University of Nevada, Reno

The Relationship Between Teachers' Attitudes Toward Aspects of No Child Left Behind and Moral Reasoning as Measured by the Defining Issues Test

A dissertation submitted for partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Counseling and Educational Psychology

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May, 2009

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

We recommend that the dissertation
prepared under our supervision by

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entitled

The Relationship Between Teachers' Attitudes Toward Aspects Of No Child Left Behind And Moral Reasoning As Measured By The Defining Issues Test

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward aspects of No Child Left Behind and their moral reasoning as measured by the Defining Issues Test (DIT). Specifically, this study examined teachers' beliefs about the quality of instruction in our public schools since the passing of NCLB, teacher's beliefs about how NCLB has changed teacher attitudes toward their jobs and their professions, their beliefs about the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement, and their beliefs about the overall effects of NCLB on public education.

Results of the study indicated no relationship between teachers' attitudes toward NCLB and DIT *P*-scores. In spite of the fact that here were some interesting findings related to *Stage 2/3* scores and *Stage 4* scores and teachers' attitudes toward NCLB mandates, it is not likely that the results of this study show real implications. Lack of findings was due to several limitations including small sample size, multiple analyses performed on DIT statistics, and low reliability of the NCLB Attitude Survey.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has prompted discussion from all quarters of society. Nowhere is the impact of NCLB felt more personally than among teachers. Researchers find teachers holding a variety of attitudes toward this legislation, with most teachers in agreement concerning the ends of NCLB, but many disagreeing with the means. The differences in these viewpoints may be a reflection of a combination of such factors as educational level, religious background, or political affiliation. However, one explanation might have to do with teachers' ability to reason about issues related to social inequity and justice, a function of moral reasoning ability (Lampe, 1994). This study examines differences in teachers' attitudes and their relationship with moral reasoning.

Overview

Since 1965, the federal government's role in education is one of increasing involvement. In that year, President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA), establishing Title I funds for the purpose of improving education as part of the war on poverty. The use of Title I funds to foster educational gains among America's poor provided funding for teachers' aides and remedial services during the school day for students from underprivileged backgrounds (Simon, 2005). These efforts failed to produce the expected gains. A later effort to close the achievement gap, 1983's *"A Nation at Risk,"* brought about new reform efforts which, similar to the ESEA, produced little change. Two legislative movements in the late 1980's, the 1988 ESEA reauthorization, and 1989's *"America 2000,"* both attempted to remedy the situation by increasing federal oversight of public education. The role of the federal

government in education expanded again with the passing of the *Improving America's Schools Act* (IASA) of 1994. Finally, the ESEA was reauthorized in 2001 and christened the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB; Simon, 2005).

NCLB increases federal requirements of states, school districts and schools and represents unprecedented expansion of the federal government's role in education. As of 2001, all states must test 95% of their students in math and reading-language arts in grades 3-8, and once again in high school. Continued Title I funding is guaranteed only to states that produce progressively improved test scores for all students. Additionally, separate, disaggregated reporting of scores is required for children with disabilities, children with limited English proficiency, minorities, and children of low socioeconomic status. According to the law, by the 2013-2014 school year every classroom in America must have a *highly qualified teacher* at its helm and 100% of its students must score proficient or better on standardized test scores of their reading-language arts, math and science skills (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Progress toward this goal is measured using a formula known as AYP, or Adequate Yearly Progress. All students must demonstrate yearly gains in scores until the goal of 100% proficiency is reached by the 2013-14 school year. Schools not making AYP, or producing progressively higher disaggregated test scores, are reported as “needs improvement.” Schools failing to make AYP must make up the missed gains while producing the additional gains required to meet AYP goals for the next school year. Each year sanctions are more stringent, and by the fifth year a school failing to make AYP will be subject to restructuring. This means that the school could be turned over to university,

a private contractor, or reopened as a charter school, with a high probability of considerable staff turnover (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Issues Related to NCLB

NCLB mandates present our society with a number of issues to which we must respond if we are to keep public education intact and useful. These issues are related to standards and standardized testing; inequities related to student disabilities, SES and minority factors, and students with limited English proficiency (LEP); adequate yearly progress (AYP); curricular decisions and most importantly, teacher attitudes.

Standards and Standardized Testing

Standards are clear guidelines for schools, parents and communities concerning what students should learn by grade in academic subjects. States are free to develop their own standards and the achievement levels that go along with those standards. Achievement levels at the basic, proficient and advanced levels must be clearly delineated by each state individually according to NCLB mandates. In order to measure achievement, states must use annual statewide assessments that are aligned with state standards. Ninety-five percent of all public school students in grades 3-8 must participate in these statewide assessments in reading-language arts, math and science, and once sometime between grades 10 and 12. Assessments are to be used by states to gauge whether students in public schools are meeting specified achievement levels. Also, annual statewide assessments are used to measure school, district and state progress toward Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals, which states must set for themselves (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Studies find teachers comfortable with state-designed standards. They prefer standards that emphasize higher-level thinking skills and that are appropriate for the children they teach. According to NCLB, annual statewide assessments are supposed to be in line with state standards, but many teachers report that this is not the case in their state (Hamilton, et al., 2007).

Although they are generally comfortable with state-designed standards, the majority of teachers doubt the effectiveness of standardized testing in providing a complete, fair picture of student learning. There are several reasons for this. First, standardized testing has become a high-stakes game in which, in some states, scores determine whether a student passes to the next grade. Second, teachers find great difficulty in getting students with disabilities, students with limited English proficiency and students from underprivileged backgrounds to earn the necessary scores required at grade level in order for their school to make adequate yearly progress goals. Finally, teachers dislike the emphasis on high-stakes testing because of its inequitable impact on students with disabilities, low SES and minority students and students with limited English proficiency.

Student Inequities

Ultimately, critics say, NCLB mandates penalize schools and districts in which social justice and equality are already distant dreams for the majority of students (Meier, Kohn, Darling-Hammon, Sizer & Wood, 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2005). Though mandates of NCLB acknowledge these problems, they still ask teachers to accept the proposition that while social inequity exists in society, it should not exist within the schools. The assumption is that when such inequality does exist within the schools, it is

almost exclusively due to poor teaching. Therefore, in order to improve the lives of the disenfranchised in America, as NCLB logic goes, teachers must push underprivileged and minority students to score as well on standardized tests as do their whiter, wealthier counterparts (Ryan, 2004). Consequently, teachers are asked to abandon their values and beliefs about what education ought to be and accept the dubious proposition that there are no social problems in this country that better education can't improve (Meier et al., 2004). The reality is that social problems in America tend to fall disproportionately on students with disabilities, minorities and underprivileged children, and students with limited English proficiency.

Students with disabilities. Mandates of NCLB penalize schools with large numbers of students with disabilities. Many of these students are characterized by learning specialists as having disabilities based on the criteria that they are not performing at grade level, or, that there is a discrepancy between their ability and their achievement. Even though they are identified as having disabilities because they do not perform at grade level, NCLB mandates still require them to be tested and to perform at grade level as a disaggregated group (Meier, et al., 2004). Furthermore, disabilities are correlated with poverty (which is linked to poor prenatal and childhood health care, poor nutrition, lead poisoning, maternal substance abuse, and many other conditions that predict learning problems), so that NCLB mandates punish schools and districts in impoverished areas that already are dealing with more than their share of social injustices that result in higher numbers than average of students identified as disabled.

Minority and low SES issues. Another issue of concern is NCLB's potential for turning schools carrying the “needs improvement” label into dumping grounds for poor

students and poorer teachers (Ryan, 2004). Schools with higher numbers of low SES and minority students are more likely to earn the "needs improvement" label and face eventual restructuring. These schools often have fewer resources, less parental support and higher crime rates than do schools deemed "high quality" (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

The proponents of NCLB seem to believe that schools can create opportunities for students who come from areas where opportunity is scarce in spite of the fact that these areas tend to have scarcely adequate schools in the first place. In fact, in many states, the spending ratio between high- and low-spending schools is typically at least three-to-one per student (Ryan, 2004), with the wealthiest U.S. public schools spending as much as ten times more than the poorest schools (Meier, et al., 2004). The reality is that schools serving large numbers of low income and minority students have larger class sizes; fewer teachers and counselors; and fewer and lower-quality academic courses, extracurricular activities, books, materials, supplies and computers, libraries and special services (Meier, et al., 2004). Missing from the demand that these schools produce in students 100% proficiency in spite of inadequate facilities is any mention of the impact on learning of the many detrimental influences on the lives of the children who attend these schools. Thus, critics of NCLB raise the concern that social issues such as poverty are swept aside while schools are asked to make up for the existing inequities (Meier, et al., 2004; Ryan, 2004, Yell & Drasgow, 2005). In fact, many researchers feel we are compounding the problem of lesser quality education for lower SES and minority students through AYP sanctions. The irony of the NCLB is that it could very well widen the achievement gap it set out to destroy (Ryan, 2004).

Students with limited English proficiency. One of the groups for whom NCLB mandates disaggregate scores in the hope of bringing about grade-level proficiency is students with limited English proficiency (LEP). Students with LEP can attend U.S. schools for three years and take annual statewide achievement tests in their native language or with other accommodations or modifications. Their scores count toward AYP goals for their grade level as a disaggregated group. However, after three consecutive years in U.S. public schools, students are expected to have achieved the level of English proficiency necessary for them to take annual statewide assessments for their grade level in English without accommodations or modifications. Their scores then count toward AYP goals, but they are no longer included in the LEP disaggregated score group (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Many teachers question the fairness of testing LEP students at grade level and counting their scores toward adequate yearly progress goals. This is due to the fact that LEP students come from a wide variety of backgrounds that don't necessarily prepare them for grade level assessment. Additionally, a student who has attended U.S. schools for three years while learning English isn't necessarily going to be at grade level at the time of annual statewide testing. Following is a discussion of specific issues related to AYP, or adequate yearly progress.

Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)

AYP seeks to ensure that *all* public school students reach the state-designated achievement level of proficiency in reading-language arts, math and by disaggregated group by the 2013-2014 school year. In order to do this, states set yearly goals for student achievement levels that are higher each year with the ultimate goal of 100% proficiency

in reading-language arts, math and science for 2013-2014. Schools not reaching AYP goals are labeled "needs improvement" and face a variety of sanctions, from offering parents the choice to transfer their children to a higher performing school to eventual restructuring or takeover of the school by the state. As a result of these sanctions, studies (Sunderman, Tracey, Kim & Orfield, 2004) find that teachers prefer not to teach at schools carrying the "needs improvement" label. The result of AYP sanctions is that good teachers are leaving schools deemed "needs improvement," thereby making the hope of reaching AYP goals even further out of reach for these schools (Ryan, 2004).

Research finds nearly 50% of teachers questioning the fairness of AYP goals (Hamilton, et al., 2007). Students with disabilities are categorized by education specialists as having disabilities because they do not perform at grade level, yet NCLB mandates require they perform at grade level on annual statewide assessments in order for a school to reach AYP goals. Students with limited English proficiency often face challenges due to language and background experiences that may not have prepared them to attain NCLB standards and assessments, yet they, too, must meet AYP goals at their grade level. Students from all major ethnic and racial groups, as well as students from low SES backgrounds, are required to meet AYP goals at their grade level even though they face a number of challenges relating to poverty and lack of opportunity for academic learning experiences outside school.

Many schools may meet most of the designated AYP goals but fail to meet *all* AYP goals because of the performance of one or two of these groups. Thus, due to the stringent nature of AYP goals, many schools that are deemed acceptable or even outstanding by state standards fail to meet AYP goals. In fact, some researchers predict

that nearly all U.S. schools will fail to meet AYP goals at one time or another, with the large majority failing to meet the final goal of 100% proficiency by the end of the 2013-2014 school year (Ryan, 2004).

In fact, studies find fewer than one quarter of teachers agreeing that sanctioning schools that have not made AYP goals will lead to overall academic improvement (Abrams, Pedulla & Madaus, 2003; Hamilton, et al., 2007; Sunderman, et al., 2004; Taylor, Shepard, Kinner & Rosenthal, 2007). For example, according to Ryan (2004), NCLB is hoping for a miracle, yet it simultaneously decreases the odds that this miracle will happen. The reason is that NCLB mandates label and sanction schools that fail to make AYP because they have high percentages of students with disabilities, students with LEP, or minority students and students from low SES backgrounds, all of whom have more difficulty taking standardized tests. Teachers know these schools are the most difficult to work in, and that schools that carry the "needs improvement" label are also schools that have the hardest time finding and keeping good teachers. Without good teachers, these schools have difficulty making the necessary improvements not only to make up for missed goals in previous years but also to reach progressively higher goals yearly. As a result of the need of schools to reach and maintain progressively higher test scores, teachers are asked to devote the majority of their time implementing curriculum designed to raise test scores.

Curricular Decisions

Curricular decisions are increasingly determined by the need to improve test scores rather than by the professional education and experience of the teacher. For example, research suggests that up to 40% of teachers feel that a major effect of NCLB is

pressure to implement a curriculum that has a negative effect on their morale and performance (Ryan, 2004; Sunderman, et al., 2004). Furthermore, in a study conducted by Sunderman and his colleagues (Sunderman, et al., 2004), 75% of teachers reported that pressure to improve scores has caused them to de-emphasize or neglect untested subjects such as art, history and music, and over 50% reported that NCLB sanctions will cause teachers to ignore these same subjects. Better teachers always have gravitated toward better schools, but the NCLB increases incentive to do so (Ryan, 2004). Finally, *The Harvard Civil Rights Survey* entitled *Listening to Teachers: Classroom Realities and No Child Left Behind* (Sunderman, et al., 2004) found that over 50% of teachers surveyed think that implementation of NCLB sanctions will encourage teachers to transfer out of schools identified for improvement while about 20% think it will not.

As a result of fear of NCLB mandated sanctions, curriculum is often implemented based on its probability of improving test scores. However, teachers realize that increasing test preparation time takes away from time spent in meaningful learning (Taylor, et al., 2007). In fact, one of the reasons teachers would rather avoid schools deemed "needs improvement" is because of the limited opportunity to do anything but prepare kids to do well on the standardized tests that they must pass in order for the school to lose the "needs improvement" label. In every paper concerning teacher attitudes toward NCLB mandates reviewed for this study, there was some mention of teacher unhappiness concerning the loss of time in which to engage in meaningful, creative learning experiences. According to one teacher, "As a professional, I feel a war begin to wage within myself." The war is between doing what is required, that is, preparing students for the tests, and doing what teachers view as their responsibility as

professionals, which is engaging students in deep meaningful learning experiences as opposed to rote, scripted, content-covering test preparation (Johnston-Parsons, 2007).

Teacher attitudes

Finally, and most importantly, NCLB mandates have had an impact on teacher attitudes concerning how and what students should learn, the ways in which that learning should be measured, and how academic improvement in underperforming schools can be accomplished. For example, research shows that the majority of teachers support the ends of NCLB while questioning the means. These teachers believe students should learn content specified in state-designed and implemented grade-level standards, but they question whether annual statewide assessments are the right tools to measure this learning. Furthermore, researchers find most teachers believe students should learn to the fullest extent of their ability, but they question whether all students have the ability to be considered proficient at grade level according to a standardized test, particularly students with disabilities, students from underprivileged backgrounds, and students with limited English proficiency. In addition, research finds that teachers believe they work hard and feel comfortable with accountability, but they wonder about the fairness of being held accountable for student learning when so much of what determines student learning is out of their control. Finally, studies find that the majority believe students attending schools deemed "needs improvement" need a better chance at a good education, but they question whether sanctions, such as school choice, tutoring provided by outside sources, and eventual restructuring, are effective ways to improve student learning and bring about school improvement (Abrams, et al., 2003; Mathison & Freeman, 2003; Ryan, 2004; Sunderman, et al., 2005).

Differences in teacher attitudes related to NCLB. A number of studies have found that teachers' attitudes differ on some mandates of NCLB (Abrams, et al., 2003; Mathison & Freeman, 2003; Ryan, 2004; Sunderman, et al., 2005). Some teachers believe that there have been positive changes in curriculum since NCLB was passed in 2001 due to the increased importance placed on reading-language arts and math. Others disagree and say the emphasis on reading-language arts and math has caused them to ignore or underemphasize subjects they consider important, such as art, history, geography, music and science. A few feel that standardized testing is an adequate measure of student learning, while many feel that standardized test scores reflect the degree to which a teacher, school and district have prepared students for the test instead of spending that time engaging their students in meaningful learning experiences. Some believe that schools and teachers just haven't worked hard enough in the past and that increased accountability, in the form of annual statewide assessments and sanctions for underperforming schools, will force teachers to finally do their jobs and teach their students properly. Others believe that teachers have always worked hard and they point to societal factors such as poverty, poor nutrition and health care, and scarce resources for schools in underprivileged neighborhoods to explain the vast disparity in educational opportunity in America.

