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Beginning teacher disposition: Examining the moral/ethical domain

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Abstract

As the push for high-quality teachers continues, many colleges of education, teacher induction programs, and professional development supervisors are left wondering about the role dispositions play in effective teaching. This study seeks to explore the definition of dispositions as teacher professional judgment and professional action in the moral/ethical domain of adult cognition. By assessing beginning teacher judgment both quantitatively and qualitatively, convergence between predicted and observed patterns was found in addition to congruence between teacher judgment and action. Based on the findings of convergence and congruence, implications for teacher education and development are made. Published by Elsevier Ltd.

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1. Introduction

William James once said there "is absolutely no guarantee that we shall be good teachers … we must have an additional endowment altogether, a happy tact and ingenuity to tell us what definite things to say and do when the pupil is before us" (Hamachek, 1968, p. 205). Although spoken almost a 100 years ago, James' thoughts resonate through the objectives and standards of teacher training and development programs across the United States. Organizations within the education academy agree that students must have teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to assist all students in learning (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1989; National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators, 2002; Serafini, 2002). However, knowing that teachers need the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to address the needs of all learners and understanding how to develop and assess such characteristics is significantly different. Where we have defined and catalogued the knowledge and skills of quality teachers, "dispositions" remain an elusive concept with little being done to promote its development (Raths, 2001). In fact, scant research even exists regarding the definition and conceptualization of teacher dispositions.

We look to the past as a starting point for understanding teacher disposition. As more attention is being paid to teachers as moral exemplars, one might consider this a revival of Dewey's early work in defining and developing a moral self. Dewey defined disposition as a disregard for personal fulfillment in a search for what is moral

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(Bergman, 2005); in essence, putting aside what might best serve the self for what is best for the "common good" (p. 52). Dewey's work serves as a foundation for the current study in examining the moral domain as a key construct in teacher disposition.

This study investigates disposition in the context of beginning teacher judgment and action. It is conducted within a theoretical framework of adult cognitive development, specifically the moral/ethical domain as defined first by Dewey and in more recent years by James Rest and his associates. It is guided by two research questions:

1. As constructs of disposition, how does the professional judgment of beginning teachers correspond to their professional action as they address the needs of diverse learners?
2. How do these professional judgments and actions influence interactions with diverse learners?

Case study methodology is used to explore the congruence between a beginning teacher's professional judgment and his/her professional action while engaged in a program aimed at developing effective teaching practices. Examining individual cases within the classroom context is a priority considering the importance Dewey placed on the social aspect and the individual nature of developing the moral self. Use of such a theoretical framework and methodology however, also lends itself to certain limitations. External validity is compromised. The results of the study can only be generalized to the participants involved. In actuality, this study does not have a goal of generalizing to all beginning teachers, but seeks to examine the theoretical proposition of disposition being a deep cognitive structure (judgment and action) of the moral ethical domain as outlined in the following section.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Defining dispositions

The lack of a clear understanding of what is meant by "disposition" in the field of teacher education and development can be traced to the lack of a guiding theoretical framework. However, past conceptualizations suggest that an understanding of dispositions must be linked to examining cognitive constructs in the moral and reflective domains including how individuals think about and act upon various experiences (Dewey, 1904; Mentkowski & Associates, 2000; Oser, Dick, & Patry, 1994; Shulman, 1998). Research suggests that within these domains, dispositions will manifest as an action and an underlying judgment (Shulman, 1998). Taking these points into account and acknowledging the unique characteristics of teaching, we propose the following definition: dispositions are attributed characteristics of a teacher that represent a trend of a teacher's judgments and actions in ill-structured contexts (situations in which there is more than one way to solve a dilemma; even experts disagree on which way is best). Further, it is assumed that these dispositions, trends in teacher judgments and actions, develop over time when teachers participate in deliberate professional education programs (Reiman & Johnson, 2003).

