THE CRITICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF EDUCATIONAL REFORM: POLICY, POWER, AND PEDAGOGY

Dissertation

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By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

Since 2001 public schools in the United States have been subjected to No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This federal level reform policy was implemented in order to improve the state of public education and bring all students to grade level by 2013-2014. This is to be achieved by holding all schools accountable to the public. Accountability mechanisms are deployed in order to align underperforming schools with the neoliberal rationality underpinning contemporary school governance.

In this dissertation I critique NCLB. I do so by filtering the policy through Foucauldian and critical geographic lenses. Foucault’s concepts of governmentality, biopower, techniques of governance, and power/knowledge lend themselves to unpacking and understanding NCLB for what it is: a policy that is imbued with power, circulates power, and produces power/knowledge. Despite the top-down nature of NCLB, I argue that in the Foucauldian sense there is room for critique/resistance at multiple scales and by multiple actors.

I argue that NCLB’s aspatial, de-contextual and colorblind nature has real socio-spatial consequences. I problematize the taken-for-granted NCLB accountability
mechanisms. In addition to a text-based critique, I weave original illustrations as part of a critical visual narrative. Through qualitative methods, this research aims at going beyond accountability data to shed light on the impacts of NCLB on perceptions, attitudes, practices, identities, and representations of people and place. Teacher narratives provide a glimpse into schools struggling to meet NCLB requirements. I focus specifically on inner city Title I schools, those that find themselves particularly squeezed by the neoliberal straitjacket, restrained by retrenchment, testing, and the labeling of school performance/quality. This one-size-fits-all garment is applied with disregard to the challenges and obstacles faced by inner city schools. Inner city schools find themselves tackling mounting pressure to improve student performance and align themselves with market norms. Pressure is also induced by the hegemonic representations of school quality produced by NCLB. Teacher insights highlight disconnect between these policy-produced representations and school realities.
Dedicated to my mother, brother, and late father
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 PREAMBLE

In June 2001, my mother came home with a professional development CD-ROM, distributed by her school's principal at their end-of-year staff meeting. Teachers were told to go through the CD-ROM over the summer and familiarize themselves with the federal reform *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) Act signed into law that past January. Dissemination of information occurred in a top-down manner from the federal level to the state, city, and lastly, to school actors. The city's chancellor's office informed principals via newsletter, and the principals were responsible for conveying information to their teaching staff.¹

¹ This system very much reminds me of the traditional game "telephone" played by western children. During the game, one person is designated to formulate a message, thereafter it is passed along to the next person and so on. When the last person gets the message he or she is responsible for communicating it to the group. Generally, the last person never says the message correctly (as it was first communicated); rather, the message is all jumbled up.
This was my mother's (and my) first encounter with NCLB and certainly not her last, as her teachers' union and school's newsletters, Board of Education emails, pressure to meet testing requirements, and more professional development workshops were to follow. However, that June she was given a jumbled version of NCLB, told to use the CD-ROM to refocus her teaching on literacy, and make sense of it all. During our discussion, I recall my mother mentioning that "changes are coming" – and I wondered: What kind of changes? Would these be new changes or more of the same? What would NCLB mean for my mother and her colleagues? For her school and the children served? For other schools in the district? For the students historically left behind?

Thereafter, I started paying more attention to the media’s reports on the state of public education in the United States (US), discourse of public officials on the reform policy, particularly that of President G. W. Bush during his State of the Union addresses, and interviews with the Secretary of Education as they verbally tackled the so-called 'educational crisis' in the United States. While NCLB was revered by public officials as a cure-all, many school districts struggled to meet the policy's requirements.

I became intrigued with this timely attention to the issue of public education and the ways in which the Bush administration touted NCLB as its most important domestic accomplishment. Yet there was little debate or discussion about the implications of NCLB. It seemed that few paid attention to public education reform aside from a handful of researchers and the stakeholders who were directly affected (i.e., parents, schools, and business interests). This is not surprising, given the diversions of the war on terrorism and other issues such as global climate change. Such issues became the foci of public
attention and geographic research, leaving research on education and reform policy to the realm of educational researchers.

Soon after my interest in educational reform was sparked, I found myself teaching geography to the first generation of NCLB graduates\(^2\) at a public university and wondering about the ways in which reform had filtered their education and their knowledge of, or lack of, geography. NCLB was subtly affecting the ivory tower, and I could not help but take notice.

### 1.2 TOPIC OVERVIEW

Signed in 2001, the *No Child Left Behind* Act is the most recent federal-level educational reform to be implemented in the US. The stated goal of this policy is to address the deficiencies and inequalities present in the American public school system, by improving the academic achievement of the economically disadvantaged, while closing the achievement gap between the advantaged and the disadvantaged (US Department of Education, 2005). This is accomplished by holding states, districts, and schools accountable for student achievement via the mandatory collection and public dissemination of ‘objective’ accountability data, which are believed to identify success in educational outcomes and to highlight weaknesses.

NCLB places heavy emphasis on quantification (i.e., to render students and their performance “knowable”) and bases success on indicators of ‘progress’ and achievement. Schools are required to report their assessment results in the aggregate as well as

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\(^2\) This guinea pig cohort underwent the NCLB reforms in their secondary schooling.
disaggregate by individual subgroups of students (low-income or disability status, race or ethnicity), to measure/quantify “success” of the student body as a whole, and identify those “at risk.”