Finally, teachers experience daily conflict between what administrators, states, and districts ask of them in order to bring about the necessary test scores required for AYP, and what they feel is their responsibility toward the young learners they teach. The majority of teachers resent scripted curriculum requiring "the factory" model of teaching in which all teachers work from the same curriculum guides teaching the same

curriculum in every class during the same week. This model, they say, does not allow them to make the necessary modifications needed for individual learners. This type of teaching is most prevalent in schools carrying the "needs improvement" label so that teachers working with populations with the highest needs have the least control over how they work with and help these students according to their own experience and expertise (Johnston-Parsons, 2007).

In conclusion, with regard to NCLB, some teachers support its ends but question the means, while others question both the means and the ends and agree that poor education is the reason for social inequities in the United States (Sunderman, et al., 2004). There may be a number of possible explanations for differences in teacher attitudes. However, one explanation might have to do with teachers' ability to reason about issues related to social justice, a function of moral reasoning ability (Lampe, 1994).

Teachers' Moral Reasoning

Effective teachers need to possess more than a set of skills or the ability to transmit knowledge. They also, on a daily basis, make moral judgments and carry out decisions based on those judgments that will impact students (Lampe, 1994). To make effective moral decisions, teachers have an ability to take the perspective of those with whom they are involved in the school setting, including co-workers and, most importantly, their students. The ability to take the perspective of others at increasingly complex levels has to do with moral reasoning ability as described by Lawrence Kohlberg (1981).

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Reasoning

Lawrence Kohlerg's theory of moral reasoning assumes a relationship between cognitive development and moral reasoning. According to Kohlberg, moral development proceeds through three levels (preconventional, conventional and postconventional) and six stages. At the post-conventional level, moral decisions are based on the cognitive ability to take the perspective of all members of society and to consider whether or not the laws and standards of society uphold or violate principles of justice. At this level, moral decisions are based on one's individual conscience. Kohlberg has called the post-conventional level, the *principled* level of moral reasoning.

Kohlberg's instrument, the *Moral Judgment Interview* (MJI), a standardized, individualized test, was the first and most widely used measure of moral reasoning (Cummings, Maddux & Harlow, 2007). Although a great deal of research has been conducted with the MJI, proper administration of the test requires a great deal of time both in training and administration. Consequently, a more recent test, the Defining Issues Test (DIT) (Rest, 1979) has become a more popular measure of moral reasoning. The DIT, a multiple-choice test, is based on moral stage typology initially defined by Kohlberg. As with the MJI, DIT items are based on hypothetical moral dilemmas, which Rest developed directly from Kohlbergian, in-depth interviews. The most frequently used index of the DIT is the *P*-score, a measure of post-conventional, or *principled,* moral reasoning. The assumption is that people define the most important issue of a dilemma in different ways, and that the selection of items on the DIT indicates a person's level of principled moral reasoning. While not precisely accurate, the *P*-score may be thought of as the percentage of principled (post-conventional) items chosen by the individual to

define the central issues of a moral dilemma (see Rest, 1993, for scoring details). Thus, a *P*-score of 35 indicates that only 35% of the person's principled reasoning is at the post-conventional level.

Several researchers have investigated levels of moral reasoning in pre-service and in-service teachers. Their findings are summarized in the following section.

Research on Teachers' Moral Reasoning

According to the research, the moral reasoning of pre-service teachers is significantly lower than that of college students majoring in other fields (Cummings, Dyas, Maddux & Kochman, 2001; Lampe, 1994). Concerning in-service teachers, Diessner (1991) reviewed 30 studies and found *P*-scores for teachers averaging in the 40s, meaning these teachers reason at the principled level only 40% of the time. Thus, on average, a greater percentage of teachers' moral reasoning is at levels lower than the post-conventional level. Other studies have found similar results (Macallum, 1993; McNeel, 1994).

According to the literature concerning differences between low and high-scoring teachers, those demonstrating lower *P*-scores view their role as authoritarian in nature and consider themselves the primary decision-makers concerning how and what students should learn. They dictate rules and expect students to follow them. Expectations for learning and behavior tend to be similar for all of their students, so that low-scoring teachers often fail to take into consideration the individual needs and perspectives of their students. In contrast, teachers demonstrating higher levels of moral reasoning see their roles as facilitative and view rules as existing to ensure students' rights. They also encourage a continuing dialogue with students concerning such issues as discipline and

individualized instruction. They are more likely to focus on the variety of individual perspectives in a given situation, and they make an effort to help their students see the perspectives of others. Finally, these teachers promote and honor individual differences, and they demonstrate autonomy of values, action and belief (Cartwright & Simpson, 2001; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Johnston, 1989; Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987; Lampe, 1994; MacCallum, 1993; McNeel, 1994; O'Keefe & Johnston, 1989).

In conclusion, existing research on teachers' moral reasoning finds differences in the perspectives of lower and higher scoring teachers, with higher scoring teachers taking individual perspectives into account and working to balance the rights of all students. In view of the apparent differences in teachers' levels of moral reasoning, it is possible that these differences may explain differences in teachers' attitudes toward mandates of NCLB.

Relationship Between Teachers' Moral Reasoning and Mandates of NCLB

To date there have been no studies examining the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward NCLB and their levels of moral reasoning. However, research relating to teachers' moral reasoning in general suggests the existence of differences in perspective-taking ability between lower and higher scoring teachers, with higher scoring teachers most likely to take individual perspectives into account in moral decision making and thus most likely to be concerned with the rights and concerns of all students. Moreover, teachers who score higher on measures of moral reasoning (such as the DIT) may be more likely to resist and have negative attitudes toward NCLB mandates. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning and their attitudes toward the mandates of NCLB.

Significance of the Study

NCLB mandates have prompted discussion from all quarters of our society. A *Reading Today* survey of April, 2005 finds 64% of teachers reporting their state standards in reading-language arts and math as about right, while parents were nearly twice as likely as teachers to say the same thing. Furthermore, over half of teachers in the poll said they did not believe U.S. schools could meet the 2013-2014 deadline of 100% proficiency in reading-language arts and math while 80% of parents were confident that their local school could achieve this.

To effect change in this legislation, evidence must be provided that NCLB mandates are potentially harmful to the children it was designed to help (Ryan, 2004). Research into the attitudes of teachers finds many different opinions related to NCLB, but to date, no research looks at the moral reasoning of the teachers who hold these various opinions. Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning indicates that individuals at the conventional level of moral reasoning, where the majority of adults reside, tend toward conformity and conventional reasoning (Rest, 1986). If this is the case, it follows that those approving of the NCLB may be doing so because they are told it is good by those with authority, not because they believe it is good for their students. It is also possible that teachers who are critical of the legislation might also be at higher levels of moral reasoning since they may be more likely than those at lower levels of moral reasoning to understand social justice issues. Individuals of higher levels of moral reasoning also are able to reason autonomously and to make ethical judgments based on their own reasoning rather than follow unjust laws. According to Witherell and Erickson (2001), for example, teachers who are advanced in measures of moral reasoning are likely to demonstrate

greater commitment to the individual in the areas of philosophy of education, or beliefs about what the ends of education should be. If the NCLB is curtailing the autonomy of teachers who exhibit higher levels of moral reasoning and thus making their professional lives more challenging, we could lose them in a time when students and society need them more than ever.

Research Questions

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward aspects of the NCLB and their moral reasoning as measured by the Defining Issues Test. In order to investigate these relationships, the following research questions will be addressed:

RQ#1. What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the quality of instruction since the passing of NCLB?

RQ#2. What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about how NCLB has changed teachers' attitudes toward their job and their profession?

RQ#3. What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement?

RQ#4. What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the overall effects of NCLB on public education?

Limitations and Assumptions

The proposed study has several limitations that include some threats to external validity. External validity is the extent to which the results of a given study can be used to explain behaviors beyond the sample of the study (Sprinthall, 2000). First, it was conducted at the University of Nevada, Reno, in graduate education courses. The attitudes of teachers in these courses are not reflective of those of teachers in the general population. Additionally, most of the participants work in Reno, Nevada and in the rural areas surrounding it. Thus, their attitudes are not representative of teachers in large urban areas or of other geographical regions. These factors limit the generalizability of the study.

Additionally, there were several statistical limitations. The first of these was the small sample size due to a lower than expected rate of return. This study had an *N* of only 40 participants although researchers (Gravetter & Willnau, 2007; Sprinthall, 2000) recommend sample sizes of at least 100 for use with correlation statistics. Further, the NCLB Attitude Survey provides ordinal data and a large percentage of tied ranks. Due to these limitations, the Kendall's τ statistic is most appropriate statistic (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007) for determining nonparametric statistical relationships. A final limitation is that nonparametric statistics have been shown to have less power in finding statistical relationships than do their parametric counterparts (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007; Sprinthall, 2000).

Another limitation of this study related to small sample size concerned multiple analyses performed on the DIT statistics. When using multiple analyses, some authors (Sprinthall, 2000) indicate concern that multiple comparisons can lead to an increased

chance of a false relationship among data. However, due to the small sample size and the probability of increasing the chance of a Type II error, the Bonferroni correction was not applied to this analysis. Thus, the use of multiple comparisons with DIT data in this study should be considered a limitation in the findings.

Another limitation of this study concerned ambiguous or poorly worded questions on the NCLB Attitude Survey. For example, each Research Question was made up of four individual questions. For Research Question #1, individual question #1 produced results contradicting results for the other three questions in the category. As a result of this ambiguity, data from individual question #1 was not interpreted. Further, individual question #16 was dropped from the final statistical analysis due to ambiguity. Finally, it is possible that there are other undetected ambiguities in the NCLB Attitude Survey. As a result of these limitations, results must be interpreted cautiously.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Overview

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between teachers' attitudes towards aspects of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and their moral reasoning. To assess this relationship, in-service elementary and secondary teachers enrolled in graduate courses in the College of Education at the University of Nevada will be asked to complete the NCLB Attitude Survey and the Defining Issues Test (DIT), a measure of moral reasoning.

This chapter first examines mandates of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* and Title I funding based on these mandates. A discussion also is included of the literature concerning teacher attitudes toward the following: (a) standards and standardized testing, (b) NCLB mandates as they relate to students with disabilities, minority students and students from low SES backgrounds, students with limited English proficiency (LEP), (c) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and (d) curricular decisions as influenced by NCLB mandates. Although there are no studies to date investigating the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward NCLB mandates and moral reasoning, this chapter includes research related to teachers' levels of moral reasoning, followed by a discussion of Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning, specifically as it relates to teachers' views of their roles, their relationships with students, their understanding of educational concepts, and their performance.

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001

And now it's up to you, the local citizens
Of America, to stand up and demand higher
Standards, and to demand that no child - not
One single child in America - is left behind.
-President George W. Bush
January 8, 2002

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) is a comprehensive and complex education law that dramatically increases federal oversight into the workings of state education agencies, local school districts and public schools. NCLB requires states to (a) ensure there is a *highly qualified teacher* in every classroom, (b) develop tests to assess students so that data-driven decisions become an integral part of the educational system, and (c) hold schools accountable for the performance of all students (Sunderman, et al., 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

NCLB rests on two assumptions. First, mandates for external accountability and the imposition of sanctions on noncompliant schools will force schools to improve and motivate teachers to change their instructional practice, resulting in better student performance. Second, market mechanisms in the form of sanctions will lead to school improvement. The first of these sanctions is the school choice option, in which students attending low-performing schools are offered the option to transfer to another, higher performing school. The second sanction involves students attending schools needing improvement, who are eligible for supplemental educational services paid for by the school district. The providers of supplemental educational services can be private, non-profit or public organizations, but they cannot be employees of the school itself (Ryan, 2004; Sunderman, et al., 2004).

Market mechanisms, such as competition, are logically applied to schools if we accept the proposition that schools are similar to businesses. In this scenario, schools educate children through the application of such resources as teachers, books, facilities, etc, which are paid for by taxes. The product of schools is educated students, and annual statewide testing is used to measure a school's success in educating students. According to NCLB logic, student learning is a product that was not adequately produced prior to NCLB. Therefore, competition as applied by NCLB will make teachers and students work harder in order to fulfill their responsibility in turning out a satisfactory product. In fact, according to Secretary Margaret Spellings, in a speech at the *Summit on the 21st Century Workforce*, " Every publicly traded company in this country reports results to its investors every quarter. Is it asking too much for our schools to report annually on their results?"

The assumption that school failure is a result of teachers and students not working hard enough lies at the heart of the concept of meritocracy, in which all individuals have an equal chance for success based on their individual efforts. Meritocracy is an appealing idea in educational policy because it keeps politicians from having to address issues related to poverty, discriminatory differences in funding between urban and suburban schools, lack of felt responsibility for the health and well-being of all children and the impact of testing on poor and immigrant children. The combination of meritocracy and market mechanisms in federal policy toward schools suggests that schools are no different from businesses and that students are the products of educational business systems. Thus, if educational systems and the students themselves work harder and better

(input), they will produce higher-achieving student-products (output) (Johnston-Parsons, 2007).

The truth of the matter is that many students are not high-achieving because of social inequities. They are students with disabilities, minorities, students from underprivileged backgrounds, and children with limited English proficiency. The idea that the academic difficulties of these children is the fault of their teachers, as well as the children themselves, is a relatively new one since in the years prior to NCLB, the federal government made attempts to aid underprivileged children through ESEA Title I funding (Ryan, 2004).

Title I was the first and largest section of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). This act was part of Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty, which was designed to improve the lives of underprivileged Americans who faced daily struggles with substandard housing, nutrition, health care and school facilities. The ESEA appropriated federal money for states to improve educational opportunities for children facing educational inequities, such as coming from underprivileged backgrounds. Under ESEA Title I funding, a school had to meet certain criteria, such as having a percentage of students who were eligible for free or reduced lunch or who came from families receiving public assistance. The federal funds allotted to these schools supplemented existing services already paid for by local funds. These services consisted chiefly of hiring of teachers' aids and creating remedial classes for disadvantaged students. (Ryan, 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

In 1994, Title I was reauthorized as part of the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA) in which all states were required to design and adopt standards as the centerpiece

of standards-based reform. Under the IASA, Title I funds were no longer used just to provide support for disadvantaged students. Instead, states used Title I funds to create rigorous standards and assessments to gauge their effectiveness. Standards were uniform for all schools within a state. Schools that experienced difficulty in meeting state designed standards as measured by formal assessment were sanctioned and plans were formulated to assist those schools. Standards-based reform promised that students in underprivileged areas would meet the same standards as those in privileged suburban schools by providing underprivileged schools with benchmarks for achievement in the form of standards, as well as with academic assistance for their students. However, the IASA failed to provide the desired gains among underprivileged students (Ryan, 2004).

The 2001 reauthorization of the ESEA was christened the No Child Left Behind Act. NCLB followed the same basic approach as IASA, but it established more ambitious goals and placed greater requirements upon states. (Ryan, 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2005). Under NCLB mandates, schools that receive Title I funding are subject to stricter accountability measures than they were under IASA. Moreover, NCLB establishes progressively more serious sanctions for Title I schools not performing at progressively higher academic levels on annual statewide assessments. The irony of the use of these funds as leverage against schools is that Title I funds were originally established to provide assistance to schools serving underprivileged children.

Issues Related to NCLB Mandates

The following sections examine the mandates of NCLB as they relate to (a) standards and standardized testing and teacher attitudes toward them, (b) student inequities related to students with disabilities, minorities and low SES students, and

students with limited English proficiency, (c) Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP, and teacher attitudes toward them, and, (d) curricular decisions and teacher attitudes toward their jobs and their profession since the passing of NCLB.

Standards and Standardized Testing and Teacher Attitudes Toward Them

Standards serve as clear sets of guidelines to schools, parents and communities concerning what students should achieve by grade in important academic subjects. According to NCLB mandates, these standards must (a) describe what students will be able to know and do, (b) include coherent and rigorous content standards, and (c) encourage the teaching of advanced skills. (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Most teachers report being comfortable with state-designed standards. Many say that standards are useful in bringing about focus and consistency of instruction within and across schools in a district and state (Hamilton, et. al., 2007). In another example, the majority of teachers in the *Harvard Civil Rights Project* survey entitled *Listening to Teachers: Classroom Realities and No Child Left Behind* (Sunderman, et al., 2004) report that standards in their state are challenging, attainable and measurable, and that their school has high standards for student achievement. Finally, teachers in the *Survey of Teachers' Perspectives of High-Stakes Testing in Colorado: What Gets Taught, What Gets Lost* (Taylor, et al., 2007) agree that standards have improved quality of instruction in their classrooms by adding important content to their curriculum.

Critics of standards raise a variety of objections, including the fear that increased enforcement of standards may decrease teacher professionalism by giving teachers less opportunity to make choices concerning curriculum. Additionally, there is concern that statewide standards will negatively affect students in underprivileged schools by creating

benchmarks that students and teachers in underprivileged areas will not have the resources to meet (Taylor, et al., 2007).