2.2. Adult cognitive development

Reiman and Thies-Sprinthall (1998) summarize adult cognitive development as adhering to several specific assumptions. The first assumption is that individuals construct meaning through cognitive structures that are organized from less to more complex stages of growth. A change from one stage to the next represents a major transformation in how a person constructs meaning from his or her experience. Such transformation however, is not automatic but requires person–environment interactions. Finally, behavior can be predicted by stages of reasoning, but the relationship is not one-to-one. Additionally, a "complex stage" model of development is intended. That is, stages do not evolve in a lock-step, one-stage-at-a-time fashion. Rather, persons typically reason at more than one stage. Hence, development is pictured as a series of uneven, overlapping waves, reflecting reasoning at a mixture of stages.

Adult cognition can be examined through three domains: the moral/ethical, the conceptual, and the ego. First, the teacher is representative of democratic values (moral/ethical domain) and must make daily decisions regarding aspects of social justice. This is especially apparent in relation to student discipline. Who develops the classroom rules? Are the rules open to change? Do we deal with specific behaviors in the same manner regardless of the student? Second, the teacher is an epistemologist and instructional manager (conceptual domain).

Is the teacher able and willing to change instructional methods to meet the varying needs of students? Finally, the teacher is a regulator of his or her own system of emotions while being attentive to the needs of others including learners, colleagues, and caregivers (ego domain) (Reiman, 1999). More specifically, the ego domain examines teachers' concept of caring about students (Reiman & Thies-Sprinthall, 1998). Does the teacher just "like children" or does the teacher truly understand the needs of each child and act as a catalyst for development (p. 53)? Although all three domains have an obvious impact on teaching and learning, we focus this article on the moral/ethical domain.

2.3. Moral/ethical domain

When investigating disposition through the moral/ethical domain, we employed a Neo-Kohlbergian framework (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau, & Thoma, 1999). Based in a three-schema conception of moral judgment with obvious ties to Dewey's original theory of the moral self, the framework suggests that moral judgments are made through schema that are developed in conjunction with other principles such as those based in religion or culture. It is through these schemas that questions of social justice and fairness are addressed.

1. First, the *Personal Interest Schema* describes individuals lacking in sociocentric perspective. Decisions are based primarily in the personal stake of the decision-maker, stressing notions such as survival and "getting ahead" (Narvaez & Bock, 2002).
2. The *Maintaining Norms Schema* signifies an increase in an individual's ability to recognize society-wide cooperation. It emphasizes rules that are clear, consistent, and apply to everyone. The social system is imperative (i.e., the hierarchical nature of a school) along with maintaining the established norms.
3. Finally, the *Postconventional Schema* is based on four specific components (Rest et al., 1999). (a) There is a primacy of moral criteria. Social norms are not set, but are alterable and relative. (b) There is an appeal to an ideal in which idealized ways exist for humans to interrelate. (c) Ideals are both shareable and open to justification and scrutiny. (d) There is recognition of full reciprocity of social norms. Norms must be uniformly applied and unbiased.

The research history of the Neo-Kohlbergian theory spans more than 25 years with over 400 publicized studies. Investigating moral judgment across various professions has been a current trend along with studying direct correlations between judgment and action (Bebeau, 2002).

3. Review of literature

Few studies exist that use a theoretical framework of cognition for teacher development. Those that have been done provide positive trends in the use of such theory however, lack specific results regarding congruency between teacher judgment and action. In an extensive review of literature, Blasi (1980) found over half of the 75 studies examined report a correlation between moral/ethical judgment and behavior, although he stressed the need to study such associations contextually. Chang (1994) reviewed research on how the moral judgment of teachers translated into their conceptions of the classroom. She found those at a higher level of moral reasoning held more "humanistic-democratic view of student discipline", were able to consider different viewpoints, showed more tolerance for student disturbances, and stressed student understanding of the purpose of rules (p. 73). One study reviewed by Chang was a case study of eight teachers by Johnston and Lubomudrov (1987). It was discovered that teachers at more principled levels of moral reasoning (as measured by the Defining Issues Test) were more apt to be democratic in their methods of discipline (involved students in rule making and promoted understanding of the reason for the rules). Teachers with less complex levels of moral reasoning viewed rules and procedures as a means of maintaining social order. Based mainly on teacher judgments regarding rules, this research implies a connection between approaches to and actions taken regarding the conceptualization of discipline. MacCullum (1993) discovered similar results. Participants in the higher range of principled reasoning (postconventional schema) approached three out of the four dilemmas presented during interviews from more varied perspectives. They also viewed their role as more facilitative and provided more information and rationale regarding their decision-making processes. Reiman and Peace (2002) conducted a study using eight teachers in an experimental group and five teachers in a control group. The teachers were from the same district and were in leadership roles