Currently, NCLB measurement tools and statistics are used to govern schools. Schools face the pressure of accountability and the wrath of the public and media upon the publication of test scores (Gruenewald, 2003). Key mechanisms of NCLB include calculation and categorization that put power into action. Calculative practices create an 'audit culture' of governance in education (Basu, 2005), which impacts multiple scales: the macro-level (states), meso- (school boards), micro- (school), individual- (principals, teachers, parents) and the relational-levels (media, activist, real-estate agents). Schools are categorized by student performance, and each school is given a performance label. These socially constructed labels create knowledge about schools and forge powerful representations.

Failing to meet state benchmarks of performance stigmatizes schools and students, perhaps unfairly labeling those whose test scores fall below the benchmark as ‘failures.’ Failure is associated with low academic achievement, low standards, poor teacher quality, poor/disadvantaged students, a large minority student population, mismanagement of resources, and inability to self-manage, thus necessitating outside intervention. Policy makers perceive educational consumers as rational-economic actors, responsible for managing their social risks (Lemke, 2001). As such, parents are blamed for making bad or ill-informed choices, and schools are blamed for poor self-management and the misuse of their autonomy (Ball 1994). So-called ‘failing’ schools
are (geographically) located in urban districts, and their student body is comprised of disadvantaged children and students of color. Publicly, urban schools are stigmatized by low test scores, high drop-out rates, poor attendance, unmotivated students, ineffective teachers, dilapidated and unsafe buildings, weak administration, and inefficient bureaucracy. The coinciding representations and reputations do not bode well for urban areas that are trying to compete and revamp their image.

NCLB deploys practices that allow for the governing of schools at a distance, whereby the state can distance itself from educational issues. These practices can be traced to the neoliberalization of governance. To understand how urban schools are governed, and the socio-spatial implications of contemporary policy, it is necessary to consider city governance practices and the context in which schools operate.

1.2.1 Public schools and the neoliberal city

The fates of cities and schools are inseparable. Given the competitive pressures among municipalities, states, and nations, localities with good schools win. Household economic dictate the attractiveness of locales where students can attend public schools and where parents can find work. (Kerchner, 1997: 425).

Public schools play an important role in postindustrial US cities. They contribute to local human capital (i.e., the workforce), and attract people and investment (i.e., contribute to economic development) (Kerchner, 1997). Education is one of the most important services that urban and local governments provide (Brookings Institution, 2003). Public education is a “basic industry” with effects that ripple through society and the economy.
(Kerchner, 1997). Like city governance, school governance has undergone a shift, precipitated by increased pressure to be productive and efficient.

Cities have been under increasing pressure to compete for resources, jobs, and capital at multiple scales. This is heightened by globalization that has precipitated conditions in which capital is hyper-mobile and businesses are footloose (Kavaratzis, 2007). Moreover, the decline of the urban core and the rise of the suburbs have made it more difficult for cities to attract jobs and investments. Deindustrialization and disinvestment in the 1970s and 1980s, and the ‘urban crisis’ of the 1980s and 1990s (Hubbard, 1996) were devastating for cities (e.g., cities faced high unemployment rates, shrinking tax bases, etc.). Finally, the decline of traditional urban economies had a significant impact on the provision of education, a system that by the 1980s was deemed to be in a state of crisis.

To render cities more attractive and competitive in an increasingly global economy, urban entrepreneurialism was promoted as the solution to urban economic, social, and fiscal problems. This required a shift in urban governance from managerial to business-like or ‘entrepreneurial’ modes of governance (Harvey 1989) in which city officials utilized tools of the private sector to manage the city and urban problems. As a matter of survival, local governments implemented business strategies (e.g., risk-taking, promotion and profit motivation) and tactics to revitalize and redefine urban environments (Kavaratzis, 2007). Dismantling of the Fordist-Keynesian order led to major cuts in social services, at a time when local social problems and conflicts were increasing.
Similarly, social policies took a neoliberal turn, privileged the market, and presented “universal cures” for crisis containment/management (Peck and Tickell, 2002). Although policy-makers focused on economic policy, they paid attention to education only insofar as it made a difference to the local workforce, and ultimately played a role in local economic development. As will be discussed in Chapter 2 of this study, neoliberal ideology infused educational reform policy, and was considered the only way to address the so-called educational crisis.

Neoliberal strategies of urban governance and educational reform have had a profound socio-spatial impact. Neoliberalism combines the destruction of institutional arrangements and the creation of a new infrastructure for economic growth (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). In considering the ways in which processes of neoliberalization have affected educational geographies, we can identify both moments of destruction and creation. Table 1 provides a summary of these processes, which are similar to contemporary processes of neoliberalization affected the institutional geographies of cities in the work of Brenner and Theodore (2002). Among the moments of destruction, the neoliberalization of public education policy has led to: increase in public schools’ exposure to competition; intensification of school surveillance; in some cases the closure of neighborhood schools; the erosion of contextually sensitive approaches to reform; and the representation of education in state of crisis. With regard to moments of creation, the processes have led to: the privatization and contracting of educational services (e.g., supplemental or tutoring services, standardized testing companies); the creation of new markets for service delivery (e.g., charter schools); intensification of socio-spatial
polarization; the diffusion of generic reform (i.e., zero-tolerance one-size-fits-all educational policy); the imposition of decontextualized “best practice” models; and the introduction of surveillance and social controls.

Table 1.1: Mechanisms of neoliberal location: Reforming public education

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* Based on Brenner and Theodore’s (2002) “moments of destruction and creation.”

Understanding the moments of destruction and creation of NCLB requires taking a closer look at the mechanisms utilized to bring about policy-desired outcomes.