According to NCLB mandates, standards must be aligned with state-developed achievement levels. These achievement levels are defined as (a) the high or advanced level, (b) the proficient level, and (c) the basic level. In order to determine students' knowledge and skills at each level, annual statewide assessments must be given in every state in grades 3-8 and once again in high school. One-hundred percent of students must meet the proficient level in state-defined standards in reading-language arts, math and science by the end of the 2013-2014 school year (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

As with standards, teachers are generally comfortable with state-designed achievement levels insofar as they are used for teachers, schools and districts to make informed choices in such areas as resource allocation and the designing and implementation of curriculum. It is when achievement levels are used to sanction states, districts, and schools through annual statewide assessments that teachers draw objection, especially when teachers question the validity of the assessment (Hamilton, et al., 2007; Taylor, et al., 2007).

Teachers' attitudes toward the validity of their annual statewide assessments vary from state to state. In one study, Sunderman, et al. (2007) found between 70% and 80% of teachers reporting that curriculum *is* aligned with established academic measures such as standardized assessment. In contrast, Hamilton, et al. (2007) found fewer than 50% of the teachers in three states agreeing that their states' reading-language arts, math, and science assessments were a good measure of students' mastery of those subjects. Many of these teachers reported that the state assessments were too difficult for the majority of

students. Furthermore, teachers in this study felt that their states' assessments were misaligned with their state standards and curriculum. Additionally, a study by Jones and Egley (2007) of teachers in Florida finds them reporting a misalignment between state-designed standards and annual statewide assessments.

In addition to annual state-designed assessments, NCLB mandates require the reading and math sections of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) to be administered in all states every other year to a random sample of fourth and eighth graders. The NAEP, often referred to as the nation's report card, is an extensive testing program that has been used for over 30 years (Ryan, 2004). NAEP results are used to compare assessments and achievement from state to state.

Results of studies related to NAEP assessment find teachers uncomfortable with the concept of being graded according to student performance on standardized tests (Johnston-Parsons, 2007). This is due to the fact that they question the validity of NAEP results because the NAEP is not aligned with any state standards. Instead, it attempts to measure content and skills assumed to be common to all state educational systems. However, due to the wide disparity among state standards, many teachers feel it is unfair to use a national assessment to compare student learning in one state with that in other states (Ryan, 2004), especially when those results are reported as state, district and school 'report cards.'

Finally, NCLB mandates concerning annual statewide assessments require states to test 95% of their students on all statewide and national assessments, including 95 % of students in subgroups that include children who often face greater challenges in academic performance due to various academic inequities. (LEP; Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Student Inequities

NCLB mandates add particular challenges to students who live with educational inequities, such as students with disabilities, minority and low SES students, and students with limited English proficiency (LEP). The first challenge these students face is that their grades, along with their test scores on standardized assessments, tend to be lower than average for their grade level. Although this tendency is well known among educators, NCLB mandates deem that the performance of these subgroups determines whether or not a school earns the "needs improvement" label. Thus, schools receiving Title I assistance, which have high enrollments of these subgroups, are most vulnerable to NCLB sanctions (thereby giving high-performing schools a reason to keep these students out). Second, due to the greater challenges they face in learning and testing, these students have greater need for good teachers as well as clean, well-lit working environments and quality materials. Unfortunately, these students are the least likely to get what they need because they often do not attend schools in suburbs in which parent groups, through fund-raising efforts, make certain their students have the best teachers, support staff, materials and environments. Consequently, students who face the greatest challenges tend to be the least likely to have access to what they need in order to reach the level of academic success that students in middle-class or wealthy suburbs take for granted. The groups of students who face these inequities include students with disabilities, minority students and students from low SES backgrounds, and students with limited English proficiency (LEP).

Students with disabilities. NCLB requires states to test 95% of all students, including students with disabilities, in reading-language arts, math, and science in grades

3-8, and once more between grades 10 and 12. NCLB requires districts to provide access to appropriate accommodations and modifications in order to get a true picture of student achievement on statewide assessments. Examples of accommodations may include (a) taking the test individually or with a small group, (b) taking frequent breaks during testing, (c) taking a Braille edition of the test, or (d) marking directly on a response booklet instead of bubbling in answers on a test sheet. Students with disabilities are held to standards for the grade in which they are enrolled, although they are eligible for accommodations or modifications under certain circumstances (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

To receive accommodations or modifications, students must be eligible for special education services under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. A student's *Individualized Education Program* (IEP) team determines appropriate accommodations or modifications for testing, and these must be written into the IEP. Additionally, students can qualify for alternate assessment if the IEP team deems it appropriate. Further, students' scores on an alternate assessment can be included in state and district calculations as long as these students include no more than 1% of a state's population (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Teachers of students with disabilities have a number of concerns regarding the use of standardized assessments with their students. First, since students with disabilities are expected to perform at grade level on standardized testing, their teachers are concerned that their failure to do well on annual statewide assessments may have a negative impact on their self-esteem. Second, some teachers are concerned about the stress placed on students with disabilities to complete the state assessments. One study found 87% of teachers of children with disabilities reporting that annual statewide assessments were

"overwhelming for students with learning difficulties." Additionally, few teachers of students with disabilities believe that statewide assessments reflect student performance. Instead, teachers of these students prefer differentiation of instruction and assessment outcomes. These teachers assert that many students with disabilities are more successful with unique sets of requirements fitted to their particular disability as opposed to a "one-size-fits-all" approach (Crawford & Tindal, 2006). In Harriman (2005), one special educator put it like this:

> Asking all students to be able to perform at the same standards is like asking for gourmet food at McDonalds. We aren't made of the same ingredients and life experiences. The classroom environment can facilitate learning, but we can't spin gold out of straw (p. 68).

Minority and low SES students. Ninety-five percent of students from all major ethnic, racial, or economic groups must be tested at their grade level on annual statewide assessments. Researchers and teachers alike are concerned this particular mandate will promote greater segregation by class and race. This is because schools failing to produce the required test scores and thus classified as "needs improvement" are often in urban, underprivileged neighborhoods. The students in these schools are sometimes faced with a variety of issues such as lack of supervision after school, poor health care and nutrition, neighborhood violence and drug abuse, substandard housing, and other issues. Further, these schools are often poorly maintained, have few support staff, have poor or lagging technology, and have substandard working conditions. Those teachers who do choose to work in schools deemed "needs improvement" are often asked to spend most of their time in rote test preparation of the sort teachers like the least (Jones & Egley, 2007). Thus, the

schools with the greatest need are also the schools that have the most difficult time finding and keeping good teachers. Without good teachers, students in underprivileged schools face great challenges not only in making up for one year of substandard test scores, but also in meeting requirements for continually improving those scores over the coming years. As a result of these factors, many researchers feel that the rate of improvement required by NCLB mandates will make it increasingly difficult for schools serving large percentages of minority students and students from low SES backgrounds to achieve the required progressively higher test scores each year. They are concerned that students and teachers who can leave these continually "failing" schools will depart for greener pastures, leaving these schools to struggling students and disinterested or ineffective teachers (Harriman, 2005; Johnston-Parsons, 2007; Ryan, 2004; Sunderman, et al., 2004).

Additionally, researchers (Ryan, 2004) fear that NCLB mandates place schools in the position of rejecting, when they can, students who may have difficulty earning the needed scores on annual statewide assessments. The pressure to earn progressively higher scores could tempt schools to ignore the needs of at-risk students as opposed to actively working to keep them involved. This temptation will probably be strongest in high schools, both because students most typically drop out at his stage and because low-performing high school students are most likely to be farthest behind. Given the connection between performance on tests, SES, and race, the students most likely to be allowed to drop out of school will be poor and/or minority students (Ryan, 2004).

Students with limited English proficiency. Teachers are also concerned about NCLB mandates as they relate to students with limited English proficiency. According to

NCLB mandates, students with LEP must be included in statewide and national assessments. However, NCLB mandates state that tests for students with LEP may include reasonable accommodations and must be in a language and form most likely to provide accurate data about a student's knowledge and skills in all subjects except English. Examples of accommodations for students with LEP may include (a) native-language assessments, (b) extra time, (c) small-group administration, (d) audio-taped instructions in the native language, or (d) the use of dictionaries. Students with LEP may take annual assessments in their native language until they have achieved English proficiency or until they have attended schools in the U.S. for three consecutive years. Ninety-five percent of students with LEP must be tested yearly, and these students are held to the same progressively higher scores on annual statewide assessments for the grade in which they are enrolled as are all other students in that grade (Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Teachers of students with LEP have mixed feelings toward NCLB mandates. They appreciate the increased attention of NCLB mandates have brought to the academic achievement of their students, especially when they lead to increased collaboration with regular classroom teachers. However, there is a great deal of concern that testing pressures have caused teachers of students with LEP to narrow their curriculum. In fact, there is evidence that in schools where elementary students can be tested in Spanish, teachers have a tendency to teach tested subjects exclusively in Spanish and ignore other subjects altogether, including the teaching of English. This is a concern despite the fact that only ten states offer testing in native languages, and then it is most often only in Spanish and not for all subjects. Further, in states that do not offer native language

assessments, teachers tend to teach subject matter in English as it applies to the test, again leaving out untested subject matter. Finally, teachers are concerned that when students with LEP do well on standardized tests it is because they have reached fluency in English. Thus, good test scores means they will be pushed out of the LEP subgroup and into the mainstream group. Consequently, these teachers find themselves in the difficult position of constantly working to improve test scores, while the improvement of test scores means they will lose the students who do well on tests to mainstream education. Finally, due to pressures to increase test scores for students with LEP, teachers find their jobs increasingly stressful (Zehr, 2006). Teachers who work with large populations of these students, particularly those working in underprivileged schools, tend to leave their positions looking for improved working conditions and the better chances of success available at suburban schools (Meier, et al*.,* 2004).

Adequate Yearly Progress

Adequate yearly progress (AYP) goals are the linchpin of NCLB. Test scores are tabulated for schools in the aggregate and must be disaggregated by disability, racial and ethnic groups, SES, and LEP status. All of these groups' scores are compared, and then used to determine whether a school is making adequate yearly progress. For example, if a state has determined that AYP for that year is 65%, then 65% of a school's students, including students in each disaggregated subgroup, must reach the level of 65% proficiency in order for the school to make AYP. If any one group, such as students with disabilities, fails to meet the goal of 65% proficient, then the school fails to make AYP, no matter how much gain was made by students overall. A year or so after a school is required to meet the goal of 65% proficiency, the scores required to make AYP jump to,

for example, 80% proficiency, whether the school reached the 65% proficiency level or not. This is so that all schools will reach the goal of 100% proficiency by the end of the 2013-2014 school year as required by NCLB mandates (Ryan, 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Schools that fail to meet AYP or to produce the required test scores for all students, including students in all subgroups, are labeled "needs improvement." After two consecutive years of earning the "needs improvement" label, schools face two sanctions. First, they must develop a plan of improvement. Second, students in those schools are allowed to choose another public school, including a charter school, within the same district, with the district providing transportation. After three consecutive years, students remaining at the school must be provided with tutoring services from an outside provider, public or private. Those schools that fail to make AYP for four consecutive years must take one of several measures, including instituting new curriculum or replacing school staff (those deemed responsible for the failure). Those that fail to make AYP for five consecutive years surrender control of their school to the federal government, which can reopen the school as a charter school, turn over management to a private company, give the school to the state to manage, or take over the school itself (Ryan, 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2005).

Teachers have a number of concerns with AYP goals as the mechanism for sanctioning schools. First, many schools lack the necessary resources to make AYP goals. In fact, Sunderman, et al., (2007) found fewer than 20% of teachers agreeing that their schools had the needed resources to make AYP. While teachers feel that the pressure to meet AYP goals is forcing school staff to focus more on improving student

achievement, they are generally unhappy with the notion that improvement in one or several groups, or improvement of all groups over last years' scores, does not necessarily mean a school will make AYP. For example, some states, such as California, have their own systems of measuring school achievement. Their system rewards schools for gains over the previous year as opposed to requiring schools to meet arbitrary, and rising, benchmarks. As a result, teachers are dismayed to find that schools that do not make AYP are achieving well under the California system (Hamilton, et al*.,* 2007). Finally, teachers support the notion that all students ought to be learning in school. However, they do not feel that the stringent nature of AYP goals and sanctions are a fair and equitable means of creating real achievement among all students. In fact, many teachers say that pressure to make AYP goals has had a negative effect or no effect on student learning (Jones & Egley, 2007). Finally, teachers and administrators alike express frustration at the unfairness of requiring all schools in a state to meet the same AYP goals, regardless of the populations they teach. In Hamilton, et al., (2007) one principal put it this way:

> The thing with AYP that is so frustrating is that everybody has to hit an arbitrary mark no matter what you are dealing with. Schools that have high special ed populations, high ESL (English as a second language) populations, are looked at the same as schools that have one ESL kid and one special ed kid, and that's not right. It's totally ridiculous if you look at it. We're dealing with situations much more difficult (p. 53).

Finally, teachers are concerned about the impact of AYP goals on graduation rates. NCLB mandates require that graduation rates be included as part of a school's attainment of yearly success toward 100% proficiency by 2013-2014. Because graduation

rates can only count against a school, an underperforming school does not have the same incentive to keep low-scoring students in school as it would have if it could point to high graduation rates to offset its failure to make AYP in test scores. Therefore, schools have less incentive to make sure that low-scoring students do not drop out of high school (Abrams, et al., 2003; Ryan, 2004).

Finally, the majority of teachers oppose the use of AYP goals and sanctions as the mechanism for bringing about school improvement. *Reading Today* (2005) found nine out of ten (93.4%) teachers disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the idea that having the state or the federal government take over a low-performing school would improve achievement. Further, fewer than 20% felt that identifying schools that had not made AYP would lead to school improvement, while 30% of those surveyed were unsure whether identifying schools that have not make AYP would lead to school improvement (Hamilton, et al*.,* 2007).

Curricular Decisions and Teacher Attitudes

Hamilton, et al. (2007) in a study concerning teacher attitudes toward NCLB mandates, finds teachers expressing concern and frustration at the narrowing of curriculum content that occurs with increased focus on test scores. For example, three-quarters of teachers agree that AYP requirements have caused some teachers to de-emphasize and neglect untested topics. Over half agree that NCLB sanctions have caused teachers to ignore important aspects of the curriculum. In another study (Sunderman, et al., 2007), 70% agreed that they teach tested subjects more than they did prior to NCLB and half say they have decreased the teaching of untested subjects. Further, teachers in Georgia, Pennsylvania and California report facing pressure from superintendents and

principals to spend more time on tested subjects and to shift time away from untested subjects (Hamilton, et al., 2007).

The pressure to raise test scores is particularly intense in Title I urban schools with high concentrations of students who face educational inequities and who are more likely to earn lower than average test scores. As a result, many states and districts are providing sequentially designed curriculum guides for these schools. These guides prescribe precisely what teachers, and even students, should say and do. Some programs go so far as to provide time allotments, timers, scripts, tests and pacing guides (Johnston-Parsons, 2007). Not surprisingly, teachers resent the use of this type of scripted teaching program because they are indicative of an extremely narrow and unimaginative definition of teaching and learning. However, it is this narrow definition of teaching and learning that NCLB mandates suggest is the most appropriate for teachers to follow.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2006) point out that NCLB language transmits a linear, remarkably narrow, technical model of teaching in which scientifically based research (SBR) determines curricular choices that are in stark contrast to what educators have determined constitutes real learning. NCLB mandates imply that teachers must have two types of knowledge in order to teach well – subject matter and the techniques of teaching that rigorous SBR has shown to be effective. These SBR methods, NCLB mandates assume, will guarantee learning for all students, if only teachers will use them. Further, the assumption is that good teachers make good curricular decisions based on "what works" and they are prudent consumers of resources for curricular decision-making such as those that can be found in commercial products created by experts and certified by SBR. NCLB mandates, according to the authors, regard knowledge as an object to be

transmitted from outside experts to teachers, who then transmit the knowledge-object to students. Testing at the end of this process checks to make sure there are no foul-ups in the knowledge transmission process. As Secretary Spellings pointed out, "What gets measured, gets done. Amen."

Teachers are particularly frustrated with the transmission model of knowledge inherent in NCLB because they have been taught teaching methods that are matched to the needs of the child as opposed to the demands of testing. For example, teacher education programs require educators to study developmental theory and to teach accordingly. However, annual statewide testing doesn't take children's differing developmental rates into account. One teacher put it like this:

> Many concepts that we are now expected to teach (like decimals) are very difficult for children because they are not developmentally appropriate. I just taught my class a whole unit on decimals and they could pass the final test, but they didn't really understand that a decimal is less than one. They shouldn't have to - they are only 8-9 years old! They are not developed enough in their abstract thinking to truly understand some math concepts that are tested. I can teach them to jump through hoops to pass the test, but true understanding is not happening, and it's really de-motivating to me as a teacher (Jones & Egley, 2007, p. 240).