for their respective schools. Those in the experimental group were trained in peer-coaching methods using the framework of social role-taking and guided analysis and reflection. Control group participants attended monthly meetings with no professional development framework established. Results indicate a significant ($p = .001$) increase in moral/ethical development as measured by the Defining Issues Test for the experimental group of 9.5% (effect size $= +3.0$), with the control group showing no increase. A connection to professional action is made by showing an increase in the use of listening behavior by the participants in the experimental group with those they were coaching. In addition, the experimental participants showed a shift in concern for the self to concern for the learners. Implications from this study include continued use of the developmental framework across the teacher career span, continued research in the link between professional knowledge, performance, and development, and refinement of measurement instruments that support forms of practice that lead to more ethical and expert teaching and mentoring.

4. Methodology

This study utilized case study methodology to explore the dispositions of three beginning teachers. Yin (2003) describes case study research as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13). It is virtually impossible to study professional judgments and professional actions outside the real-life context of teaching. They are embedded within each other.

4.1. Setting

The definition of dispositions states that dispositions are developed in deliberate professional education programs. The context chosen for this study involved such a program. Termed, developmental clinical assistance, the deliberate professional education adheres to conditions acknowledging the context of the beginning teacher as a learner (e.g., utilizing role taking and guided inquiry to support development).

The conditions were being used as a foundation for an innovative program to establish high-quality mentoring programs and retain beginning and

lateral entry teachers in a rural Southeastern county. Some of the challenges faced by the school system included high teacher attrition (as high as 81% in some schools) and exigent demographic features (for example, high rates of unemployment and adults without high-school diplomas). The program in which the participants were involved had the goal of preparing twelve beginning teachers to engage in building relationships and implementing effective classroom instruction. Twelve mentors were also enrolled in the program in order to prepare themselves to assist the beginning teachers based upon conditions of adult development. The program was voluntary and was designed as a series of college graduate level courses meeting once a week for at least 3 h.

4.2. Participants

Three participants agreed to be a part of the study after their mentors were selected as part of a similar study. Sherry, Caucasian and 26 years old, was in her second year of teaching high-school science and entered the field through lateral entry (without a teaching degree or specific training in education). Joseph was a Latino male, 24 years old. He was a first-year teacher (also lateral entry) of language arts and social studies. Finally, Susan, a 33-year-old Caucasian female had just started her first year as a science teacher after working as a research technician in animal science at a state university. Susan entered teaching through an alternative licensure program similar to the lateral-entry teachers.

4.3. Sources of data

4.3.1. Quantitative
Judgments: The DIT-2 (Defining Issues Test) is a measure of moral/ethical judgment. It is a projective multiple-choice test meaning the participants have to supply meaning to the items being rated. Five vignettes presenting a moral dilemma are given to participants who then rate and prioritize possible courses of action to solve the dilemma. Reliability has been reported in the high 0.70s to low 0.80s (Rest & Narvaez, 1998). Chang (1994) reports teachers average in the mid 40s (on a scale of 0–93) in terms of postconventional moral reasoning. Limitations do exist in terms of assessing deep structures with an objective measure versus a written or verbal task. Further, examination continues into the focus of the DIT on measuring

macro-morality (society-wide structure) versus micro-morality (face-to-face relationships and individual development) although many argue that the two are inseparable (Walker, 2002).

Actions: Quantitative data were also gathered on three lessons taught by each beginning teacher using an adapted form of the Flander's Interaction Analysis System known as the Guided Inquiry Analysis System (GIAS) (Flanders, 1967; Reiman, 1999). The system consists of three categories: direct teacher interaction, indirect teacher interaction, and student talk. Research has shown that teachers using less direct and more indirect styles of instruction were able to increase student learning through accepting student ideas, promoting inquiry, and using prediction strategies (Rosenshine & Meister, 1994).