1.2.2 Bringing a Foucauldian lens to educational reform:
Governing schools / governing space

I utilize a Foucauldian ‘governmentality’ framework to investigate educational policy; to highlight the underlying rationality of NCLB, and the taken-for-granted techniques, mechanisms, and framings through which schools and subjects become knowable and
governable. The term ‘governmentality’ was coined by Foucault in 1978 at the Collège de France. It combines the notions of ‘governing’ and ‘mentality’ and refers to the art of governance, to both the mode of governance and the mentalities that guide governance (Foucault 2000; Dean, 1999; Lemke, 2001).

A number of scholars (including Burchell et al., 1991; Rose, 1996 and 1999; and Dean, 1999) further developed the governmentality framework and its associated analyses from the perspective of government. Similarly, I utilize this framework because I am concerned with the ways that school populations are governed by reform policy, and how their behaviors and performances are dictated top-down to emulate the prevailing political rationality. I analyze the power of NCLB by considering the motivation of authorities, the outcomes they desire, and the strategies and techniques they deploy in order to achieve their objectives. In doing so, I emphasize the use of tactics of control to influence schools and subjects with the intention of aligning their behaviors to societal norms/practices.

Although the governmentality literature does not emphasize space, the gaze of governors can be spatialized (Rose, 1999). A governmentality approach can reveal governable spaces and subjects (Prince et al., 2006). It is through the discourses which legitimize governmental technologies that spaces and subjects are rendered knowable and governable. The predominant governmental rationality penetrates and influences school spaces and subjects and governing of conduct occurs in these spaces as they are monitored and made visible by calculative strategies. Through calculative techniques, schools are identified, labeled, and monitored, and knowledge about schools and school
identities are produced. These hegemonic discourses frame collective meanings and attachments to place and cannot be divorced from socio-spatial practices, but exist in relationship with them (Foucault, 1972).

Contemporary geographical writing on governmentality (Huxely, 2006; Crampton and Elden, 2006) and modes of spatial calculation inform my work. According to Crampton and Elden (2006), a rich account of spatial politics necessitates including the calculative, vital to the management of space and what occurs in space, without which the account would be incomplete.

My intervention contributes to the geographies of calculation scholarship by focusing on the management of school space and the measuring practices of contemporary school accountability regimes. In so doing, I critique the relationship between school calculation and the representation of school spaces. I isolate school labeling, a tool that is used to identify and classify schools. As part of a broader neoliberal state project of place coding and calculation, school labeling is a management practice that dates back to the emergence of the calculative practices of government, which have led to binary codes of school classifications. Another motivation for utilizing the governmentality approach in this work is that it assists in seeking progressive mentalities and non-hegemonic coding systems by removing “the ‘naturalness’ and ‘taken-for-granted character of how things are done” (Dean, 1999: 38).

In my study, I problematize the ‘truths’ associated with the knowledge of school performance that are produced by the calculative practices and influence how individuals are governed. I consider how and what people who are governed think about the way they
are governed. Thus, I ask teachers, who are subjected to educational policy, what they think about the reform of their conduct and their everyday practices.

Although school populations are subjected to power, they also have agency. I am interested in policy-created representations of schools as spaces to be governed, but also in the possibility for resisting these top-down practices at the micro-level. As per Foucault, individuals choose whether or not to align themselves with predominant norms (Foucault, 2000). Not only is governmentality about the regulatory system or mode of governance that allows for the exercise of power (Foucault, 2000), but it is also about considering the choices that individuals make to either follow norms or resist / critique them. Individuals "are not passive recipients of governmental policies and directives” (Crampton and Elden 2006: 682). Likewise, nor are school administrators and teachers passively implementing NCLB, and accepting accountability mechanisms and state-administrative directives. NCLB deploys its accountability mechanisms with disregard to local specificity and the diversity of actors.

1.2.3 Bringing a geographic lens to contemporary educational reform

Recent education reform “takes little notice of place” (Gruenewald, 2003). This is not surprising as contemporary federal level reform is the result of a copy-paste / one-size-fits-all approach to educational policy that has diffused across the globe (primarily between the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the US). NCLB is part of the educational reform epidemic that infected different educational systems. Regardless of their geographic context, contemporary educational policies in core countries exhibit
common symptoms (Levin, 1998). First, education reform is viewed in economic terms, as an educated population today is considered the workforce of tomorrow; students are homogenized; and change in education is driven by the creation of a sense of fear. Second, the criticism of schools is central, the discourse on schools focusing on their failure to deliver. Third, education reform policies call for change and the retrenchment of resources. Fourth, governance shifts to school-based management. Fifth, schools are commodified as market goods, which parents and students consume by choice. Sixth, reform places emphasis on standards, accountability, and testing (Levin, 1998).

These six common themes are applicable to the US context, with NCLB exhibiting all of the symptoms of universal policies. Clearly, the US is not immune to the global educational policy epidemic in which “policy bits are taken out of a country’s approach and adopted elsewhere as if context did not matter” (Levin, 1998: 138). As a geographer, I recognize the de-contextualized nature of NCLB as a red flag, given that federal-level educational policies have real implications that vary by scale, context, and the actors involved.

Considering context and local specificity are important in understanding the spatially varying consequences and implications of policy (Martin, 2001). Exposing the context in which policies touch down has the potential to inform stakeholders in the education system, policymakers, and the media by offering a more realistic picture of school performance (Basu, 2005).

NCLB is a layer blanketed over an uneven geography of opportunity in the US. This unevenness is due to the unequal distribution of wealth, which results in large
pockets of poverty, and isolated groups across the US landscape. Students from different economic and cultural backgrounds are unevenly distributed across space, yet educational policies do not take this variation into account (Smith, 2005). Under NCLB, every student is prescribed an equal identity, in which each can acquire knowledge and can be tested regardless of opportunities and access to resources, such as textbooks, extra help and preparation, proper nutrition, etc.