This teacher, like many others, is in a peculiar position inherent in NCLB mandated testing. That is, in order for her students to do well on annual statewide assessments, she must ignore what she knows to be good teaching. Another teacher put it this way: "We aren't getting smarter students, we're getting smarter test-takers. The schools that score

well are focusing on teaching to the test at a very high cost to their students" (Jones & Egley, 2007, p. 241).

Researchers (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2006) note a troubling image of teachers and teaching in NCLB mandates that sees them as both the problem and solution to what is wrong with schools. Teachers know that some students are much harder to teach than others, and factors outside of school can greatly encumber learning. Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2006) point out that making teaching with SBR methods "the answer" to the problem of education distracts attention from underprivileged schools and other systemic factors, such as poverty and racism. The logic of NCLB, that all students can learn if only teachers will use SBR methods to transmit knowledge accordingly, blames teachers for student failure and ignores developmental issues and social inequities. It is not surprising that this de-contextualization is frustrating for teachers in the field who know the complexities of working with diverse groups of students. Consequently, NCLB mandates that ignore the real challenges of teaching and limit teachers to a linear technological transmission of knowledge are contributing to teacher stress.

Studies (Abrams, et al., 2003; Sunderman, et al., 2004) find such factors as annual high-stakes assessments; AYP goals and the accompanying possibilities of sanctions; and increased pressure from states, districts, and school administrations to ignore sound teaching practices in favor of test preparation are increasing teacher stress levels. As a result of this increased stress, these researchers note several trends among teachers. First, teachers report a decrease in morale. For example, one study (Hamilton, et al., 2007) finds three-quarters of teachers and administrators agreeing that morale among school personnel has changed for the worse since 2001. Second, teachers tend to look for

opportunities to transfer out of schools needing improvement. For example, over 50% of teachers report NCLB sanctions will encourage teachers to transfer out of schools identified for improvement. Third, and most alarmingly, NCLB mandated testing and the accompanying stress for teachers is resulting in increased teacher attrition. In fact, one study (Hoffman, Assaf & Paris, 2001) finds 85% of Texas teachers agreeing with the statement that "some of the best teachers are leaving the field because of the pressures of testing." Finally, high-stakes testing negatively impacts teacher and student morale and motivation, ultimately contributing to increased departures from the teaching profession and/or increased high school drop out rates. In fact, much of what NCLB mandates require from teachers tax them through increased stress levels as a result of pressure from above. Further, teachers experience a moral dilemma when they are asked to abandon their beliefs about what good teaching is in order to teach in ways that might raise test scores. Due to NCLB mandates, such moral conflicts have become a regular part of the professional landscape for many teachers. The following section addresses the relationship between teacher attitudes toward NCLB mandates and moral development.

NCLB Mandates and Moral Development

The previous section has examined NCLB mandates, their effects on students, and teacher attitudes toward them. The studies reviewed find some teachers supporting the ends of NCLB mandates, believing that schools can and ought to do a better job reaching students facing social inequities, but question the means, wondering whether sanctions and an increased focus on testing will do anything to mitigate the difficulties some students face. Consequently, these teachers fear NCLB mandates' focus on education as the primary cause, as well as the answer, to poor academic performance. Their concern is

that this focus separates policy-makers from their responsibility to address issues of social inequity. Conversely, some teachers support both the means and the ends of NCLB mandates and agree that lack of hard work on the part of teachers and students is the reason for poor academic performance. As a result, they believe that increased pressure through market mechanisms, such as AYP goals and sanctions, will force teachers and students to work harder and thus produce improved academic performance. This attitude reflects a belief in the concept of meritocracy, in which all individuals have an equal chance of success based upon hard work, regardless of environment.

The differences in these viewpoints may be a reflection of a combination of such factors as educational level, religious background, or political affiliation. However, one explanation might have to do with teachers' ability to reason about issues related to social inequity and justice, a function of moral reasoning ability (Lampe, 1994).

Moral Reasoning in Teachers

Researchers have examined moral reasoning in teachers since the 1970's. This research has focused on such factors as moral reasoning and its relationship with moral behavior; moral reasoning and teacher understanding of such factors as discipline, individualized instruction and on-task behavior; and moral reasoning and the effectiveness of pre-service and in-service teachers. The major instrument used in research regarding moral reasoning in teachers is the Defining Issues Test (DIT; Rest, 1979), a measure of moral reasoning based on Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Reasoning

Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning assumes a relationship between cognitive development and moral reasoning. According to Kohlberg, moral development

proceeds through three levels (preconventional, conventional, and postconventional) and six stages. At the post-conventional level, moral decisions are based on the cognitive ability to take the perspective of all members of society and to consider whether or not the laws and standards of society uphold or violate principles of justice. At this level, moral decisions are based on one's individual conscience. Kohlberg has called the post-conventional level, the *principled* level of moral reasoning. Kohlberg's levels and stages are described below.

Level I. Preconventional Morality. At the preconventional level, the individual approaches a moral issue from the perspective of the *concrete interests* of the individuals involved. The individual is concerned with the concrete consequences an individual would face in resolving the dilemma. At this level, there is no concern about the "right" way to behave in a given situation in terms of its effect on a group or the greater society. Preconventional morality consists of two stages.

At *Stage 1,* an obedience and punishment orientation, resolutions to moral dilemmas are based on whether or not there is a chance of being punished. At this stage, the individual is egocentric and can only take the viewpoint of one other person at a time. Thus, the person acts in a moral way in order to avoid punishment by an authority.

At *Stage 2*, resolutions to dilemmas are based on trade-offs and deals, but only if the person sees something in it for himself. Need satisfaction is uppermost, but a beginning awareness of reciprocity has begun.

Level II. Conventional Morality. At this level, the individual approaches moral problems from a "member-of-society" perspective. Now, the individual realizes and takes into consideration an understanding of how a group or society expects him to act in

accordance with the moral norms of a group of known others or of the society at large. The person acts not just to avoid punishment or to gain reward, but to live up to, in a positive way, the accepted standards of the group or to his or her societal role. In other words, the person wants to be valued in the eyes of the group (stage three) or to be a good member of society (stage four). Here, the concern is to be a good "role occupant" (husband, mother, worker, citizen, etc.), and to protect society's as well as one's own interests.

Stage 3, a good-boy/good-girl morality, is the first stage of the conventional level. This stage is represented within a new level because there is a shift in perspective from the egocentric perspective of the individual only to a more abstract perspective of a group of significant others. Now, the response represents the individual's concern for what a group of known others would think of him or her. The desire is to maintain good relations and for one to be thought of by a group of significant others as a "good person."

Stage 4 is characterized by concern for authority, laws and social order. Now the individual takes the even more abstract perspective of the society at large, is concerned about law and social order, and wants to be a good member of society. The person wants to adhere to the standards (law) of the social system. To do otherwise is to jeopardize the cohesiveness of society.

Level III. Postconventional Morality. At this level, the individual approaches a moral problem from a "prior-to-society" perspective. This is the level of principled reasoning characterized by equality, mutual respect and protections of basic human rights. Postconventional reasoning depends upon the complex cognitive ability to take a multiplicity of perspectives as well as the ability to engage in abstract formal reasoning.

Reasoning at *Stage 5* focuses on the importance of the social contract and individual rights. Individuals reasoning at this stage consider the rights and values that a society ought to uphold. Laws are regarded as social contracts that we agree to uphold to the benefit of all until they are changed by democratic means. There is a belief that individual rights should be protected and that there ought to be democratic procedures for changing unfair laws and for creating a more just society.

Finally, *Stage 6* reasoning upholds universal ethical principles. At this stage, the individual believes that the principles of justice require U.S. to treat the claims of all parties in an impartial manner, respecting the basic dignity of all people as individuals. These principles of justice are seen as universal; they apply to all. Moral right is defined by a decision of conscience in accord with principles of equality, mutual respect and protections of basic human rights. The perspective is that of any rational individual recognizing the nature of morality or the basic moral premise of respect for other persons as means, not ends.

Criticism of Kohlberg's Theory. Kohlberg's theory has been criticized for its perceived bias against females (Gilligan, 1982) and its claims of universal and invariant stages (Liebert, 1984). However, a number of studies have found that gender is a trivial variable in accounting for variance on measures of moral reasoning, including both the Moral Judgement Interview and the Defining Issues Test (Rest, 1979). Also, over 50 Kohlbergian studies have been conducted in diverse cultures and many have found evidence of the universality of Kohlberg's six-stage theory (Rest, Thoma & Edwards, 1997). Although other theories of moral development have been proposed (Gilligan, 1982), most of these are based on variations of Kohlberg's work. In sum, Kohlberg's

work continues to strongly influence thinking about morality and moral development and has been described as "the linchpin for studying morality from the inside, and it is the major work on moral judgment" (Rest, et al., 1997, p. 6).

The Defining Issues Test (DIT). The most widely used measure of moral reasoning is the DIT (Rest, 1979). The DIT, a multiple-choice test, is based on moral stage typology initially defined by Kohlberg. DIT items are based on hypothetical moral dilemmas, which Rest developed directly from Kohlbergian, in-depth interviews. The assumption is that people define the most important issue of a dilemma in different ways, and that the selection of items on the DIT indicates a person's level of principled moral reasoning. The most frequently used index provided by the DIT is the *P*-score, a measure of post-conventional, or *principled,* moral reasoning. While not precisely accurate, the *P*-score may be thought of as the percentage of principled (post-conventional) items chosen by the individual to define the central issues of a moral dilemma (see Rest, 1993, for scoring details). Thus, a *P*-score of 35 indicates that 35% of the items chosen to define an issue are reflective of principled, or post-conventional, moral reasoning. Further, Rest (1979) has made objective comparisons with individual and group DIT measures. For example, the DIT manual (Rest, 1986) lists the following group *P*-score averages:

65.2 Moral philosophy and political science doctoral students

59.8 Seminarians in a liberal Protestant seminary

52.2 Advanced law students

49.5 Practicing medical physicians

42.5 Average college students

40.0 Average of adults in general

31.8 Average senior high school students

21.9 Average junior high school students

P-scores will be applied in the present study.

As stated above, since moral reasoning is concerned with justice issues, it may be a factor in teachers' attitudes toward the impact of NCLB mandates on childrens' learning. That is, teachers with higher levels of moral reasoning ability may be more likely to have negative attitudes toward NCLB mandates.

Teachers' Moral Reasoning

Several researchers have investigated levels of moral reasoning in pre-service and in-service teachers.

Pre-service teachers. According to some empirical studies, the level of moral reasoning of pre-service teachers compares unfavorably with those of college students in other fields (Chang, 1994). In fact, Cartwright and Simpson (2001) find pre-service teachers mean *P*-scores seven points lower than those of their counterparts in other fields. Further, not only do pre-service teachers score well below other college students, their scores as seniors are more similar to those of college freshman than they are to those of other seniors (McNeel, 1994). In fact, Lampe (1994) finds pre-service teachers displaying a predominately conventional level of thinking, with stages three and four accounting for over 50% of their reasoning. Finally, freshman education students with high moral reasoning scores are more likely than students in other majors to show significant *decreases* in moral reasoning at the end of their program (Cummings, et al., 2001; Lampe, 1994).

In-service Teachers. In-service teachers moral reasoning scores are similar to those of pre-service teachers. A study of the moral reasoning of a group of Australian high school teachers found mean *P*-scores of 39.5. These are lower than expected and closer to the published mean for adults in general as opposed to members of other graduate groups (MacCallum, 1993). Further, Diessner (1991), reviewing 30 studies, found *P*-scores demonstrating that teachers reason at the principled level only 40% of the time. Concerning college professors of education, McNeel (1994) found their principled reasoning scores higher than typical for college seniors. However, the lowest third in this study demonstrated moral reasoning scores scarcely above those of incoming freshman (McNeel, 1994).

The following sections examine the literature concerning teachers' moral reasoning and its relationship to teacher behavior, such as teachers' view of their roles, teachers' relationships with students, teachers' understanding of educational concepts, and teacher performance (Chang, 1994).

Moral Reasoning and Teachers' Views of their Role

Lower-scoring teachers. Johnston (1989) found a relationship between in-service teachers' DIT scores and their understandings of their roles as teachers. Data from the beginning and the end of a two-year graduate program shows that changes in understandings from pre- to post-service interviews are consistent in direction and related to pre- and post-test scores in moral reasoning, with lower scoring teachers viewing their role as authoritarian and higher-scoring teachers more likely to view their roles as facilitative. Johnston and Lubomudrov (1987) interviewed subjects with both high and low *P*-scores concerning classroom rules and roles, management of disobedience,

conflicts of interest, and teacher and student rights and responsibilities. Low scoring teachers see their roles as authoritarian in a discipline situation and as one of maintaining control, or "policing." Further, lower scoring teachers tend to be quite confident that they make the best decisions in most discipline instances. Finally, these lower scoring teachers view themselves as the primary decision makers concerning how and what students should learn (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987; MacCallum, 1993).

Higher-scoring teachers. These teachers tend to see their role as more facilitative than directive, and suggest that rules exist in order to insure students' rights. They encourage a continuing dialogue with students concerning their individual needs and interests. They speak of ways to set up rules that promote student understanding and responsibility. Further, they see their role as interactive and facilitative, finding ways to balance their own needs with those of their students. Finally, they are less confident than lower scoring teachers that their choices are the best ones due to the fact that they are aware of the difficulty of the task of balancing the rights of all concerned (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Johnston, 1989; Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987; MacCallum, 1993)

Moral Reasoning and Relationships with Students

Lower-scoring teachers. In a study investigating the relationship between teachers' moral reasoning and their relationships with their students, Johnston & Lubomudrov (1987) found low-scoring teachers expecting their students to comply with the rules without question. Further, these teachers retain the right to interpret, change and/or implement rules to fit particular situations. Lower scoring teachers tend to feel comfortable dictating the rules and expecting their students to follow them instead of

working with students to determine classroom rules. Further, these teachers often cite students' positive regard for them as the leverage they use to gain compliance. In another study, MacCallum (1993) interviewed teachers concerning four hypothetical school discipline incidents and coordinated their responses with DIT scores. These findings suggest that lower scoring teachers consider the maintenance of their authority as the central aspect of their relationship with students. For example, these teachers consider use of nicknames for teachers as a threat to their authority. Further, these same teachers see discipline situations primarily from their own perspective or from that of one or two of the students involved.

Higher-scoring teachers. In general, teachers demonstrating higher levels of moral reasoning respond to student incidents by considering the viewpoints of all involved. They value student participation in rule making and enforcement. Further, they tend to focus on the reasons underlying rules, to demonstrate an awareness of students' psychological needs, and to help their students see situations from the perspectives of others. Finally, these higher scoring teachers tend to view the use of nicknames within the context for which the nicknames are formed instead of as an automatic threat to authority (Cartwright & Simpson, 2001; Johnston, 1989).

Moral Reasoning and Understanding Education Concepts

Lower-scoring teachers. Studies have found a relationship between moral reasoning and teachers' understanding of curriculum and management issues (Lubomudrov, 1982; Wheaton, in O'Keefe & Johnston, 1989). For example, Johnston (1989) found a relationship between teachers' understanding of being "on-task" and moral reasoning, with lower scoring teachers holding narrower views of on-task behavior

while higher-scoring teachers recognize a wider variety of behaviors as indicative of students being "on-task" (Johnston, 1989). Further, an investigation of moral reasoning and teachers' understanding of individualized instruction finds teachers with lower DIT scores holding expectations for groups as opposed to individuals. These teachers see individualized instruction as a means for getting a student caught up with the group. Finally, lower scoring teachers tend to design curriculum used for individual instruction without consulting the student concerning what or how he or she might like to learn.

Higher-scoring teachers. Teachers demonstrating higher levels of moral reasoning tend to promote individual differences and to adapt curriculum to students' interests or needs. Higher scoring teachers speak of the tyranny of conformity that "one-size-fits-all" curriculum places on the individual and view the individualizing of instruction as a means of supporting the rights of students. These teachers are more likely to consult with students concerning how and what the student will learn during individualized instruction (Johnston, 1989).

Moral Reasoning and Teacher Performance

Pre-service teachers. Thoma and Rest (1987) found no relationship between *P*-scores and performance ratings for pre-service teachers. Instead, they found another DIT measure, the *U*-score or utilizer variable, playing a positive role in evaluation of teaching behavior. Further, Cartwright and Simpson (2001) investigated the relationship between moral reasoning and student teachers' effectiveness. The researchers report no relationship between *P*-scores and pre-service teacher effectiveness as measured by the *Texas Teacher Appraisal System*. However, there was a relationship between DIT *U*-scores and pre-service teacher effectiveness. In both studies, pre-service teachers

demonstrating higher *U*-scores have a tendency to receive higher performance ratings. Teacher performance is also tied with the concept of 'flexing' or responsiveness. Teachers who readily adapt instructional time to student needs more often demonstrate higher levels of moral reasoning (O'Keefe & Johnston, 1989).