4.3.2. Qualitative data

Qualitative data were gathered around two cycles of assistance, a demonstration and an observation cycle, conducted by each mentor with his/her beginning teacher. A cycle of assistance was composed of the dyad engaging in three major activities: (1) identifying a teaching behavior focus on which the beginning teacher would like to work (i.e., positive reinforcement, higher-order questioning, etc.); (2) engaging in discussion and mentor demonstration of the behavior which included a pre- and postconference around the demonstration; and (3) conducting pre- and postobservation conferences around the beginning teacher's utilization of the behavior in an instructional lesson. Observations of conferences between the teacher and his or her mentor, observations of lessons by the beginning teacher, analysis of artifacts asking the beginning teachers to self-analyze and reflect, and interviews with the beginning teachers were collected, transcribed, and coded for judgments and actions. The qualitative data were coded according to a list of indicators or ''decision rules'' (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 246) for the moral/ethical domain derived from general trends in the literature (Yin, 2003). These indicators are illustrated in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, the personal interest schema represents a decision maker's primary concern being only with his or her own stake in terms of outcomes (Rest et al., 1999). Across the horizontal axis, these judgments have corresponding actions. Teachers who reason predominantly with the personal interest schema employ instructional strategies regardless of the needs of learners. As persons move down the

vertical column of Table 1, an increase in complexity occurs as represented by the maintaining norms and postconventional categories. For example, at the postconventional level there is recognition of others in terms of cooperation and a realization that social norms are situational and must be subject to debate.

To test the reliability of the matrix, two raters trained in both theories of adult development as well as processes of mentoring, supervision, and effective teaching coded the data independently. Inter-rater reliability was calculated by comparing coding that was the same by the two raters to the total number or results. Reliability was found at a 0.73 level of consistency.

4.4. Data analysis

After the observed patterns in judgment and action collected through observations, interviews, and artifacts were coded for each domain according to the matrix, they were compared to the theoretical predicted patterns obtained from the DIT-2 (judgment) and the GIAS (action). Analysis was conducted using a system known as pattern matching which includes, in the case of this study, comparing observed patterns with theoretical ones and judgment patterns with actions. Using such a method greatly increases the validity of case study research (Campbell, 1975; Trochim, 1989). After analyzing data for convergence between theoretical and observed patterns, congruence between the judgments and the actions of the beginning teacher was analyzed. Finally, the influence of such judgments and actions were investigated in terms of interaction with diverse learners.

5. Results

The moral/ethical domain characterizes how knowledge is constructed around problems of social justice and fairness and is categorized by one of three schemas: postconventional, maintaining norms, or personal interest. Table 2 shows the results for the moral/ethical domain beginning with a report on the distribution of use of the three schemas (DIT-2) followed by an overview of the findings from the coding matrix gathered through interviews, observations of conferences between the teacher and his or her mentor, and artifact analysis (i.e., written self-reflection and analysis). The fourth column of Table 2 reports the findings from the GIAS taken as an average of three instructional