Schools are held accountable for their performance regardless of their spatial location, the type of students they serve, and the resources they possess. Under NCLB, they must meet the threshold of progress established by their state, or else face sanctions. In its discourse, NCLB gives the impression of being an equitable reform, but this is not the reality. School reform relies solely on "uncontextualized raw test scores" that determine school success or failure. Critics of NCLB fear that inequities could be reproduced, thereby reinforcing current inequalities in education (Smith, 2005), as policies often work to intensify geographical inequalities (Martin, 2001).

In this dissertation, I take a critical approach and problematize NCLB. I focus on the mechanisms of reform, particularly the practice of school performance labeling, which produces top-down meanings / representations that are the foundation of policy discourse. I shed light on the experiences of school agents – specifically teachers – with education reform and capture bottom-up understandings of school performance across urban landscapes.

While geographers have touched upon certain aspects of education, none to date have explored the local impacts of neoliberal education policy on the geography of
education in the US context. Another limitation of recent research is that few or no studies have utilized qualitative methods to explore issues surrounding education and the role of agency. Additionally, existing studies have not looked at the micro-scale processes played out in schools nor at the variation of school quality within districts. Similarly, most education research lacks a geographic lens; yet, geography is fundamental to our understanding of variations in quality, performance, and provision of education.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In this dissertation project, I ask the following overarching research question: what are the socio-spatial implications of NCLB? The objective of my study is to shed light on the realities of inner schools as they struggle to meet NCLB requirements. Prior to contextualizing the problem, this line of inquiry necessitated unpacking NCLB in order to make sense of the policy, and understanding how school quality is created and contested. The sub-questions explored toward unpacking NCLB include the following: what is the underlying rationality of NCLB? What are the silences/limitations of the policy? This is followed by the need to understand the ways in which schools are governed through dominant policy discourse and practices. In this regard, the sub-questions addressed include: what are the mechanisms deployed by NCLB? What are the socio-spatial consequences of these techniques of power? Specifically, what are the implications of increased visibility and labeling practices? What are the consequences of the state's gaze and discourse on school spaces? Finally, I ask what do school agents in so-called 'failing'
schools think about NCLB? Are they resisting federal policy at the micro-level? If so, in what ways? In Chapters 3 and 4 I give voice to teachers on the frontlines of policy implementation who speak out on the contemporary mechanisms of school governance and its effects on their school and everyday classroom practices.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

NCLB mandates schools to test students and report their grades; such data is publicly accessible. Additionally schools are held accountable on a number of targets, which if they fail to meet, are placed on academic probation of sorts, with sanctions increasing for each additional year of failure. The data provide but a sliver of information on the actual performance of schools with disregard to a school and its neighborhood context, which are fundamental to understanding differential outcomes. I am interested in looking beyond the numbers, as accounting practices constitute the very “realities” they supposedly count (Cruikshank, 1999: 110) and at times “governing by numbers” produces mythical representations, objective reality, or ‘truth.’ Thus, it is necessary to question the power-imbued knowledge that is created by NCLB.

Unmasking the reality behind NCLB and school labels requires qualitative methodologies that enable researchers to interpret lived experiences and understandings of marginalization. Much of the research conducted on the geography of education takes a quantitative approach (Warrington, 2005). In so doing, "the effects of market-oriented policies on individual people in real places” (Warrington, 2005: 796) are glossed over and the disadvantaged are portrayed as helpless victims of reform. The examination of
micro-scale processes, differentiation, and the role of agents are essential to developing a theoretical understanding of educational opportunity (Warrington, 2005).

A narrative approach can uncover the relative importance of schooling experiences (Smith, 2000). Such methodologies can expose the challenges that confront school districts and schools. The public assumptions and representations associated with NCLB take a narrow view of the state of education and do not acknowledge the real contextual disparities in which different agents find themselves (Gerstl-Pepin, 2006). In fact, the dominant narratives of NCLB that frame educational policymaking do not include alternative narratives. Gerstl-Pepin (2006) utilized a narrative policy analysis “to examine the social justice narrative embedded in No Child Left Behind, specifically with respect to the economic inequities, and compared it to the narratives of educators working within a school that serves an economically challenged community. Policies represent a form of power. Thus, emphasis should be placed on uncovering the interactions between the dominant and alternative narratives (Gerstl-Pepin, 2006).

Similar to Gerstl-Pepin (2006), the current study captures multiple narratives from across the hierarchy of the educational system. The NCLB policy ascribes identity to schools and so it is important to consider both the narrative and the counter-narrative. I gleaned the federal-level narrative from policy documents and official speeches that diffused the federal NCLB Act downward along the educational chain. Additionally, I reviewed documents including the federal education reform policy, public documents on school performance and on NCLB, and state- and city- media, as they capture the ‘official’ dominant policy narrative, which is used “to promote and justify NCLB for
public consumption” (Gerstl-Pepin, 2006). In addition to the dominant discourse of school reform, I attempted to capture the school-level experiences of education reform, the experiences of those "who work in classrooms every day, see the flaws all too clearly" (AFT, 2008).

The way teachers encounter and interpret policy is a function of how a particular policy is transmitted to them and a function of the context within which the policy lands "after it careens down the state school hierarchy. Not only are there local considerations of resources, student needs, community expectations for schools, and competing priorities and ideologies; [but] there are also a wide variety of constraints imposed by existing policies, many of which stand as direct and indirect obstacles to the pursuit of the new policy intentions” (Darling-Hammond, 1990).