Summary Statement

According to the literature reviewed in this study, many teachers hold profound concerns about the appropriateness of NCLB as the instrument by which education is guided. The first of these concerns has to do with the fact that NCLB rests on the assumption that schools are similar to businesses. According to this assumption, schools will function more efficiently if they are subjected to market mechanisms and accountability structures that are similar to those businesses face. Further, NCLB mandates recommend a narrow model of learning in which teachers are the consumers and transmitters of commercially produced curriculum. Second, as far as standardized testing, there is the issue of misalignment between state standards and assessments. Also of concern to teachers is the use of statewide standardized assessments for students with disabilities, minority and low SES students, and students with LEP. Teachers express unease with this testing because these students, who face educational inequities, are expected to perform at grade level as disaggregated subgroups. Third, AYP requirements that sanction schools due to the underperformance of students in the above groups are of concern to teachers because most feel it is unrealistic to expect all students in a given grade to perform at the same, or higher, predetermined level of achievement. Further, teachers are concerned about the curricular choices that are forced upon them due to pressure to meet AYP goals. They find themselves having to choose between that which

they are told will increase test scores and that which they believe to be best for their students. Finally, they are concerned that AYP pressures are responsible for decreased teacher morale, and increased teacher stress levels as well as attrition among both students and teachers. Studies find teachers with varying degrees of concern about these issues.

Differences in teacher attitudes toward the issues above can be investigated using moral development theory. According to literature reviewed in the current study, teachers with higher levels of moral development are willing to consider a variety of perspectives when making choices concerning such issues as discipline, individualized instruction, and curriculum. Further, higher scoring teachers view themselves as facilitators in the classroom as opposed to all-knowing authorities. These teachers are more capable than lower scoring teachers of assessing issues of fairness in classroom situations. It follows that their attitudes toward educational policy will reflect their ability to understand and empathize with a variety of perspectives and to make sound judgments concerning the equity and fairness of educational policy.

It is the aim of this study to investigate the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward NCLB mandates and moral reasoning. Specifically, the current study will address teachers' attitudes toward changes in the quality of instruction since the passing of NCLB, teachers' attitudes toward their jobs and their profession, and teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement.

CHAPTER III

Research Methodology

Overview

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward aspects of NCLB and their levels of moral reasoning. Specifically, inservice elementary, middle and secondary public school teachers taking courses in the College of Education at the University of Nevada, Reno were asked to complete a demographic survey, a survey of their attitudes toward aspects of NCLB, and the Defining Issues Test.

Research Questions

For the purposes of this study, four research questions were asked:

RQ#1. What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the quality of instruction in our public schools since the passing of NCLB?

RQ#2. What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about how NCLB has changed teachers' attitudes toward their job and their profession?

RQ#3. What is the relationship between teachers' level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement?

RQ#4. What is the relationship between teachers' level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the overall effects of NCLB on public education?

Participants

Approximately 60 in-service elementary and secondary teachers taking graduate education courses participated in this study. This population of teachers may differ from those not taking graduate courses in education. However, they were nonetheless chosen for this study due to the difficulties of working with teachers in schools. Instructors of graduate courses within the College of Education were asked permission for their students to participate in the study. The researcher visited their classes and the eligibility requirements for the study were presented. Eligible students were asked to participate in the study.

Materials

Demographic Survey

Participants were given a short demographic survey adapted from recommendations by Dillman (2000). Questions related to demographic characteristics such as years teaching, name of school where the participant teaches and the grade level in which the teacher currently works.

Time. Administration of the demographic survey took approximately 10 minutes.

NCLB Attitude Survey

The *NCLB Attitude Survey* was adapted from the Harvard Civil Rights Project (HCRP) survey entitled *Listening to Teachers: Classroom realities and No Child Left Behind*, (Sunderman et al., 2004). The HCRP survey questions emerged from items modified from previously conducted teacher-attitude surveys. Their newly-designed items were field tested in three states. The NCLB Attitude Survey items are modeled on the HCRP Survey.

The NCLB Attitude Survey addressed the following topics:

1. Teachers' beliefs about the quality of instruction in our public schools since the passing of NCLB

2. Teachers' beliefs about how NCLB has changed teachers' attitudes toward their job and their profession

3. Teachers' beliefs concerning the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement, and

4. Teachers' beliefs concerning the overall effect of the NCLB sanctions

The NCLB Attitude Survey consists of a five-point Likert format for each question.

Reliability. The researcher used Cronbach's Alpha to measure the test reliability of the NCLB Attitude Survey.

Validity. The researcher measured content validity by writing each survey question on a separate note card. Four doctoral students from various departments in the College of Education were asked to place each note card in a category pile. Note cards that were deemed by the experts as not belonging to a specific category were either thrown out or rewritten to better fit the category. Re-written questions were re-sorted by the experts until all questions fit in the required four category piles.

Time. Administration of the survey took approximately 20 minutes.

The Defining Issues Test

The Defining Issues Test (DIT; Rest, 1979) is a widely used objective measure of moral reasoning based on Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. According to Kohlberg (1981, 1987), moral reasoning proceeds through three levels (preconventional,

conventional and postconventional) and six stages. As moral reasoning advances from the preconventional to the postconventional level, the basis for making moral judgements changes from one that is influenced by an egocentric perspective of individual self-interest to one that is characterized by concerns for equality, mutual respect and protections of basic human rights (Cummings, et al., 2001). Moral judgments made at the postconventional level depend on abstract, formal reasoning and the cognitive ability to take the perspective of a variety of individuals, as well as those of institutions and societies. Kohlberg (1981) has called the postconventional level the *principled* level of moral reasoning.

Teachers' levels of moral reasoning was measured through administration of the Defining Issues Test. This instrument measured principled moral reasoning based on Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. It was a pencil-and-paper test consisting of six hypothetical moral dilemmas. Rankings of importance on twelve items representing an issue for consideration in resolving the dilemma were used to derive an individual's scores (Cummings, et al., 2001). The test is based on the assumption that the selection of items represented a person's level of principled moral reasoning as based on Kohlberg's theory. The most frequently used DIT score is the *P*-score (the Principled score), a percentage figure that represented the relative importance participants give to principled moral considerations. *P*-scores range from 0-95 and are interpreted as the degree to which the participant believes that postconventional or principled considerations are important (Rest, Narvaez, Bebeau & Thoma, 1999). Thus, the higher the *P*-score, the higher the individual's level of principled moral reasoning. According to the DIT manual (Rest, 1993), the average college student has a P-score of 42.3, meaning that 42.3% of an

individual's reasoning is at the principled level and the other 57.7% is at lower levels of moral reasoning.

Reliability. Test-retest reliability for the *P*-score average is in the .80s over a period of weeks. Cronbach's Alpha index of internal consistency also averages in the .80s (Rest, 1993). The DIT has been used extensively since the 1970s. The published literature on the test is extensive, with about 150 new studies each year (Cummings, et al., 2001).

Time. The DIT takes approximately 40 minutes to complete.

Procedures

Participants were recruited from graduate courses in education. The researcher visited each class, with the instructor's permission, and presented an overview of the study. At that time, students who were currently teaching, or who had left teaching within the past three years, were asked to participate. The researcher informed all students that there were no adverse consequences of declining participation. Each eligible student received a manila envelope, which contained the following materials: (a) an IRB consent form, (b) a demographic survey, (c) the NCLB Attitude survey, and (d) the DIT. Participants were asked to put all materials back into the manila envelope when they are finished and returned all testing materials to their instructor.

To ensure confidentiality of student participation, student names did not appear on any test materials or on the demographic survey, and there were no consent forms required for this study. The researcher assigned the surveys and the DIT a numbered code (the DITs will be sent for scoring to the Center for the Study of Ethical Development at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis) from a table of random numbers. When all

testing materials were completed and scored, DIT scores were written on each demographic form and NCLB Attitude Survey for aid in analysis of data.

Design and Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward aspects of NCLB and moral reasoning. To investigate this relationship, the following four research questions were asked:

Research Question #1. What is the relationship between teacher's levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the overall effects of NCLB on public education?

To answer this question, interval data provided by measurements of moral reasoning will be converted to ordinal data so that it can be compared with the ordinal data provided by the NCLB Attitude Survey. The two measures will be calculated into a single Kendall's τ statistic (Sprinthall, 2000).

Research Question #2. What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the quality of instruction in our public schools since the passing of NCLB?

To answer this question, interval data provided by measurements of moral reasoning will be converted to ordinal data so that it can be compared with the ordinal data provided by the NCLB Attitude Survey. The two measures will be calculated into a single Kendall's τ statistic (Sprinthall, 2000).

Research Question# 3. What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about how NCLB has changed teacher's attitudes toward their job and their profession?

To answer this question, interval data provided by measurements of moral reasoning will be converted to ordinal data so that it can be compared with the ordinal data provided by the NCLB Attitude Survey. The two measures will be calculated into a single Kendall's τ statistic (Sprinthall, 2000).

Research Question #4. What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement?

To answer this question, interval data provided by measurements of moral reasoning will be converted to ordinal data so that it can be compared with the ordinal data provided by the NCLB Attitude Survey. The two measures will be calculated into a single Kendall's τ statistic (Sprinthall, 2000).

For each analysis, data screening procedures will be conducted using the methods outlined by Sprinthall (2000) and Mertler and Vanatta (2002). Specifically, each variable will be screened for violations of assumed normality.

CHAPTER IV

Results

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward aspects of NCLB and their levels of moral reasoning. Specifically, in service elementary and secondary public school teachers taking courses in the College of Education at the University of Nevada, Reno were asked to complete a demographic survey, the NCLB Attitude Survey, and the Defining Issues Test, a measure of moral reasoning.

The following research questions were addressed in the study:

Research Question #1: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the quality of instruction in our public schools since the passing of NCLB?

Research Question #2: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about how NCLB has changed teachers' attitudes toward their job and their profession?

Research Question #3: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement?

Research Question #4: What is the relationship between teachers' level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the overall effects of NCLB on public education?

Demographic Information

There were 40 participants in the study. Of the 40 participants, 20% (n = 8) were male and 80% (n = 32) were female. Sixty-one percent (n = 23) were elementary school teachers, while 38.5% (n = 17) were secondary teachers. Of these, 88% (n = 35) were regular education teachers, 7.5% (n = 3) were special education teachers, 2.5% (n = 1) was a teacher of children labeled gifted and talented and 2.5% (n = 1) was the dean of students in a high school. Further, two of the elementary teachers were not currently teaching. One was on leave and teaching at the university, while one had left her last teaching position two years prior to her participation in the study.

The following section covers demographic information and DIT scores for participants broken down by gender and teaching level. No data is presented for AYP status of the school where they currently teach, years spent teaching, and educational specialty because sample size is too small to produce meaningful statistics on these variables.

Gender

Data was analyzed using *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores from the DIT. Table 1 presents the means and standard deviations for DIT data for males and females. There were no significant gender differences in DIT scores.

Table 1

DIT means and standard deviations for males and females

	Male	Female
P-score	*M* = 42.57, *SD* = 15.56	*M* = 43.34, *SD* = 15.95
N2	*M* = 47.02, *SD* = 15.86	*M* = 46.78, *SD* = 13.80
2/3	*M* = 17.93, *SD* = 11.59	*M* = 17.05, *SD* = 8.27
4	*M* = 29.47, *SD* = 12.41	*M* = 33.25, *SD* =13.32

Teaching level

Data was analyzed using *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores from the DIT. Table 2 presents means and standard deviations for DIT data for elementary and secondary teachers. There were no significant differences in DIT scores between elementary and secondary teachers.

Table 2

DIT means and standard deviations for elementary and secondary teachers

	Elementary	Secondary
P	M = 46.21, SD = 13.82	M = 39.09, SD = 17.49
N2	M = 49.01, SD = 13.00	M = 43.88, SD = 15.20
2/3	M = 16.99, SD = 7.27	M = 17.54, SD = 10.89
4	M = 29.76, SD = 11.74	M = 36.19, SD = 14.22

Finally, data collected for these teachers using the demographic survey, the NCLB Attitude Survey and the DIT was analyzed.

Statistical Analysis

The most commonly used DIT measure is the *P*-score. The overall group *P*-score means and standard deviations were: $N = 40$, $M = 43.19$, $SD = 15.68$. The means and standard deviations of DIT *P*-scores for the two teaching levels were: elementary, $n = 23$, $M = 46.21\%$, $SD = 13.82$; and secondary, $n = 17$, $M = 39.08\%$, $SD = 17.49$. To compare these two means, data screening was conducted and homogeneity of variance was found. However, since the groups had unequal *n*'s, the nonparametric *Wilcoxon Mann-Whitney U Rank Sum* test was chosen as the appropriate statistic. The obtained *W* was 296, which was not significant ($p > 0.05$). Thus, no significant difference in *P*-scores was found between elementary and secondary teachers.

Data was collected from the Defining Issues Test (DIT) and the NCLB Attitude Survey. The DIT provides interval data in the form of *P*-scores while the NCLB Attitude Survey provides ordinal data in the form of a Likert-type scale. The differences in the forms of these data necessitate the use of a nonparametric correlation statistic. Further, this study had an *N* of only 40, which is considered low for a correlation study. Additionally, data collected from the NCLB Attitude Survey contained a number of tied ranks. Due to these factors, the appropriate analysis for this data is the non-parametric correlation statistic Kendall's τ (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007). Several other measures from the DIT also were examined for this analysis.

Analysis using other measures derived from the DIT

The *P*-score is the most widely used measure from the DIT. No significant relationships were found between *P*-scores and teachers' attitudes toward NCLB. However, there are several other measures derived from the DIT, including the *N2* score,

the *Stage 2/3* score (personal interest schema), and the *Stage 4* score (maintaining norms schema). Each research question was analyzed for a relationship with these measures (Rest, et al., 1999).

The N2 Score

The *N2* score is considered the best alternative to the *P*-score because it is a modified *P*-score that is adjusted by the degree to which the individual discriminates clearly between lower and higher stages of reasoning (Thoma, 2002). In fact, Thoma (2002,) refers to the *N2* score as "the best alternative initially and on cross-replication" (p. 239) to the *P*-score. Thoma (2002) also has reported that the *N2* score, along with the *Stage 2/3* score and the *Stage 4* score, arose out of analysis of DIT data collected from the 1970's until the early 1990's. Thus, use of these three scores provides a more comprehensive analysis of DIT results (Rest, et al., 1999; Thoma, 2002).

Neo-Kohlbergian Schema: Stage 2/3 and Stage 4 scores

Rest, et al. (1999), in reviewing DIT scores from two decades of DIT research, revised Kohlberg's stages significantly. In fact, the authors delineate three schema instead of six stages as Kohlberg did. In their rationale, they explain that they were not able to differentiate six stages as Kohlberg did in his theory. Further, their data did not support finer discriminations for more than three schema clusters (personal interest, maintaining norms and postconventional). The authors refer to these new delineations, as well as some other variations from Kohlberg's original theory, as "Neo-Kohlbergian." For this reason, DIT analyses reports three sets of stage or schema scores. These are the *Stage 2/3* score (personal interest schema), the *Stage 4* score (maintaining norms score), and the postconventional, or *P*-score.

The first of these is the *Stage 2/3* score, or the personal interest schema. This schema encapsulates all reasoning from stage 1 through stage 3. To review, in stages 1 and 2 the individual approaches a moral issue from the perspective of *concrete interests* of the individuals involved. There is no concern about the "right" way to behave in a given situation in terms of its effect on a group or the greater society. In stage 2, resolutions to dilemmas are based on trade-offs and deals. In stage 3, the individual is still concerned with self-interest, but is able to consider the self as a member of a group of known others. In fact, a concern for the way a group of known others think of him or her emerges. Finally, stage 3 is characterized by an interest in maintaining good relations and being thought of by a group of significant others as a "good person." Stage 2/3 scores are reported as percentages, indicating that the percentage of reasoning an individual demonstrates on the DIT falls into that category.

The *Stage 4*, or "maintaining norms" schema represents the assumption that some normative system of rules and roles are necessary as a way to increase cooperation and decrease conflict. In fact, a society wide system of cooperation must be established and maintained for the purpose of stabilizing expectations and rules among people. These rules or laws can be either civil or religious, and they require uniform, categorical application. Further, such laws rightly establish reciprocity among participants in a society, requiring them to do their duty in exchange for the assurance that everyone else will be required to do the same. Finally, Stage 4 represents a belief in the need for hierarchical role structures. One must obey authority out of respect for the social system. This schema encapsulates all of Kohlberg's stage four reasoning and is reported in this study as *Stage 4* schema, or the "maintaining norms" schema (Rest et al. 1999, Thoma,

2002). *Stage 4* scores are reported as percentages, indicating the percentage of *Stage 4* reasoning an individual demonstrates on the DIT.

