  - College/University Administrator
  - Researcher
  - Student



## **“Fishing” for Your Response**

**Recently I mailed you a survey about social dilemmas. If you have already returned the survey, please accept my THANKS!! If you have not yet returned the survey, this card is to encourage you to respond.**

**If you have misplaced your survey, you can get another by calling : Institute of Government**

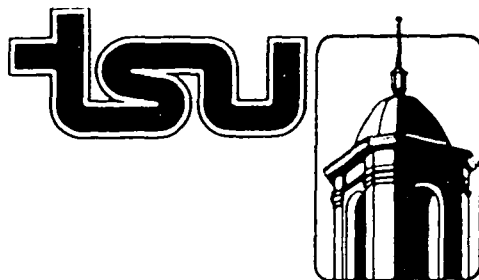
**at Tennessee State University: (615) 963-7241**

**or by writing to: Laura Lee Swisher**

**PO Box 150667, Nashville, TN 37215-0667. `**

**THANKS FOR YOUR HELP!**

## **APPENDIX D**



Office of Sponsored Research  
Tennessee State University  
3500 John A. Merritt Blvd.  
Nashville, TN 37209-1561

# Memorandum

To: Ann-Marie Rizzo, Ph. D.  
Faculty Advisor

From: Maurice Mills, Ph.D. *MM/lan*  
Director of Sponsored Research

Date: 28 April 1998

Re: Measuring Moral Development in Public Administration

The Office of Sponsored Research has reviewed the Human Subjects Research Proposal application and attachments for the research protocol identified above. The protocol was **APPROVED**, 28 April 1998 and classified as a **category (9) expedited nonexemption** in compliance with institutional and federal guidelines governing research involving human subjects.

Nonexempt protocols require annual review. If dissertation has not been completed within the twelve-month period following approval, please resubmit one month prior to initial approval date for a continuation review.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at extension 7660.

cc: Laura Lee Swisher  
A. Robert Thoeny, Ph.D.

Rpl 25

**CENTER for the study of  
ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT**

*University of Minnesota*

---

James Rest, Research Director / 206-A Burton Hall / 178 Pillsbury Drive SE / Minneapolis, MN 55455 / (612) 624 0876 / FAX (612) 624-8241  
Munel Bebeau, Education Director / 15136 Moos Tower / Health Ecology / 515 Delaware Street SE / Minneapolis, MN 55455 / (612) 625-4633  
Darcia Narvaez, Executive Director / 125G Peik Hall / 159 Pillsbury Drive SE / Minneapolis, MN 55455 / (612) 627-7306

Friday, June 26, 1998

Ms Laura Lee Swisher  
4907 Maywood Drive  
Nashville, TN 37211

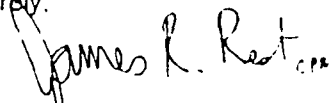
Dear Ms Swisher

I grant you permission to use the Defining Issues Test in your current study. If you are making copies of the test items, please include the copyright information on each copy (e.g., Copyright, James Rest, 1979, All Rights Reserved).

I also grant you permission to reprint the Defining Issues Test as an appendix in your dissertation or report for publication. This includes the stories and test items, but not the scoring key or stage designations for specific items. Please make sure that the copy contains the usual copyright information. I understand that copies of your dissertation may be duplicated for distribution.

Please send me a copy of the report of your study. Thanks for your interest in the Defining Issues Test.

Sincerely,



James Rest  
Professor  
Educational Psychology

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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