1.4.1 Survey methodology and study areas

Originally, I wanted to examine how policy recipients at different levels (school board members, central office administrators, school principals and teachers) view or experience the dominant education reform discourse. Unfortunately, despite my persistence, two obstacles stood in my way of collecting counter-narratives via face-to-face interviews: (a) gatekeepers and (b) I could not get anyone to speak with me voluntarily in person. As a result, I constructed an anonymous survey (see Appendix B) to capture the narrative stories of school administrators and teachers operating within the
context of ‘failing’ inner city schools and the climate of NCLB reform. I designed this survey to collect as much information as possible, and as quickly as possible. I based the survey questions upon issues pertinent to the research questions and formulated them after conducting informal discussions with public school teachers. The surveys included both closed- and open-ended questions. Insights from teachers are essential in understanding whether or not the data upon which school reputations are forged are in fact accurate representations of people and places. I therefore asked teachers to reflect on their school’s ‘in need of improvement’ label.

In total, I distributed 350 surveys to elementary (Kindergarten to 5th grades) and middle-school (6th to 9th grades) administrators and teachers in two inner city school districts, one in the Midwest and one in the Northeast. Prior to survey dissemination, I sought and received approval from both Ohio State’s Institutional Review Board and the school districts’ research review boards. Twelve elementary schools in the Midwestern school district volunteered to participate in the winter of 2008. Only two schools returned completed surveys. A combined total of 11 surveys were received, one of which was completed by a school principal. Given this poor response rate (3.7%), I took a different strategy in the Northeastern school district, in the spring of 2008. I distributed 50 surveys through snowball sampling to teachers and administrators across the district. I received back 35 completed surveys, at a much higher response rate (70%). The primary data

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3 Ideally, interviews and ethnography ought to be utilized to collect data on the everyday experiences within schools.

4 Upon approval of my research, the school districts requested that I not name them in my research. As a result of the confidentiality agreement, the school districts or cities in which they are located are not named in this work.
presented in this dissertation are based upon these 46 completed surveys. Admittedly, this is a disappointing number.

All of the participating teachers worked in Title I schools. These schools receive federal funding under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965. Title I refers to Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged and provides grants to local educational agencies (LEA) so as “to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (US Department of Education, 2009). LEAs distribute this money to schools that serve largely disadvantaged children.

Both inner-city school districts that I surveyed serve largely economically disadvantaged populations. Schools in each context had a student body composed of roughly a 75% disadvantage, with a few schools reaching 95% in 2007-2008. I selected the sampled schools from all district schools that did not meet their state’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and so were designated ‘in need of improvement.’ My sampled schools range from being in their second year of improvement status to their sixth year, with one school designated as a Safe Harbor School.

5 Disadvantage is defined as students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

6 AYP refers to a state’s measure of yearly progress toward achieving state academic standards. AYP is the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts, and schools much achieve each year. Each state in the US sets its own AYP.

7 The Safe Harbor provision of NCLB is a way that a struggling school can meet AYP even if one or more of its subgroups fails to achieve the reading and/or math targets. However in order to make AYP the school has to meet all performance targets in the aggregate, and the subgroup meets the other academic indicators, and the% of students below proficient level of the subgroup must decrease by ten% over the last two years.
In terms of student proficiency in reading and math, generally less than 50% of students were at state-determined levels. Demographically, the schools that I sampled reflected concentrations of either White or African-American poverty (95% in both cases) and in some cases a concentration of Hispanics (25% in one school in the Northeast). Additionally, all schools had English Language Learners (up to 20% of students in some schools) and students with disabilities (up to 15%).

With regards to the data presented herein, they are certainly limited. Much richer data could be collected via semi-structured interviews and ethnographic research, which I plan to engage with in future research. Surveys are limited in their ability to capture unprompted responses, and to validate the authenticity of that which is being recorded.

1.4.2 Representations of school space and educational reform: A visual narrative

In this study, I present a visual narrative of school space and educational reform. In my unconventional approach, I weave critical illustrations across each chapter. These visuals are, in a way, a form of geographic storytelling.

In writing and teaching geography, geographers are involved in the act of representation. In fact, “the creation and interpretation of visual images has always been important to geography and is what makes geography unique” (Thorne, 2004: 793). Geographers utilize a plethora of visual representations when producing, interpreting, and disseminating geographical knowledge (e.g., Kwan, 2008; Kwan and Ding, 2008). These include maps, photographs, films, slides, diagrams, graphs, etc. in textbooks, PowerPoint presentations, classrooms and conference settings. Visuals are powerful; they can seduce
the viewer. Images alone stimulate the senses and induce feelings in the viewer: “Anthropologists, psychologists and therapists have long understood the sensory effects of visual imagery. There is no reason why geography cannot embrace them too” (Bartram, 2003: 157).

Whether in teaching, research, or presentations, I incorporate critical illustrations that are a means of expressing how I think and articulate my ‘way of seeing’ the world. I create visual images to promote my personal ideas, knowledge, and feelings. In this work, I utilize pen-ink-wash hand drawings as an alternative form of communication about the topic of urban school space and educational reform by drawing upon the taken-for-granted objects of everyday life. My creative interpretations of the mundane become part of a powerful narrative that allows me to communicate with my audience and compliment/enrich the text. Woven within the text, my illustrations reveal my reading of the social, political, economic, and cultural issues at hand.

Although I recognize the importance of visual literacy (the constructing and deconstructing of images), my critical illustrations are open to the viewer’s interpretation. The viewer is free to react and decode the images.