DIT data reflecting *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores were analyzed for each of the four research questions within the NCLB Attitude Survey. Results are presented in the following section.

Statistical Analysis for Research Question #1

Research Question #1: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the quality of instruction in our public schools since the passing of NCLB?

For each research question, the NCLB Attitude Survey included a specific category comprised of four questions. For each category, a means score for each participant was obtained. For the research question #1, mean participant responses (N = 40, M = 2.72, SD = .69) were correlated with the overall group means for *P*-scores (N = 40, M = 43.19, SD = 15.68), *N2* scores (N =40, M = 46.83, SD = 14.02), *Stage 2/3* scores (N = 40, M = 17.23, SD = 8.87), and *Stage 4* (N = 40, M = 32.49, SD = 13.08) scores using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = -.061$ ($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = .058$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = -.167$ ($p > 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, $\tau = .065$ ($p > 0.05$). No significant correlations were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey for research question #1. Table 3 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 3

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question # 1

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	43.19	15.68	.061	.298
N2	46.83	14.02	.058	.307
Stage 2/3	17.23	8.86	-.167	.075
Stage 4	32.49	13.08	.065	.286

Research question #1 means and correlations by teaching level: elementary. For elementary teachers, mean participant responses ($n = 23$, $M = 2.55$, $SD = .65$) for research question #1 were correlated with overall group means for *P*-scores ($n = 23$, $M = 46.21$, $SD = 13.82$), for *N2* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 49.01$, $SD = 13.00$), for *Stage 2/3* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 16.99$, $SD = 2.27$), and for *Stage 4* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 28.81$, $SD = 11.73$) using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = -.092$ ($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = -.095$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = -.295$ ($p < 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, $\tau = .264$ ($p < 0.05$). Correlation coefficients between *Stage 2/3* scores and *Stage 4* scores and mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey questions relating to research question #1 are significant. Table 4 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question #1 Responses by Teaching Level: Elementary

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	46.21	13.82	-.092	.278
N2	49.01	13.00	-.095	.269
Stage 2/3	16.99	7.27	-.295*	.030
Stage 4	29.76	11.73	.264*	.046

*$p<.05$

Research question #1 means and correlations by teaching level: secondary. For secondary teachers, mean participant responses (n = 17, M = 2.94, SD = .69) for research question #1 were correlated with overall group means for *P*-scores (n = 17, M = 39.09, SD = 17.49), for *N2* scores (n = 17, M = 43.88, SD = 15.20), for *Stage 2/3* scores (n = 17, M = 17.54, SD = 10.89), and for *Stage 4* scores (n = 17, M = 36.19, SD = 14.22) using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, τ = .270 (p > 0.05); for *N2* scores, τ = -.244 (p > 0.05); for *Stage 2/3* scores, τ = -.047 (p > 0.05); and for *Stage 4* scores, τ = -.148 (p > 0.05). No significant correlations were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey for research question #1. Table 5 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question #1 Responses by Teaching Level: Secondary

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	39.09	17.49	.270	.072
N2	43.88	15.20	.244	.092
Stage 2/3	17.54	10.89	-.047	.401
Stage 4	36.19	14.22	-.148	.214

Reliability for research question #1. For Research Question #1, Cronbach's α index of consistency was calculated to be .562. This is considered to be a low level of internal consistency reliability (Simon, 2008).

Statistical Analysis for Research Question #2

Research Question #2: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about how NCLB has changed teachers' attitudes toward their job and their profession?

For each research question, the NCLB Attitude Survey included a specific category comprised of four questions. For each category a mean score for each participant was obtained. For research question #2, mean participant responses ($N = 39$, $M = 3.12$, $SD = .83$) were correlated with group means for *P*-scores ($N = 40$, $M = 47.58$, $SD = 31.93$), *N2* scores ($N = 40$, $M = 46.83$, $SD = 14.02$), *Stage 2/3* scores ($N = 40$, $M = 17.22$, $SD = 8.86$), and *Stage 4* scores ($N = 40$, $M = 32.49$, $SD = 13.08$) using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = -.022$

($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = -.038$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = -.144$ ($p > 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, $\tau = .169$ ($p > 0.05$). No significant correlations were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey for research question #2. Table 6 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question #2

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	47.58	31.93	-.022	.425
N2	46.83	14.02	-.038	.371
Stage 2/3	17.22	8.86	-.144	.110
Stage 4	32.49	13.08	.169	.073

Research question #2 means and correlations by teaching level: elementary. For elementary teachers, mean participant responses ($n = 23$, $M = 2.81$, $SD = .83$) for category #2 were correlated with overall group means for *P*-scores ($n = 23$, $M = 46.21\%$, $SD = 13.82$), for *N2* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 49.01\%$, $SD = 13.00$), for *Stage 2/3* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 16.99\%$, $SD = 7.27$), and for *Stage 4* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 29.76\%$, $SD = 11.74$) using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = .030$ ($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = -.063$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = -.089$ ($p > 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, $\tau = .097$ ($p>0.05$). No significant correlations were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and

mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey for research question #2. Table 7 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 7

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question #2 Responses by Teaching Level: Elementary

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	46.21	13.82	.030	.425
N2	49.01	13.00	.063	.344
Stage 2/3	16.99	7.27	-.089	.286
Stage 4	29.76	11.74	.097	.268

Research Question #2 means and correlations by teaching level: secondary. For secondary teachers, mean participant responses ($n = 17$, $M = 3.53$, $SD = .65$) for research question #2 were correlated with group means for *P*-scores ($n = 17$, $M = 39.09$, $SD = 17.49$), for *N2* scores ($n = 17$, $M = 43.88$, $SD = 15.20$), for *Stage 2/3* scores ($n = 17$, $M = 17.55$, $SD = 10.89$), and for *Stage 4* scores ($n = 17$, $M = 36.19$, $SD = 14.22$) using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = .098$ ($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = -.016$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = -.214$ ($p > 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, $\tau = .132$ ($p > 0.05$). No significant correlations were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey questions for research question #2. Table 8 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 8

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question #2 Responses by Teaching Level: Secondary

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	39.09	17.49	.098	.303
N2	43.88	15.20	-.016	.466
Stage 2/3	17.55	10.89	-.214	.131
Stage 4	36.19	14.22	.132	.245

Reliability for research question #2. For Research Question #2, Cronbach's α index of consistency was calculated to be .681. This is considered to be an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability (Simon, 2008).

Statistical Analysis for Research Question #3

Research Question #3: What is the relationship between teachers' level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement?

For each research question, the NCLB Attitude Survey included a specific category comprised of four questions. For each category, a mean score for each participant was obtained. For research question #3, mean participant responses ($N = 40$, $M = 4.36$, $SD = .80$) were correlated with group means for *P*-scores ($N = 40$, $M = 47.55$, $SD = 31.93$), *N2* scores ($N = 40$, $M = 46.83$, $SD = 14.02$), *Stage 2/3* scores ($N = 40$, $M = 17.22$, $SD = 8.86$), and *Stage 4* ($N = 40$, $M = 32.49$, $SD = 13.08$) scores using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = .040$

($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = .038$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = .040$ ($p > 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, $\tau = -.127$ ($p > 0.05$). No significant correlations were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey questions for research question #3. Table 9 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 9

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question # 3

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	47.58	31.93	.040	.366
N2	46.83	14.02	.038	.371
Stage 2/3	17.22	8.86	.040	.366
Stage 4	32.49	13.08	-.127	.137

Research question #3 means and correlations by teaching level: elementary. For elementary teachers, mean participant responses ($n = 23$, $M = 2.81$, $SD = .84$) for research question #2 were correlated with group means for *P*-scores ($n = 23$, $M = 46.21$, $SD = 13.82$), for *N2* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 49.01$, $SD = 13.00$), for *Stage 2/3* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 16.99$, $SD = 7.27$), and for *Stage 4* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 29.76$, $SD = 11.74$) using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = .122$ ($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = .128$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = -.219$ ($p > 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, $\tau = .008$ ($p > 0.05$). No significant correlations were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and mean

participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey questions for research question #3. Table 10 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 10

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question #3 Responses by Teaching Level: Elementary

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	46.21	13.82	.122	.219
N2	49.01	13.00	.128	.204
Stage 2/3	16.99	7.27	-.219	.082
Stage 4	29.76	11.74	.008	.479

Research question #3 means and correlations by teaching level: secondary. For secondary teachers, mean participant responses ($n = 17$, $M = 4.19$, $SD = .74$) for research question #3 were correlated with group means for *P*-scores ($n = 17$, $M = 39.09$, $SD = 17.49$), for *N2* scores ($n = 17$, $M = 43.88$, $SD = 15.20$), for *Stage 2/3* scores ($n = 17$, $M = 17.55$, $SD = 10.89$), and for *Stage 4* scores ($n = 17$, $M = 36.19$, $SD = 14.22$) using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = -.109$ ($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = -.100$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = .319$ ($p < 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, $\tau = -.305$ ($p > 0.05$). There was a significant relationship between *Stage 2/3* DIT scores and mean participant responses to research question # 3. No significant relationships were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, or *Stage 4* scores and mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey questions for research question #3. Table 11 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 11

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question #3 Responses by Teaching Level: Secondary

	M	SD	τ	sig.
P-score	39.09	17.49	-.109	.279
N2	43.88	15.20	-.100	.294
Stage 2/3	17.55	10.89	.319*	.043
Stage 4	36.19	14.22	-.305	.051

*$p<.05$

Reliability for research question #3. For Research Question #1, Cronbach's α index of consistency was calculated to be .761. This is considered to be an acceptable level of internal consistency reliability (Simon, 2008).

Statistical Analysis for Research Question #4

Research Question #4: What is the relationship between teachers' level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the overall effects of NCLB on public education?

For each research question, the NCLB Attitude Survey included a specific category comprised of four questions. For each category, a mean score for each participant was obtained. However, for research question #4, the last question was dropped from the final analysis due to its ambiguity, so research question #4 only contains the mean responses for three questions.

For research question #4, mean participant responses ($N = 40$, $M = 4.58$, $SD = .81$) were correlated with group means for *P*-scores ($N = 40$, $M = 47.55$, $SD = 31.93$), *N2*

scores ($N = 40$, $M = 46.83$, $SD = 14.02$), *Stage 2/3* scores ($N = 40$, $M = 17.22$, $SD = 8.86$), and *Stage 4* ($N = 40$, $M = 32.49$, $SD = 13.08$) scores using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = .181$ ($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = -.140$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = .097$ ($p > 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, $\tau = .056$ ($p > 0.05$). No significant correlations were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey questions for research question #4. Table 12 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 12

Group Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Cat. 4 Responses

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	47.58	31.93	.181	.061
N2	46.83	14.02	-.140	.112
Stage 2/3	17.22	8.86	.097	.204
Stage 4	32.49	13.08	.056	.314

Research question #4 means and correlations by teaching level: elementary. For elementary teachers, mean participant responses ($n = 23$, $M = 4.6$, $SD = .81$) for category #4 were correlated with overall group means for *P*-scores ($n = 23$, $M = 46.21\%$, $SD = 13.82$), for *N2* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 49.01\%$, $SD = 13.00$), for *Stage 2/3* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 16.99\%$, $SD = 7.27$), and for *Stage 4* scores ($n = 23$, $M = 29.76\%$, $SD = 11.74$) using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, $\tau = -.151$ ($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, $\tau = -.157$ ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, $\tau = .017$ ($p >$

0.05); and for *Stage 4* scores, τ = .073 ($p > 0.05$). No significant correlations were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and mean participant responses on NCLB Attitude Survey questions for research question #4. Table 13 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 13

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question #4 Responses: Elementary

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	46.21	13.82	-.151	.172
N2	49.01	13.00	-.157	.159
Stage 2/3	16.99	7.27	.017	.457
Stage 4	29.76	11.74	.073	.323

Research Question #4 means and correlations by teaching level: secondary. For secondary teachers, mean participant responses ($n = 17$, $M = 4.55$, $SD = .83$) for category #4 were correlated with group means for *P*-scores ($n = 17$, $M = 39.09\%$, $SD = 17.49$), for *N2* scores ($n = 17$, $M = 43.88\%$, $SD = 15.20$), for *Stage 2/3* scores ($n = 17$, $M = 17.55\%$, $SD = 10.89$), and for *Stage 4* scores ($n = 17$, $M = 36.19\%$, $SD = 14.22$) using Kendall's τ. These analyses produced the following correlation coefficients: for *P*-scores, τ = -.239 ($p > 0.05$); for *N2* scores, τ = -.168 ($p > 0.05$); for *Stage 2/3* scores, τ = .209 ($p > 0.05$); and for *Stage 4* scores, τ = -.008 ($p > 0.05$). No significant relationships were found between DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores or *Stage 4* scores and mean participant

responses on NCLB Attitude Survey questions for research question #4. Table 14 presents the results of the analysis.

Table 14

Means, Standard Deviations, Kendall's τ Significance for Research Question #4 Responses by Teaching Level: Secondary

	M	*SD*	τ	*sig.*
P-score	39.09	17.49	-.239	.098
N2	43.88	15.20	-.168	.180
Stage 2/3	17.55	10.89	.209	.130
Stage 4	36.19	14.22	-.008	.483

Reliability for research question #4. For Research Question #1, Cronbach's α index of consistency was calculated to be .594. This is considered to be a low level of internal consistency reliability (Simon, 2008).

Analysis for Individual NCLB Attitude Survey questions

Analysis were conducted for each individual DIT question. For research question #1, a significant relationship ($\tau = .205$, *sig.* .047, $p < .05$) was found between teachers' mean *Stage 4* scores and individual question #1, "Concerning instruction, an important effect of NCLB is that teachers behave in ways that may ultimately result in more students performing at higher levels." Additionally, a significant inverse relationship ($\tau = -.289$, *sig.* .011, $p < .05$) was found between teachers' mean *Stage 2/3* scores and individual question #2, "Concerning instruction, an important effect of NCLB is that teachers divert time from untested subjects (ex: history, geography, music, etc) in order to

concentrate on tested areas." Further, a significant relationship ($\tau = .204$, *sig.* = .047, $p < .05$) was found between teachers' mean *Stage 4* scores and individual question #3, "Considering instruction, pressure to improve standardized test scores cause me to ignore what I consider to be important aspects of the curriculum." No other significant relationships were found between research question #1 individual questions and DIT *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores and *Stage 4* scores.

For research question #2, there was a significant relationship (.245, *sig.* = .023, *p<.05*) with teachers' *Stage 4* scores and question #8, "NCLB mandates have affected my attitude toward remaining at my school for more than five years." No significant correlations were found between *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores and *Stage 4* scores and any other individual questions in research questions #2. For research question #3, no significant correlations were found between *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores and *Stage 4* scores.

Finally, for research question #4, a significant inverse relationship ($\tau = -.217$, *sig. .038, p<.05*) was found for teachers' mean *P*-scores and question #15, "Overall, NCLB has made it more difficult for schools serving low-performing students to retain high quality teachers." No significant relationships were found between *P*-scores, *N2* scores, *Stage 2/3* scores and *Stage 4* scores and any other individual questions in research question #4.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward aspects of NCLB and their levels of moral reasoning. Specifically, in service elementary and secondary public school teachers taking courses in the College of Education at the University of Nevada, Reno were asked to complete a demographic survey, the NCLB Attitude Survey, and the Defining Issues Test, a measure of moral reasoning. Moral reasoning scores, as measured by the DIT, were examined in light of teachers' attitudes toward aspects of NCLB mandates.

There are several reasons why many teachers are concerned about the use of NCLB mandates as the focus of educational policy (Abrams, Pedulla & Madaus, 2003; Hamilton, et al., 2007; Johnston-Parsons, 2007; Mathison & Freeman, 2003; Meier, et al., 2004; Ryan, 2004; Simon, 2005; Sunderman, et al., 2004; Taylor, et al., 2007). First, NCLB rests on the assumption that schools are similar to businesses, and thus they will function more efficiently if they are subjected to market mechanisms and accountability structures similar to those businesses face. In response to this assumption, one teacher in this study commented, "Schools are not businesses, students are not parts on an assembly line. The free market principles do not apply." A second concern expressed by teachers is that NCLB mandates encourage a narrow model of teaching and learning in which teachers focus on transmission of tested knowledge while paying little attention to untested subjects such as social studies, art, music and physical education. For example, one teacher in this study referred to NCLB as an "…approach to education that shifts the

focus away from individual pursuits to a commodity of test scores, diverting educators' attention and resources." Finally, teachers are concerned that pressure to meet AYP goals are leading to decreased morale and increased stress levels, particularly at schools with challenging populations of students. As another teacher noted, NCLB mandates have "…created a negative, highly stressful, and irrational public school environment." Consequently, many teachers are leaving these high-risk schools for suburban schools where they have more freedom to make choices about what and how they teach. A teacher serving in a local fourth-year watch list school commented, "I love my school. I don't want to leave, but if we are not supported with better preliminary education, time, support (from public, government administration, whatever), continuing education, belief in ourselves and what we are doing, we may/do feel that we are fighting a losing battle."