Table 1
Matrix of indicators for the moral/ethical domain

Moral/ethical schema	Judgments	Actions
Personal interest schema	• Defines "on task" behavior as being when learner is actively working on assignment given by instructor • Sees role as an authority in the classroom/relationship • Views rules for the purpose of maintaining order • Has an orientation towards need for learner conformity • Considers only personal stake in reference to action • Sees problems as having only one solution	• Measures "on task" through behavioral observations only • Makes instructional strategies without regard to learner perspective or internal motivation • Takes more of a controller role in the classroom/relationship • Becomes easily bothered by socially defiant behavior • Creates rules without learner input • Takes challenges to rules personally • Shows no sensitivity to learners' emotional needs
Maintaing norms schema	• Views issues from own or from school's viewpoint • Gives some consideration to learner perspective or internal motivation • Considers the purpose of rules and norms is to provide safety and stability especially for those who do not know each other well • Sees laws, rules, and norms as applying to everyone • Views the school in terms of its hierarchical structure (principal–teacher; teacher–student)	• Establishes rules that are categorical, clear, and uniform • Obeys rules and norms (and expects others to do the same) out of respect for the social system • Works to maintain the established order in the classroom and school setting • Uses formulas and other proven methods to solve problems • Is willing to try new varied instructional strategies, although they are not part of repertoire
Postconventional schema	• Realizes curriculum can be viewed from multiple perspectives • Considers the benefits and consequences of instructional choices • Takes into account a variety of learning styles when planning activities • Holds a humanistic-democratic view of learner discipline • Views rules as being designed to protect certain rights • Considers rules as alterable and relative • Is sensitive to student rights • Makes decisions based upon the context of situations • Self-concept is organized around moral principles	• Allows rules and norms to be shared and scrutinized • Uses individualized instruction to adjust curriculum to the needs of the learner • Encourages decision making in learners • Makes extensive use of cooperative learning activities • Takes more of a facilitator than presenter role • Employs more interactive instructional strategies • Shows more tolerance of socially defiant behavior • Encourages learners to take part in rule making • Considers various viewpoints in social-conventional situations • Shows a willingness to help students understand and reason about ill-structured problems • High levels of ethical conduct in classroom and school commitments • Teacher is resolved to care about learners, curriculum, and school

lessons centered on a cycle of assistance with each teacher's mentor. The data are reported in terms of two categories: direct versus indirect interactions and teacher versus student talk. Finally, the last column in Table 2 shows an overview of the matrix in which moral/ethical actions were coded. Data for this column were gathered by observing the three lessons, observing conferences between the teacher and his or her mentor, and examining artifacts such as written lesson plans and self-assessments of teaching.

5.1. Convergence between theoretical and observed patterns

As seen in Table 2, similarities and differences existed between the participants in terms of results reported by the DIT-2. Shown in the second column, all of the teachers used the maintaining norms as their primary judgment schema, with Susan being the most consolidated within this schema at 56%. Sherry followed at 42% and Joseph at 38%. However, it is also important to note the

Table 2
Summary of findings in the moral/ethical domain for beginning teachers

Teacher	Standardized measure (schema distribution)			Findings from application of matrix (judgment)	GIAS assessment from three lessons				Findings from application of matrix (action)
	Postconventional	Maintaining norms	Personal interest		Direct interactions	Indirect interactions	Teacher talk	Student talk	
Sherry	.30	.42	.28	• Uphold rules and norms • Adhere to school structure • Vary teaching style for different learners	.85	.15	.53	.47	• Maintain established order • Used proven methods of instruction • Willing to try varied instructional methods
Joseph	.34	.38	.18	• Need for clear norms and expectations • Noted personal interest in making decisions • Considered rights of learners	.80	.20	.81	.19	• Maintain classroom structure • Stress student adherence to norms • Willing to have ideas questioned
Susan	.36	.56	.08	• Uphold established rules and respect authority • Some norms can be altered • Considered rights of learners	.60	.40	.62	.38	• Used proven methods of instruction • Maintain established order • Facilitative role during instruction

distribution of personal interest and postconventional schema. For Sherry, there was almost an equal use of postconventional at 30% and personal interest at 28%. Susan displayed a significant difference with postconventional reasoning (36%), reported more than four times more than personal interest (8%). Similar results emerged for Joseph who showed some personal interest schema (18%) although only half as often as the postconventional (34%). What would be expected from these results? Considering the similarities in percentage of maintaining norms reasoning, it is likely all three participants would adhere to established rules and policies. Rules should be clear and consistent and apply to everyone. There is a view of a school as a hierarchical structure and an emphasis is placed on respecting authority within such structure. According to Susan's low percentage of personal interest reasoning (8%) it would be expected that she and Joseph (18%) would show a strong consolidation in maintaining the norms of the school as well as show emerging judgments that consider the rights of their students as individual learners.

Convergence existed between these theoretical patterns and the observed patterns illustrated in the second column of Table 2. A significant trend for all three participants was to maintain the structure of their classroom and of the school climate. For example, Sherry spoke about having to hold class in another teacher's room.