1.5 Positionality and Contributions

1.5.1 How I came to this project

I have always been interested in urban representations, alternative forms of visualization, race/place, inequality, and social issues. Growing up in a neighborhood supposedly plagued by a cornucopia of urban problems, I became conscious of this negative
reputation and popular representations of urban decay at an early age. It was clear to me how ingrained stereotypical representations were in the mind of the public. Therefore, for years, I have been interested in how dominant representations of people and places, and their reputations are constructed and perpetuated over time, regardless of the fluidity of neighborhoods, identities, and the everyday realities.

My fascination with public school issues derives from the countless hours I spent in the schools and classrooms in which my mother taught. I listened to her stories and those of her colleagues about life on the “inside”: the many challenges vis-à-vis reforms, the administration, parents, and students; as well as the rewarding aspects of teaching.

During my study of geography, it became clear to me that there is a gap in the discipline regarding socially relevant, policy-relevant, and anti-racist research. Not since the 1960s have US geographers prioritized socially relevant research as a disciplinary agenda. This contrasts with the ongoing exploration of such topics in the UK, Canada, and abroad. As geographers, we are interested in the patterns and processes of phenomena. Beyond bringing a geographic lens to various issues, I have been curious as to what social contributions geographers are able to make, for instance, in the education realm? Are they in a position to inform public policy? These are but a few of the questions that I have been grappling with, and I hope that my discussion of these questions will spark further research.

As a reflective individual, I feel as though I must provide a disclaimer with regards to my positioning to this project. Who am I in relation to the schools, teachers, students, and communities that I study? I am an aspiring academic with interests in urban
social geography. I cannot deny my privileged background and outsider status vis-à-vis the public education system. I do not feel as though I am in a position to even begin to interpret the complexity of the issues with regards to public education in inner city communities in the US. As such, the reader is entitled to be suspicious of my understandings and interpretations, and is welcome to judge and take away relevant points. My study merely scratches at the surface of certain issues; it is my hope that future research will explore some of the important avenues that I highlight.

1.5.2 Contribution to the geography of education and visualization

This endeavor builds upon the under-researched sub-discipline of the geography of education, which is concerned with the “study of spatial variations in the provision, uptake, and outputs of educational facilities and resources” (Johnston et al., 2000: 203). The bulk of such research has been conducted within and focuses on education in the UK context (Burgess and Wilson, 2005; Warrington, 2005; Fotheringham, Charlton and Brundson, 2001; Taylor, 2002; Taylor, 2001a; Taylor, 2001b; Pearce, 2000; Pacione, 1997; Matthews, Airey, and Tacon, 1988) or the Canadian context (Basu, 2004, 2005) while few geographers have studied education in the US context (Dittmer, 2004; Talen, 2001 and Clark, 1987).

Geographers have focused on the contextual characteristics of school catchments (Matthews et al., 1988; Pearce, 2000; Fotheringham et al., 2001), school accessibility (Talen, 2001), the link between school performance and socio-spatial context (Pacione 1997), the geography of the education market (Taylor, 2001), and educational inequality
(Warrington, 2005). However the majority of the body of works has been carried out in the UK context; and as Talen (2001) observes, geographers have contributed to: (1) models for optimizing school locations, (2) school population forecasting and planning, and (3) analysis of school performance and their influential factors. This research elaborates on the third category of research with a focus on the impact of education policy on the landscape of education.

This work emerges from a critical geography perspective and tackles a pressing policy issue. Despite the call for a policy turn in geography and “a moral duty to engage with public policy issues and debate” (Martin, 2001), few researchers have heeded the call. I believe that geographers should engage, and be willing to criticize, policies that do not bring about real and positive change. Often “policies which seek to ‘reform’ existing socioeconomic structures and process merely adjust the status quo, or worse still end up reproducing it” (Martin, 2001: 203). NCLB is “applied blanket-fashion across designated areas as if the same problems, conditions and solutions pertain to each” (Martin, 2001: 204). Geographers are in a position to expose the importance of place in policy construction, implementation, and implications (Martin, 2001), and should act as social critics (Martin, 2001; Warrington, 2005).

Furthermore, this research makes two methodological contributions: (1) it uses qualitative methods to explore the issues surrounding the geography of education, which is rarely done; and (2) it creates alternative forms of visualization by using critical illustrations, thus contributing to visual culture in geography. I move beyond conventional visual representations and methods in the discipline. I believe that the
production of geographic knowledge through textual practices can coincide with the production of visual images, an innovative approach to conveying the geographer’s subjective ways of seeing issues and ways of imaging them.

This unconventional approach can be challenging. Challenges include having space to display critical illustrations, and recognizing these visuals as legitimate forms of representations within the discipline. Through this study, I call upon the making of space\(^8\) for the critical visual narrative in the discipline.

1.6 DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. In these chapters, I interweave my discussions of the neoliberal city, the governing of public schools, the power/knowledge generated from school performance data, and the place-images that result from NCLB. Figure 1, inspired by Holcomb (2001) (see Appendix A), illustrates the intricacies of place and representation. In the context of a neoliberal city seeking to streamline its social services, schools are governed at a distance and urban images are deployed to influence potential investors or residents. Schools are required to make public their performance. As I argue in my study, when a school fails to reach its state-established benchmark, its performance affects the city’s reputation and ability to attract. School failure is paraded through report cards, newspapers, online, and on television, thus creating a distinct place-

\(^8\) Fortunately I was able to have an exhibit of the illustrations woven throughout the following chapters (see Appendix E for photos and audience feedback).
image that has consequences for school reputations and identities, as well as affecting the mental images and behaviors of the consumers of education or consumers of the city.