These issues have prompted discussion from all quarters of society. Though findings suggest that teachers hold varied and nuanced attitudes toward NCLB mandates (Sunderman, et al., 2004), no studies have examined the personal characteristics that may affect these attitudes. One such characteristic may be related to teachers' levels of moral reasoning, which is a cognitive attribute.

One useful theory for this examination is Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning, which assumes that individuals at different levels of moral reasoning may have different attitudes. For example, individuals at the conventional level of reasoning, or *Stage 4*, tend toward conformity and conventional reasoning (Rest, et al., 1999). Thus, teachers who reason at this level may not have the same concerns about NCLB as teachers who demonstrate a higher level of moral reasoning. These teachers are more likely to view NCLB mandates as relating to issues of social justice. Thus, the purpose of the present

study was to examine the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward NCLB mandates and their levels of moral reasoning as measured by the Defining Issues Test (DIT). To examine this relationship, the following research questions were addressed:

Research Question #1: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the quality of instruction in our public schools since the passing of NCLB?

Research Question #2: What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about how NCLB has changed teachers' attitudes toward their job and their profession?

Research Question #3: What is the relationship between teachers' level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement?

Research Question #4: What is the relationship between teachers' level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the overall effects of NCLB on public education?

Review of the Literature

The literature review examined NCLB mandates as they relate to (a) standardized testing, (b) student inequities related to students with disabilities, minorities and low SES students, and students with limited English proficiency, (c) adequate yearly progress, or AYP, and teacher attitudes toward them, and, (d) curricular decisions and teacher attitudes toward their jobs and their profession since the passing of NCLB. Finally, it reviewed Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning and a discussion of moral reasoning in teachers.

Although many teachers are comfortable with state-designed standards (Hamilton, et al., 2007), there is concern that standards ignore important differences in the resources available to schools and districts (Taylor, et al., 2007). Further, when these standards are tied to achievement levels used to sanction states, districts and schools, many teachers question the validity of both the standards and the assessments (Hamilton, et al., 2007; Taylor, et al., 2007). Finally, teachers' attitudes towards standards and standardized assessments vary from state to state (Sunderman, et al., 2004).

In general, teachers express concern about inequities in education and their relationship to NCLB mandates. Students with disabilities, minorities and low SES students, and students with limited English proficiency are groups that face challenges in both testing and learning. These are the students who are most in need of good teachers, but they are also the students who are more likely to attend second-rate facilities with poor community support. In general, many teachers fear that NCLB mandates may harm the very students they set out to help (Ryan, 2004).

Finally, teachers report concerns with use of AYP goals as the mechanism for sanctioning schools (Hamilton, et al., 2007; Sunderman, et al., 2004). First, schools are under tremendous pressure to meet AYP goals even though many teachers report that their school lacks the necessary resources to do so. Further, teachers are concerned that this pressure is causing them to focus on the tested subjects at the expense of those that are not tested (Hamilton, et al., 2007; Sunderman et al., 2004). Finally, as a result of these and other pressures, teachers report an increase in stress as well as a decrease in morale (Hoffman, Assaf & Paris, 2001). The purpose of the present study was to examine

teachers' attitudes toward NCLB mandates and a possible relationship with their levels of moral reasoning as defined by Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning.

According to Kohlberg's theory, moral reasoning is the ability to take the perspectives of others at increasingly complex levels. Studies that have investigated the relationship of teachers' levels of moral reasoning to various behavioral characteristics have found differences in teachers who reason at lower levels and those who reason at higher levels.

For example, MacCallum (1993) found that lower scoring teachers consider the maintenance of their authority as the central aspect of their relationship with students. Another study found that lower scoring teachers view themselves as the primary decision makers concerning how and what students should learn (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987; MacCallum, 1993). Concerning discipline situations, Johnston and Lubomudrov (1987) found that low scoring teachers see their roles as authoritarian and as one of maintaining control, or "policing." These teachers expected their students to comply with the rules without question and they tended to retain the right to interpret, change and/or implement rules to fit particular situations. Finally, these same teachers see discipline situations primarily from their own perspective or from that of one or two of the students involved. Finally, lower-scoring teachers tend to be quite confident that they make the best decisions in most discipline instances (Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987).

In terms of teachers with high *P*-scores, studies have found that they encourage dialogue with students concerning such issues as individualized instruction, discipline, values and the rights and responsibilities of both student and teacher (Cartwright &

Simpson, 2001; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Johnston, 1989; Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987; Lampe, 1994; MacCallum, 1993; McNeel, 1994; O'Keefe & Johnston, 1989). Concerning classroom rules and procedures, these teachers tend to see their role as more facilitative than directive, they tend to focus on the reasons underlying rules, and they believe that rules exist in order to insure students' rights. (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Johnston, 1989; Johnston & Lubomudrov, 1987; MacCallum, 1993). Further, teachers demonstrating higher levels of moral reasoning respond to student incidents by considering the viewpoints of all involved. Finally, they are less confident than lower scoring teachers that their choices are the best ones due to the fact that they are aware of the difficulty of the task of balancing the rights of all concerned (Cartwright & Simpson, 2001; Johnston, 1989).

These studies examined the impact of teachers' levels of moral reasoning on attitudes and behavior within the classroom. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning and their attitudes toward aspects of NCLB.

Participants

There were 40 participants in the study. Of the 40 participants, 20% (n = 8) were male and 80% (n = 32) were female. Sixty-one percent (n = 23) were elementary school teachers, while 38.5% (n = 17) were secondary teachers. Of these, 88% (n = 35) were regular education teachers, 7.5% (n = 3) were special education teachers, 2.5% (n = 1) was a teacher of children labeled gifted and talented and 2.5% (n = 1) was the dean of students in a high school. Further, two of the elementary teachers were not

currently teaching. One was on leave and teaching at the university, while one had left her last teaching position two years prior to her participation in the study.

Data Collection

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward aspects of NCLB and their moral reasoning as measured by the Defining Issues Test (DIT). Participants were either in-service teachers or teachers who had left teaching within the last three years. Participants were enrolled in graduate education classes at the University of Nevada, Reno, during the first three weeks of the spring, 2009 semester. This timeframe was chosen in an attempt to lessen the possibility that teachers may have discussed NCLB mandates in these classes. On the day the testing materials were distributed, eligibility guidelines and a brief overview of the study were first presented. Following this introduction, the researcher distributed manila envelopes containing the following materials: a consent form, a demographic survey, the NCLB Attitude Survey and the DIT. Eligible participants were asked to complete the testing materials and return them to the instructor the following week. Next, the envelopes were collected by the class instructors and given to the researcher who coded the testing materials using a table of random numbers. Finally, DITs were scored at the Center for Ethical Development in Alabama and returned for analysis along with the other testing materials.

Instruments

Three different instruments were used to collect data in this study. These were: (a) a short demographic survey concerning characteristics such as years teaching, name of school where the participant teaches and the grade level in which the teacher currently works, and (b) the NCLB Attitude Survey, using a Likert-type scale to measure teachers'

attitudes toward aspects of NCLB, and (c) the Defining Issues Test (DIT; Rest, 1979), a widely used objective measure of moral reasoning based on Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning.

Results

Research Question #1*:* What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the quality of instruction in our public schools since the passing of NCLB?

To address Research Question #1, a Kendall's τ statistical analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between Research Question #1 mean responses and *P*, *N2*, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* mean scores. No significant relationships were found between Research Question #1 mean responses and *P* or *N2* scores. However, for elementary teachers, there was a significant inverse relationship ($\tau = -.295$, $p < 0.05$) between mean *Stage 2/3* scores and Research Question #1 mean responses. Further, a significant relationship ($\tau = .264$, $p < 0.05$) was found between *Stage 4* scores and Research Question #1 mean responses.

Research Question #1 consisted of four individual questions. A Kendall's τ statistical analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between these individual questions and *P*, *N2, Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores. No significant relationships were found between individual questions in Research Question #1 and *P* and *N2* mean scores. However, there was a significant relationship ($\tau = .205$, *sig.* .047, $p < .05$) between *Stage 4* and individual question #1, "Concerning instruction, an important effect of NCLB is that teachers behave in ways that may ultimately result in more students performing at higher levels." Further, a significant inverse relationship ($\tau = -.289$, *sig.* .011, $p < .05$)

was found between teachers *Stage 2/3* scores and individual question #2, "Concerning instruction, an important effect of NCLB is that teachers divert time from untested subjects (ex: history, geography, music, etc) in order to concentrate on tested areas." Finally, a significant relationship ($\tau = .204$, *sig.* $= .047$, $p < .05$) was found between teachers *Stage 4* scores and individual question #3, "Considering instruction, pressure to improve standardized test scores cause me to ignore what I consider to be important aspects of the curriculum."

Research Question #2*:* What is the relationship between teachers' levels of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about how NCLB has changed teachers' attitudes toward their job and their profession?

To address Research Question #2, a Kendall's τ statistical analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between Research Question #2 mean responses and *P*, *N2*, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores. No significant relationship was found between DIT scores and Research Question #2 mean responses.

Research Question #2 consisted of four individual questions. A Kendall's τ statistical analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between these individual questions and *P*, *N2*, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores. There was a significant relationship ($\tau = .245$, *sig.* $= .023$, $p < .05$) between teachers *Stage 4* scores and individual question #8, "NCLB mandates have affected my attitude toward remaining at my school for more than five years." No significant relationships were found for any other individual questions in Research Question #2 and DIT scores.

Research Question #3: What is the relationship between teachers' level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the effectiveness of AYP sanctions in bringing about school improvement?

To address Research Question #3, a Kendall's τ statistical analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between Research Question #3 mean responses and *P*, *N2*, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* mean scores. No significant relationships were found between *P, N2*, or *Stage 4* scores and Research Question #3 mean responses. However, there was a significant relationship ($\tau = .319$, $p < 0.05$) between *Stage 2/3* scores for secondary teachers and mean Research Question #3 responses.

Research Question #3 consisted of four individual questions. A Kendall's τ statistical analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between these individual questions and DIT *P*, *N2*, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores. No significant relationships were found in this analysis.

Research Question #4: What is the relationship between teachers' level of moral reasoning as measured by the DIT and their beliefs about the overall effects of NCLB on public education?

To address Research Question #4, a Kendall's τ statistical analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between research question #4 mean responses and *P*, *N2*, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores. No significant relationships were found between *P, N2, Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores and Research Question #4 mean responses.

Research Question #4 consisted of four individual questions. However, individual question #16 was dropped from the analysis due to ambiguity. Thus, mean responses to Research Question #4 are the result of the analysis of only three individual questions. A

Kendall's τ statistical analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between these three individual questions and *P*, *N2*, *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4* scores. A significant inverse relationship ($\tau = -.217$, *sig. .038,* $p < .05$) was found between teachers' mean *P*-scores and individual question #15, "Overall, NCLB has made it difficult for schools serving low-performing students to retain high-quality teachers." No other significant relationships were found.

Discussion

Results of the study indicated no relationship between teachers' *P*-scores and any of the four research questions. However, there were some interesting findings related to *Stage 2/3* scores and *Stage 4* scores and teacher' attitudes toward NCLB mandates. One possible factor for the failure to find a relationship between teacher attitudes and *P*-scores may be due to the small sample size that resulted because of time constraints coupled with a lower than expected rate of return for testing materials. This study had a sample of only 40 teachers while many authors recommend sample sizes of 100 or larger for studies using correlation statistics (Gravetter & Willnau, 2007; Sprinthall, 2000).

Findings were also limited by the use of a nonparametric statistic. Due to the small sample size, the Likert-type scale used in the NCLB Attitude Survey, and a large percentage of tied ranked scores, the best statistic for this study was the nonparametric Kendall's τ. However, nonparametric statistics have less power in the determination of statistical relationships than do parametric statistics (Gravetter & Willnau, 2007; Sprinthall, 2000). This means that relationships that might be detected using parametric statistics are less likely to be detected using their nonparametric counterpart.

A third explanation for the findings of this study may have to do with the variety and complexity of teacher attitudes toward teaching itself. While this study found no support for the relationship between teachers' attitudes toward NCLB and high *P*-scores, there were some interesting findings related to the higher percentages of teachers' moral reasoning in *Stage 2/3* and *Stage 4*. Further, there were contradictions between some of the quantitative data and actual teacher comments, which point to the variety and nuance that may be inherent in teacher attitudes. Finally, because of the small sample size, every effort has been made to interpret results with caution.

Teachers With High Stage 2/3 Scores

One example of the complexity and variety of teacher attitudes is found in Research Question #1. For this research question, no relationship was found with *P*-scores or N2 scores. However, for elementary teachers, a significant inverse relationship was found with *Stage 2/3* scores and Research Question #1. This finding demonstrated that elementary teachers with high *Stage 2/3* scores disagreed that NCLB mandates have negatively impacted the quality of instruction. Specifically, they disagreed with individual question #2, "Concerning instruction, an important effect of NCLB is that teachers divert time from untested subjects (ex: history, geography, music, etc) in order to concentrate on tested areas." This finding could be due to the fact that elementary teachers demonstrating lower levels of moral reasoning do not find a conflict in focusing on test scores because they tend to approach moral issues from the perspective of *concrete interests* of the self. In fact, in *Stage 2/3* reasoning, there is no concern about the "right" way to behave in a given situation in terms of a higher principle. Instead, resolutions to dilemmas are based on trade-offs and deals (Rest, 1999). Given these

characteristics, it is possible that instead of resenting the intrusion of authority into their classrooms, these teachers appreciate the goals and outcomes offered by standardized testing. In fact, one high *Stage 2/3* scoring elementary teacher commented, "testing provides needed focus for education. I believe on-going assessment is very important."

Even though the statistical analysis suggests that teachers with high *Stage 2/3* scores disagreed that NCLB mandates have had a negative impact on education, these findings are inconsistent with specific elementary teacher comments. For example, comments from some teachers with high *Stage 2/3* scores indicate discomfort with the pressure to produce test scores. One wrote, "it's put so much pressure on everyone involved in education, I'm amazed we haven't all revolted or quit." Another elementary teacher with a high *Stage 2/3* score commented on a negative aspect of the emphasis NCLB mandates place on test scores, "instruction is aimed toward a test and not toward understanding." The inconsistencies between quantitative findings and these comments of *Stage 2/3* elementary teachers, along with other findings in this study, point out the tremendous complexity and variety of teacher attitudes toward their profession.

In another example, a significant relationship was found between secondary teachers with high *Stage 2/3* scores and individual question #3. These teachers agreed that AYP sanctions would be effective in bringing about school improvement. While this finding is difficult to interpret, it could be due to the fact that secondary teachers are often only one of six teachers a student may see in a day and therefore they are not as individually responsible for the overall education of a student as an elementary teacher is. Further, NCLB mandates require secondary students to take standardized tests only once during high school. Coupled with the assumption that *Stage 2/3* reasoning reflects a

tendency to approach a moral issue from the perspective of *concrete interests* of the individuals involved as well as a concern for the interests and attitudes of authority (Rest, 1999), it seems likely that secondary teachers might be more comfortable than elementary teachers with AYP sanctions as the mechanism for bringing about change. It is not likely to be the secondary teacher who will be blamed for less than satisfactory test scores. These findings are in contrast with those for high *Stage 4* teachers.

Teachers With High Stage 4 Scores

In contrast with teachers with high *Stage 2/3* scores, teachers with a high *Stage 4* scores agreed that the quality of instruction has suffered since the passing of NCLB. Specifically, they agreed with individual question #3, "Concerning instruction, pressure to improve standardized test scores cause me to ignore what I consider to be important aspects of the curriculum." For teachers reasoning at *Stage 4*, it follows that they feel tied to state and federal mandates over the mandates of their own conscience. However, it is possible they experience conflict because test preparation is anathema to the sound educational principles learned during certification. As a result, it is not surprising that teachers demonstrating a high percentage of reasoning in *Stage 4* would see NCLB mandates as damaging to the quality of instruction. Concerning the conflict between time spent on test prep versus time spent in valuable learning activities, one teacher asks hypothetically, "Why do we (I) submit to this?"