> We still have to follow the rules that are pertinent to the classroom…I certainly feel like if we're borrowing her room I should follow her rules, because if she were in my room I would want her to follow mine" (Sherry, Observation Post-Conference, lines 87–88; 136–137, November 2003).

Joseph also focused a great deal on having a class in which expectations were clearly established and procedures were followed. "I believe there needs to be an established set of norms. Normally people expect these norms to be explicit … many times they are not usually resulting in inefficiencies or conflict" (Joseph, Self-Reflection #19, November 2003). Susan wanted to maintain order in her class by having students raise their hands instead of calling out answers. Yet, as indicated in Table 2, wanting to maintain order stemmed from a concern for the rights of learners. "I know three or four students are monopolizing the lesson so equity is still a problem" (Susan, Follow-Up Interview, lines 121–122,

December, 2003). Joseph had similar concerns, "I don't want to put (students) in a position where they're not going to pass, they're not going to succeed. It's frustrating to them as well as for the rest of the class" (Joseph, Demonstration Preconference, lines 49–51, November 2003). He, like Susan, acknowledged learners as individuals however, both participants based the majority of their judgments in terms of maintaining the norms of the classroom and the school.

5.1.1. Congruence between judgments and actions

Columns four and five of Table 2 present findings on moral/ethical actions. First results of the GIAS are presented. These are average percentage rates recorded from three lessons conducted by each beginning teacher. The first lesson occurred prior to a cycle of assistance with his or her mentor, the second occurred during the cycle, and the final lesson occurred after the cycle. Table 3 focuses on the results of the GIAS compared to the distribution of schemas assessed by the DIT-2.

Several important trends are shown by Table 3. In terms of amount of time teachers spent talking versus their students, results show Joseph spending a great deal of time on teacher talk (81%) while Sherry's average was more balanced (53–47% teacher to student talk). This indicates, for Sherry, more opportunities were given for students to participate in the lesson through behaviors such as or asking questions. These patterns are inconsistent considering one would expect Joseph's teacher talk to be less than Sherry's based upon DIT2 results. Table 3 does show apparent trends in terms of the type of teacher talk that was used. When the teachers used more postconventional reasoning and less personal interest judgments, the percentage of direct instruction decreased. Teachers spent less time providing information and giving direction and more time prompting inquiry, accepting and using students' ideas and offering reinforcement. For example, Susan used 36% postconventional reasoning and only 8% personal interest. According to the trends, her indirect interactions should be measurably higher than that of Sherry who was using 28% personal interest schema and only 30% postconventional reasoning. The data supports the trend with Susan engaging in indirect interaction for 40% of the time while Sherry was only able to use 15% indirect interactions with students (i.e., prompting inquiry, clarifying or using student ideas, reinforcing, etc.). Joseph's data is consistent with

Table 3
Comparison of DIT-2 and GIAS for beginning teachers

Teacher	DIT-2			Direct interactions (%)	Indirect interactions (%)	Teacher talk (%)	Student talk (%)
	Postconventional (%)	Maintaining norms (%)	Personal interest (%)				
Sherry	30	42	28	85	15	53	47
Joseph	34	38	18	80	20	81	19
Susan	36	56	8	60	40	62	38

the trend (indirect interactions at 20%) although a higher percentage was expected based upon the DIT2 results.

How does the coding matrix support this data and converge with the participants' judgments? Table 3 indicates Susan's primary schema being maintaining norms. This was consistent with her action in reference to encouraging students to raise their hands and talk one at a time and the use of the same method of instruction for all three lessons. As previously explained however, Susan was also able to employ more indirect strategies of instruction (60%). When interacting with her students, she used behaviors such as prompting further inquiry and using student ideas to facilitate discussion.

Susan:	Let's think about what we know about these missions. What do we know about Apollo 11?
Student:	It was the first on the moon.
Susan:	It was the first one that went to the moon … The first one to take humans to the moon. Okay, Apollo 13 was made into a movie.
Student 2:	It had Tom Hanks.
Susan:	It had Tom Hanks in it. So, what do you know about Apollo 13? Why was it made into a movie?
Student 2:	They almost died.
Susan:	They almost died. Why?
Student 3:	Something blew up … (Susan, Postobservation Lesson, lines 104–128, December 2003).