In Chapter 2, I provide a genealogy of NCLB. Using the Foucauldian governmentality approach discussed in this chapter, I reveal the rationality underpinning NCLB and its associated discourses. I problematize NCLB and expose the silences of the policy, arguing that NCLB is neither aspatial nor colorblind. Place and race matter in considering the persistence of educational inequities, which the public educational system cannot alleviate simply through accountability mechanisms. Additionally, we cannot decontextualize NCLB, for this one-size-fits-all policy is applied to different contexts and so will have spatially varying outcomes.

In Chapter 3, I argue that NCLB has placed urban public schools in a neoliberal straitjacket. I explore the ways in which populations at these schools are feeling the squeeze. I weave-in teacher narratives that highlight the classroom realities exacerbated by NCLB. I give voice to inner-city public school teachers who critique the mechanisms deployed by NCLB and note the obstacles they face in achieving school improvement and sanctioned outcomes.
Figure 1.1: Connecting the neoliberal city, school performance, and place-images

(Inspired by Holcomb, 2001: 38, Figure 2.1)
In Chapter 4, I focus on the top-down form of public NCLB school governance in the US. I flesh out NCLB with insights from Foucault’s (1978, 2003) notion of biopower to remove the ‘naturalness’ and ‘placelessness’ of its neoliberal mechanisms. I argue that NCLB is a form of biopower, and I unpack what this implies for school governance. Doing so necessitates that I highlight the various techniques of power deployed by NCLB in order to govern schools, and regulate conduct. Although these techniques of power impact classroom practices, there is room for resistance. By critiquing the accountability system, teachers actively engage in resisting NCLB.

I continue with the thread of resistance, though I focus specifically on the practice of school labeling and the way NCLB publicly represents schools. School spaces are ascribed value-laden labels. I argue that schools that are designated ‘in need of improvement’ endure socio-spatial outcomes. I understand labels as a means of representing space. Hegemonic labels imbue places with meaning. As a result, schools are stigmatized by negative labels, as are the teachers and students within. Imaging ‘place’ has repercussions for both spaces and identities. I argue that socially constructed performance labels misrepresent school realities. Additionally, these misrepresentations are contested at the micro-level with teachers’ critiques of their schools’ label and the media’s portrayals of performance. Demystifying labels can be accomplished through contextualization, which provides a richer picture of what is really going on in particular places.

Finally, Chapter 5 concludes this work with a discussion of future research, useful methodologies to explore similar issues, and a consideration of the implications of NCLB.
for the discipline of Geography. In this chapter, I call for the engagement of geographers in research on Educational Geography as well as for their involvement in ensuring that Geography is prioritized at the K-to-12 grade levels despite the narrowing of curricula under NCLB.
CHAPTER 2
A GENEALOGY OF NCLB

Genealogy is a critical method that assists in reconstructing the origin and historical development of a particular discourse. Foucault (1995) developed the genealogical method in order to understand how systems of truth come about, and trace the movement of power and knowledge in space and time. In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault conducted a genealogical study of the development of the modern prison system, emphasizing that reforms led to a system of social control that diffused throughout society, including schools. The motto of the prison model of control: “to punish less, perhaps; but certainly to punish better” applies to contemporary schooling, as contemporary school reform is based upon minimizing inputs while increasing performance outcomes: ‘to fund less, but to educate better’.

The impetus to utilize the genealogical method here is my sense that educational reform is amiss. NCLB is problematic, and I would argue that current accountability scheme hinders rather than improves public education. In order to critique NCLB, it is first necessary to consider how NCLB came about. Tracing the evolution of NCLB
requires focusing on the notions and ideas that the reform is founded upon, and the discourses deployed to justify its implementation (i.e., that public education is in a state of crisis, and scientifically-proven accountability methods are the only solution); discourses that play off of societal concerns (e.g., social order, economic competitiveness, etc). As Darling-Hammond (1990) points out, education policies do not land in a vacuum, they land on top of other policies and so a massive geological dig would be required to unearth the tangled influences of the many policy layers that exist in schools (Darling-Hammond, 1990).

The genealogical approach is useful in studying the development of contemporary accountability schemes, which were developed to cure the so-called national educational crisis (though some schools are doing well). The public education system in the US has evolved over time, and been targeted by many reforms. The ultimate purpose of educational reform is to align schooling with societal norms regardless of context and time period. Digging into the past allows us to see how deeply rooted accountability practices have been historically. Additionally, conducting a genealogy of accountability raises our awareness of the present circumstances of educational reform, and in so doing facilitates critique (Visker, 1995).
In what follows, I present background information on NCLB; I trace the evolution of accountability, and the underlying logic of the reform. Doing so allows me to then critique the recycling of accountability schemes that are perpetually context insensitive.
2.1 NCLB: CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION REFORM

The *No Child Left Behind* Act of 2001 is the most recent federal level reform policy targeting the K-to-12 public school system in the US. It was signed into law in 2001 and has since been awaiting reauthorization. NCLB reauthorized the *Elementary and Secondary Education* (ESEA) Act of 1965, which established the Title I program to support and improve the academic achievement of poor/disadvantaged students. NCLB holds states, districts, and schools accountable for student achievement; and requires regular assessment of public schools to ensure that progress is made in closing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students (i.e., those that qualify for reduced-price or free lunches, students from poor households, students of color, and those that consistently score lower on standardized tests).
Illustration 2.2

The objectives of NCLB are to improve the quality of education for all students, and to close the achievement gap by the school year 2013-2014 (US Department of Education, 2007). In order to achieve its stated goals, NCLB scrutinizes schools designated as Title I (those with a large percentage of disadvantaged children, and eligible for federal funding). NCLB has four central elements: (1) stronger accountability for results, (2) expanded flexibility and local control, (3) expanded options for parents,
and (4) an emphasis on doing what works based on scientific research (US Department of Education, 2007).