Teachers with high *Stage 4* scores agreed with individual question #8, "NCLB mandates have affected my attitude toward remaining in my school for more than five years." This could be due to the possibility that these teachers feel more pressure to conform and thus feel less freedom in their curricular choices. According to several

researchers, this lack of freedom contributes to high levels of stress and burnout among teachers (Harriman, 2005; Mathison & Freeman, 2003). In fact, one teacher in this study mentioned that pressure to improve standardized test scores caused her to ignore important aspects of the curriculum. In spending time on test preparation instead, she "becomes a hypocrite." She tries to fit it all in, but she feels she "often skims." Another teacher mentions that she is pressured to "teach to the test from a program. I am not a robot, nor are the kids." Daily conflict between what a teacher feels is good teaching and what is required for standardized testing appears to contribute to feelings of pressure and discomfort with their jobs. Teachers with high *Stage 4* scores are more likely to experience these pressures because they value the maintaining of norms, and yet there is conflict between the norms dictated by sound educational practice and NCLB mandates.

Teachers with High P-scores

Comments in this study point to a possible explanation for the difference in terms of their individual comments between teachers with high *Stage 4* scores and teachers with high *P*-scores (i.e., those who reason at the postconventional level). Teachers with high *P*-scores indicate that they still find a way to teach untested subjects in spite of the internal conflicts caused by pressure to raise test scores because they believe it is the right thing to do. The comments below indicate that they view their roles as both maintaining a high quality of instruction and meeting the demands of testing. One higher-scoring teacher commented, "staff who worked hard before (for the sake of increasing student achievement) will do so now no matter if there is or isn't a law. They do it because it is right." According to another, "good teachers have always worked hard to improve the quality of education." Thus, it is possible they are less likely to see NCLB mandates as

having a negative impact upon instruction because in their own classrooms they do not allow this to happen.

Concerning the reasoning of higher-level teachers, one significant relationship was found between *P*-scores and one individual question within the entire NCLB Attitude Survey. This concerned question #15, which stated that "Overall, NCLB has made it more difficult for schools serving low-performing students to retain high-quality teachers." This finding is consistent with those of other researchers in the field who found that teachers often leave these schools for those with more parental support and better facilities (Hamilton, et al., 2007; Harriman, 2005; Johnston-Parsons, 2007; Mathison & Freeman, 2003; Ryan, 2004; Sunderman, et al., 2004; Taylor, et al., 2003). However, In spite of this support from quantitative data in this study and from the literature, comments from several teachers point to difficulties in interpreting even this finding. One teacher, in particular, points out the contradictions in teacher attitudes. In response to question #15, she first answered 'strongly agree', and then crossed it out and circled 'agree'. She goes on to comment: "Or are better teachers at these schools? Those at my Title I school have learned a lot about teaching due to the necessity of reaching our kids." Further, she comments, "are teachers working harder, or better? Or are teachers leaving because it's *hard* (emphasis hers) for me to fit in test prep, but I do it, is this better?"

With regard to individual question #13 "Overall, as a result of NCLB mandates, students work harder in school," another teacher with a high *P*-score, commented, "but do they work better?" This response reflects another of the conundrums inherent in NCLB mandates. Most feel that teachers, in general, have always worked hard (Sunderman, et al., 2004). Further, according to Harriman (2005), many teachers say that

it is not lack of hard work that explains student failure as much as inequities in both society and the education that we offer students from different areas and with varying levels of need. As this teacher pointed out, the way to bring about improvement in learning is not through harder work but through work that is better suited to students' learning needs (Johnston-Parsons, 2007). Teachers and schools must better adapt to differences if they wish to meet the needs of their students. As one teacher put it, "people/students are different and consequently they learn at different ways/rates. We are doing a disservice when we are not recognizing/supporting/ encouraging individual growth – some children – will never meet the bar set by NCLB, so we *are* 'leaving them behind' (emphasis hers)."

NCLB Mandates and Individual Standards

While it is clear to teachers in the field that all students cannot be expected to meet the same standard, NCLB mandates are not congruent with this idea (Hamilton, et al., 2007; Sunderman, et al., 2004; Yell & Drasgow, 2005). This theme, while not addressed specifically in any of the research questions, arose in several teacher comments. One high-scoring high school teacher commented, "By definition, all students cannot be average. As a result some students' achievement will always be limited by their abilities." Another high-scoring teacher hypothetically asked, "how is testing students with LD's at grade level going to 'prove' anything? Obviously they are not (majority) performing at grade level, or they wouldn't have been looked at for SPED/LD." She goes on to say,

> Same for LEP in this scenario: A student moves legally from country x, speaks very limited English, yet was at grade level and knows the material in their

> first/native language/country. When tested in English the student fails. Obviously, the student doesn't know English and this doesn't accurately reflect the student's knowledge and abilities.

Still another teacher states that,

> Testing Sped students in 10th grade and then basing AYP on the next year's 10th graders (along with raising the bar) just doesn't make sense. Judging and punishing the entire school because one less Sped student than necessary passed is insane.

Further, another teacher comments that, "comparing an affluent school to those with at-risk students is not fair and demoralizes the teachers." As these teachers point out, NCLB mandates, in their zeal to enforce accountability, fail to recognize and respect student differences. Consequently, this failure, according to one teacher, takes much of the joy out of teaching and learning. "Students are not enjoying learning… they are always pressured to perform." She goes on to add, "teachers have always worked hard – it is just not as enjoyable now."

Teacher attitudes described in this study point to the variety and complexity of teacher attitudes toward education. While it is difficult to interpret these findings, the possible complexities suggested here seem to demonstrate that there is probably not a single theory, such as moral reasoning, that can explain this variety and complexity. This finding is not surprising given that none of the literature reviewed concerning teacher attitudes found 100 percent agreement among teachers. Instead, teacher attitudes seem to vary according to teaching level, prior experience and other, yet undiscovered

differences. Finally, given the small sample size and the difficulty inherent in interpreting such findings, there are no significant implications from this study.

Implications

Results of the study indicated no relationship between DIT *P*-scores and any of the four research questions. In spite of the fact that there were some interesting findings related to *Stage 2/3* scores and *Stage 4* scores and teachers' attitudes toward NCLB mandates, it is not likely that the results of this study show real implications. Lack of findings was due to a number of limitations. Those limitations are discussed below.

Limitations

There are several limitations in this study. First, it was conducted at the University of Nevada, Reno, in graduate education courses. The attitudes of teachers in these courses are not reflective of those of teachers in the general population. Additionally, most of the participants work in Reno, Nevada and in the rural areas surrounding it. Therefore, their attitudes are not representative of teachers in large urban areas or of other geographical regions. These factors limit the generalizability of the study.

Further, there were several statistical limitations. The first of these was the small sample size due to a lower than expected rate of return. This study had a small sample size of only 40 participants although researchers (Gravetter & Willnau, 2007; Sprinthall, 2000) recommend sample sizes of at least 100 for use with correlation statistics. Further, the NCLB Attitude Survey provides ordinal data and there were a large percentage of tied ranks. Due to these limitations, the Kendall's τ statistic is most appropriate statistic (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007) for determining nonparametric statistical relationships. A

final limitation is that nonparametric statistics have been shown to have less power in finding statistical relationships than do their parametric counterparts (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2007; Sprinthall, 2000).

Another limitation of this study related to small sample size concerned multiple analyses performed on the DIT statistics. When using multiple analyses, some authors (Sprinthall, 2000) indicate concern that multiple comparisons can lead to an increased chance of a false relationship among data. In this instance, these authors recommend the Bonferroni correction, which is a statistical correction for multiple comparisons. However, other authors (Perneger, 2009; Simon, 2008) indicate that the Bonferroni method is inappropriate with small sample sizes. In fact, Simon (2008) mentions that

> If you apply a Bonferroni correction with a data set that is already too small you are implicitly stating that it is important only to control the probability of a Type I error (rejecting the null hypothesis when the null hypothesis is true) and that you don't care about limiting the probability of a Type II error (accepting the null hypothesis when the null hypothesis is false).

Due to the small sample size and the probability of increasing the chance of a Type II error, the Bonferroni correction was not applied to this analysis. However, the use of multiple comparisons with DIT data in this study should be considered a limitation in the findings.

Another limitation of this study concerned Cronbach's α of internal consistency for the NCLB Attitude Survey. In order to measure internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's α was calculated for each research question. Research Questions #2 and #3 demonstrated adequate internal consistency reliability while Research Questions #1 and

#4 demonstrated low internal consistency reliability. Evidence of low internal consistency reliability in Research Questions #1 and #4 of the NCLB Attitude Survey is considered a limitation of this study (Simon, 2008).

Another limitation of this study concerned ambiguous or poorly worded questions on the NCLB Attitude Survey. For example, individual question #16, "Overall, NCLB has forced teachers to work harder," was part of Research Question #4 concerning the overall effects of NCLB. If a teacher answered "strongly agree" to this statement, it was unclear whether the teacher felt that NCLB has made teachers work harder to the benefit of students or whether NCLB has made teachers work harder, but in ways that may not be of benefit to students. Due to this ambiguity, this question was dropped from research question #4, so that it was the only research question whose overall mean came from the answers to only three questions.

In another example, for Research Question #1, a significant relationship ($\tau = .205$, *sig.* .047, $p < .05$) was found between teachers' mean *Stage 4* scores and individual question #1, "Concerning instruction, an important effect of NCLB is that teachers behave in ways that may ultimately result in more students performing at higher levels." This finding was difficult to interpret due to the fact that answers given to this question were in contradiction with answers given to the other three individual questions in Research Question #1. For example, an answer of 'strongly agree' for question #1 would be in conflict with an answer of 'strongly agree' for individual question #2, "Concerning instruction, an important effect of NCLB is that teachers divert time from untested subjects (ex: history, geography, music, etc) in order to concentrate on tested areas." Due to the conflict between answers to individual question #1 and the other three individual

questions in Research Question #1, it is difficult to interpret the significant finding for individual question #1 in any meaningful way. In response to this issue, analyses were conducted for Research Question #1 using only responses to individual questions #2, #3 and #4. However, results were no different than they were when individual question #1 was included. Thus, individual question #1 was left in the analyses, but is not interpreted due to its ambiguity.

Finally, it is possible that there are other undetected ambiguities in the NCLB Attitude Survey. In fact, one teacher commented, "Due to questions posed, I am not sure if my answers accurately reflect my views." As a result of this possibility, results must be interpreted cautiously. Every effort has been made to do that in this analysis. In order to increase the possibility of finding meaningful relationships between developmental processes such as moral reasoning, there are several changes that could be enacted in this study.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study found no relationship between high DIT *P*-scores and teacher attitudes toward NCLB mandates. This lack of finding suggests several directions for future research. First, the most significant limitation in this study was sample size. Future research needs to sample a larger and more varied set of teachers. Further, differences have been found in prior research between the attitudes of teachers in varying specialties (Hamilton, et al., 2007; Sunderman, et al., 2004). Studies attempting to measure teacher attitudes and their relation with developmental processes, such as moral reasoning, will be more effective if they analyze samples of at least 100 or more teachers from various specialties and teaching levels.

Although this study found no relationship between moral reasoning and teacher attitudes, there is an opportunity to investigate this connection in relation to other developmental theories such as ego development and/or cognitive complexity and their relationship to teacher attitudes.

Further, due to the variety and complexity of teacher attitudes toward NCLB mandates, future research will be more likely to establish significant results if they ask more, and better, questions about specific topics. For example, Sunderman, et al., (2004) covered teachers' views of their schools, general impressions and knowledge of NCLB, accountability incentives and sanctions, changes in curriculum and instruction and teachers' views of what they need for greater success. Each of these topics was addressed by enough questions to accurately calibrate teacher attitudes. In another example, Abrams, et. al., (2007) surveyed over 4,000 teachers using a 27-question survey that addressed only teachers' opinions of statewide testing programs. Either of these examples may have been more effective than the present study in describing teacher attitudes than the present study due to the fact that they asked more questions concerning individual topics. Consequently, future studies seeking to examine teacher attitudes in relation to personal characteristics such as moral reasoning might be more successful if they are able to better ascertain teacher attitudes by asking more questions about the topics under study.

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Appendixes

Appendix A

INFORMATIONAL DATA SHEET

PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION ACCURATELY AND COMPLETELY.

ALL INFORMATION WILL REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL. YOU ARE ASSURED ANONYMITY AND YOUR NAME WILL NOT BE ASSOCITED WITH YOUR RESPONSES.

GENDER (M or F)_____ AGE_____

WHAT GRADE(S) DO YOU TEACH?_____

WHERE DO YOU TEACH?_____

HOW LONG HAVE YOU TAUGHT AT YOUR CURRENT SCHOOL? _____

YEARS YOU HAVE TAUGHT THE CURRENT GRADE_____

WHAT IS THE CURRENT AYP RATING OF YOUR SCHOOL?_____

HAVE YOU EVER TAUGHT AT ANY OTHER SCHOOLS?_____

IF SO, WHERE, AND WHAT GRADES? _____
_____
_____

WHAT WAS THAT AYP RATING AT THESE SCHOOLS? _____
_____
_____

What comments, if any, do you have concerning The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001?

Appendix B

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Attitude Survey

This survey concerns the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The aim of NCLB is to bring about improvement in public education by holding teachers, schools, districts and states accountable through a combination of increased testing and progressively more stringent sanctions.

NCLB measures learning through standardized test scores. According to NCLB mandates, standardized tests must be administered to every child grades 3-8 in the areas of Math, Language Arts, Reading and Science. All students, including those with learning disabilities, students with limited English proficiency, minority students and students from low SES backgrounds must be tested at grade level. Scores are used to measure whether a school, district and state is succeeding in adequately educating children. Adequacy of test scores is determined according to the percentage of students scoring in the proficient range or above. Districts set yearly benchmarks for schools, with schools expected to score higher each year until all schools in the nation reach the same goal of 100% proficiency in all subjects by the 2013-14 school year. These benchmarks are called *adequate yearly progress* (AYP). Average test scores, as well as a school's progress toward meeting AYP, are published in newspapers, government reports and sent home to parents, and schools not meeting AYP goals are labeled "needs improvement".

Schools earning this label are sanctioned with progressively more stringent sanctions each year they fail to produce required scores. For example, after two consecutive years earning the "needs improvement" label, the school develops a plan of improvement and offers students the opportunity to transfer to another, higher performing school, with the district providing transportation. After three consecutive years earning the "needs improvement" label, the school provides *supplemental educational services*, or tutoring, by outside contractors or individuals not affiliated with the school. Schools earning the "needs improvement" label for four consecutive years take one of several measures, including but not limited to instituting new curriculum or replacing school staff (those deemed responsible for the failure). Those earning the "needs improvement" label for five consecutive years surrender control of their school to the federal government, who can reopen the school as a charter school, turn over management to a private company, give the school to the state to manage or take over the school itself.

The following questions concern aspects of NCLB and AYP mandates.

I. Quality of Instruction

1. Concerning instruction, an important effect of NCLB is that teachers behave in ways that may ultimately result in more students performing at higher levels.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

2. Concerning instruction, an important effect of NCLB is that teachers divert time from untested subjects (ex: history, geography, music, etc) in order to concentrate on tested areas.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

3. Concerning instruction, pressure to improve standardized test scores cause me to ignore what Iconsider to be important aspects of the curriculum.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very	Strongly	Agree	Disagree	Strongly	Very

Strongly Agree	Agree			Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. Concerning instruction, pressure to improve standardized test scores causes many teachers to cover a great deal of material quickly as opposed to spending time investigating material in depth.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

II. Teacher Attitudes

5. One effect of NCLB is that teachers experience negative morale.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

6. NCLB mandates have affected my attitude toward remaining in teaching for more than five years.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

7. An important effect of NCLB is that teachers experience negative morale to the point that many teachers are leaving or thinking about leaving teaching.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

8. NCLB mandates have affected my attitude toward remaining at my school for more than five years.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

III. Effectiveness of AYP Sanctions

9. External sanctions, such as earning of the “needs improvement” label, will lead to improvement in public education.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

10. AYP sanctions require a school identified as "in need of improvement" to offer students the *opportunity to transfer to a higher-performing school*. I believe this sanction will force schools on the "needs improvement" list to work hard to improve the quality of their instruction.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

11. AYP sanctions require a school identified as "needs improvement" to offer students *supplemental educational services*. This sanction will force schools on the "needs improvement" list to work hard to improve the quality of their instruction.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

12. Public identification of schools that have not met AYP goals (through newspaper articles, television news and parent mailings) will improve the quality of instruction in those schools.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

<u>IV. Overall Effects of NCLB</u>

13. Overall, as a result of NCLB mandates, students work harder in school.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

14. Overall, NCLB has had a positive effect on public education.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

15. Overall, NCLB has made it more difficult for schools serving low-performing students to retain high-quality teachers.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree

16. Overall, NCLB has forced teachers to work harder.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Very Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Very Strongly Disagree