Susan was able to veer from the structure of her lesson plan to consider the perspective of her learners congruent with an increasing percentage of postconventional reasoning shown in Table 3.

A significant majority of the interactions used by Sherry and Joseph were direct. They worked to maintain the hierarchy of their class (teacher as authority, student as learner) congruent with their judgments. Joseph expected the norms of the class to be upheld and pushed students to answer questions one person at a time. For example, Joseph was asking students questions about a novel he was reading aloud. He asked a question that caused some conversation to begin between students, but Joseph quickly pulled the students back into a structure of him asking the question and one student answering. This shows Joseph's reluctance to fully engage the learners in a class discussion. Sherry stressed the need for her students to listen to the information she was providing them. "If you don't pay attention, you're not going to know which way to hold the moon and you're going to screw everyone up and everyone's going to be mad at you" and "Pay attention or you're not going to have the set-up right" (Sherry, Observation Lesson, lines 136–138, November 2003; Postobservation Lesson, lines 127–128, December, 2003). As the use of the personal interest schema decreased, more openness to student input was noticed. For example during one of Joseph's lessons about using quotations to support a position on the Spanish–American War, the following exchange occurred regarding a paragraph Joseph's had written on the board.

Student:	Why doesn't he care about human life because that means he doesn't care about himself?
Joseph:	Well, that brings up a good point. Maybe I should put, "The government of the United States does not value other human life". Maybe that would be better.
Student:	Yeah.

Joseph: Okay, that's a good point. However, I'm going to leave it like that for now… (Joseph, Observation Lesson, lines 200–209, December 2003).

Joseph allowed his ideas to be questioned however, his value in maintaining the norms and structure in his classroom did not allow for a great deal of discussion or debate among students. As indicated by Table 3, the majority of Joseph's class instruction was spent as direct interactions with students (80%).

Convergence existed across all spectrums of the moral/ethical domain. Theoretical, predicted patterns matched those that were observed and measures of judgments converged with measures of actions. Where the beginning teachers showed similar judgments and actions characteristic of maintaining established norms, variations existed as the percentage of personal interest schema decreased and postconventional reasoning increased. With increased percentages of postconventional reasoning, teachers became more open to the learner perspective and engaged in more indirect interactions such as prompting inquiry and accepting and using student ideas.

6. Discussion

The dispositions of beginning teachers have a significant influence on addressing the needs of diverse learners. This parallels research claiming one of the most important factors for student achievement is teacher quality (Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Such quality can and should include the amount of tolerance a teacher has, an ability to read and flex to a multitude of perspectives, a tendency to make decisions based on a wide array of evidence, and a capacity to be a model of social justice. Such characteristics were identified in past research with similar connections emerging from this study. Johnston and Lubomudrov (1987) described the impact teachers with more complex levels of moral/ethical judgment had on students. These teachers were seen as more democratic in nature while those at less complex levels worked to maintain social order. In the current study, all of the participants scored below the average percentage of postconventional reasoning. As first- or second-year teachers this is common (Reiman & Watson, 1999). There was a certain need for maintaining the structure of the classroom through rules and procedures and upholding the social norms of the

school. Reiman and Watson also found that beginning teachers who worked in a program specifically targeting cognitive development become more analytical and reflective about their teaching. This was also true in these case studies. In the last conferences recorded as well as exit interviews, the participants were able to discuss some of the benefits and consequences of their instructional choices and were apt to make goals for modifying their behavior.

What the past research lacks is addressing the convergence between theoretical and observed patterns and beginning teacher judgments and actions. Evidence gathered through interviews, observations of lessons, and self-assessment and reflection proved especially valuable in answering these questions. First, an overall convergence existed between the theoretical patterns predicted by the standardized measure of judgment and observed patterns gathered through the application of a coding matrix. As Loevinger (1976) noted, rarely do individuals exist in one consolidated level. This makes direct convergence impossible although apparent trends were found in the results of this study. As the beginning teachers moved to more complex levels of judgment, they were able to acknowledge the perspective of their learners, consider varying instructional methods, and self-assess the impact of their instruction. However, as the trends suggest, all participants remained at an average to below average level of complexity as measured by the DIT-2. Judgments assessed by the coding matrix resulted in similar findings. Reasoning by the beginning teachers was centered on maintaining an established structure within their classrooms and reducing ambiguity and uncertainty that often comes from a complex new role such as teaching.

A strong congruence was also found between teacher judgments and actions. In reference to assessing professional actions, the GIAS proved reliable in assessing interactions between the beginning teacher and his or her students. Percentages from the GIAS provided a clear picture of the level of student engagement allowed by the beginning teachers as well as how often the teacher used indirect behaviors such as prompting inquiry, clarifying and using student ideas, or providing reinforcement. Application of the coding matrix provided supporting evidence for the GIAS. For example, in the moral/ethical domain, beginning teachers were predominately using the

maintaining-norms schema for reasoning. Judgments were based in adhering to the rules and structure of the classroom and school. Sherry designed lesson plans that would "please" her principal. Susan worked on strategies to get students to raise their hands instead of talking out. Joseph's goals for students included conforming to his established norms through behaviors such as eye contact and verbal response.

These discoveries have multiple implications for teacher education and development. The use of the coding matrix proved reliable in providing supporting evidence and descriptive characteristics to the standardized measures. Where quantitative assessments have the potential to describe trends in large groups such as cohorts of preservice or beginning teachers, the coding matrix could be used with individuals at various junctures in the teacher education curriculum. For example, teacher educators could use the matrix as a powerful descriptive tool for assessing the dispositions of preservice teachers before, during, and after student teaching. Mentor coordinators could use the tool when considering the best mentor match for beginning teachers. Although further development and study is necessary, the matrix has the potential to be a worthwhile means of doing descriptive assessment. The DIT-2 provided a valid means of quantitatively assessing the moral/ethical domain while the GIAS was successful in accurately measuring verbal interactions and paralleled the qualitative data on professional action. Again, the GIAS could effectively be used to assess beginning teacher actions throughout the induction phase of their career, providing valuable evidence in how often students are allowed to engage, as well as the percentage of time a teacher spends prompting inquiry or accepting student ideas versus providing their own information. Although trends were apparent, further studies with larger, more diverse samples of beginning teachers are necessary to determine if correlations between the standard measure of judgment and the GIAS are statistically significant. This study was conducted using three lateral entry beginning teachers working with middle or secondary students. Broadening the exploration to include teachers in other fields as well as those trained by traditional teacher education programs is necessary.

John Dewey (1964) once stated, "to depend wholly, or even chiefly, upon the knowledge and use of 'methods', is an error fatal to the best interests of education" (p. 198). He saw one of the primary challenges for teachers being the development of dispositions toward reflection, inquiry, ethical judgments, and orientation towards the multifaceted processes of students (Dewey, 1904). Although not necessarily explicit, ties to Dewey's early work in describing the moral self are critical in understanding, developing, and assessing teacher disposition. As he postulates, moral disposition is shown through development away from personal gain towards the common good. Rest and his associates explain this shift as a move from personal interest to postconventional reasoning. Connections between these theories and professional educators were evident in this study. As the participants began shifting away from judgments and actions made for self-fulfillment and survival to those made for the sake of classroom equity, students were more engaged, active learners.

When dispositions gained renewed attention in teacher education, initial reactions were characterized by confusion and angst. A plethora of conceptualizations poured through the academy lacking a theoretical foundation on which development and assessment could be built. This study, as an exploration into teacher disposition as professional judgment and action in the moral/ethical domain, set out to answer some of the challenges facing the use of disposition. Evidence was gathered using established quantitative measures and a newly designed qualitative matrix. Considering we only used three dyads, we do not expect to generalize any of our findings to the greater population; however we have established a more extensive body of research in possible ways of measuring disposition. Connecting Dewey's work on understanding the moral self to the Neo-Kohlbergian theory provides a theoretically sound conceptualization of disposition, one that is both clear and measurable—something that has been a missing link in teacher development until now.

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