NCLB is intended to heighten local control by providing greater flexibility at state and local levels; this may allow for the possibility of positive change. Both states and local school districts are given greater flexibility in how they allocate their federal funds to intervene in schools ‘in need of improvement,’ yet are required to follow federal Title I guidelines. Districts and schools are supposed to utilize effective teaching methods that are “scientifically proven” and employ “highly qualified” teachers. Despite these measures, if districts and schools do not perform well they are identified as ‘in need of improvement’. This designation requires districts/schools to expand options for parents of children from disadvantaged backgrounds that are “trapped in failing schools”. Options include offering: public school choice, which allows students to transfer to better-performing public or charter school; supplemental educational services including tutoring, after school services, and summer school programs; and charter schools by giving parents, educators, and interested community leaders greater opportunities to create new charter school (US Department of Education, 2007).

Under NCLB, each state implements measurements for determining whether its schools and local educational agencies (LEAs) are making adequate yearly progress (AYP). AYP is an individual state's measure of progress toward the goal of 100% of students achieving state academic standards in reading and math. It sets the minimum level of proficiency that the state, its school districts, and schools must achieve each year on annual tests and related academic indicators.
Schools that receive federal Title I funds (based on the percentage of students from low-income families) that have not met AYP for two consecutive years are identified as ‘in need of improvement’ and must develop a two-year plan to turn around their schools. Additionally, every student must be given the option to transfer to another public school within the district (one that has not been identified as ‘in need of improvement’). If a school does not make AYP for three consecutive years, it remains in school improvement status, and must continue to offer public school choice to all students. Additionally, students from low-income families must be offered supplemental educational services (free tutoring or extra academic help outside of the school day). Schools that remain in improvement for additional years are subject to corrective action, restructuring, and possible takeover or reorganization of the school (see Table 2.1 for additional details).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>School improvement measures</th>
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| **Year 1 School Improvement** | Address academic achievement problem that caused school identification for improvement  
Develop and implement plan (assistance in analyzing assessment data, improving professional development, improving resource allocation).  
- Offer all students public school choice  
- Must develop or revise a two-year school improvement plan |
| **Year 2 School Improvement** | Continue activities from Year 1 of School Improvement  
- Offer all students public school choice  
- Make available supplemental educational services to low-income students |
| **Year 3 Corrective Action** | - Offer all students public school choice  
- Offer supplemental educational services  
- Notify parents about the school’s status.  
LEA required to take action to “bring about meaningful change at the school”. Options include:  
- Replace school staff responsible for continued failure to make AYP  
- Implement a new curriculum based on scientifically based research  
- Decrease school-level management authority  
- Extend school day or year  
- Appoint outside expert to advise the school  
- Internal reorganization |
| **Year 4 Restructuring** | - Offer all students public school choice  
- Offer supplemental educational services.  
First year of restructuring, LEA required to prepare a plan and select from the options:  
- Reopen school as a public charter school  
- Replace principal and staff  
- Contract for private management company  
- State takeover  
- Other major restructuring of school governance |
| **Year 5 Implementation of restructuring** | Implement alternative governance plan no later than school year following year four.  
- Turn school operations over to the state  
- Undertake other major reforms and restructuring |

2.2 TRACING ACCOUNTABILITY AND EDUCATION REFORM

NCLB is not a novel reform policy, rather one that has borrowed heavily from the past, and so builds upon all education reforms and movements that preceded it. Its deployment as an instrument of power can be situated in the “dark ages of old accountabilist
arguments” (Sirotnik, 2004: 151), and practices over time. Sirotnik (2004) argues that NCLB (2001) is rhetorically identical to Lessinger’s Every Kid a Winner (1970). The latter put forward an ideology of educational accountability based upon student outcomes and scientific management. Both are outcome-driven, rely on reward and sanction as motivational drivers, both privilege science, and both lament the low achievement of disadvantaged students and those of color (Sirotnik, 2004). To flesh out the recycled accountability mechanisms featured in NCLB, it is necessary to trace the evolution of educational accountability. In what follows, I discuss the genealogy of educational reform policy, and the goals and means of accountability over time.

2.2.1 Genealogy of Contemporary Accountability

Accountability has been present throughout the history of US public schooling, however the goals, means, and responsibility of accountability have fluctuated over time (Cuban, 2004). The system of tax-supported public schools has been held accountable to voters, elected officials, and tax-payers since its inception. Since the late 1800s, the means of accountability, namely testing and the tracking of performance are surprisingly consistent, so too are the themes of efficiency and blame.

By 1865, testing became a ubiquitous tool to assess within district learning and student outcomes (Cuban, 2004), and a means of managing the performance of schools and students. With rapid industrialization and urbanization in the early 20th century, business and civic progressives called for reforms in education, arguing that schools had to fill in the gaps other social entities could not. Public schools were made into custodial
centers to prepare workers for the industrialized economy (Cuban, 2004), and performance data was collected. Gathering information on public school performance was believed to “motivate, shame, and ultimately prod school boards and administrators into making schools efficient and lead to a more rational, democratic, and humane society” (Cuban, 2004: 21).

Pre-World War I and the post war periods saw the emergence of the school survey movement, in which experts were sent into districts to track performance and the spending of public money (Cuban, 2004). These efforts were intended to capture information on the efficient use of school resources, as quality schooling was based upon the provision of adequate school buildings and materials (Cuban, 2004). However after World War II, this shifted to a performance-based definition of high quality education, and the efficient use of resources toward improving student performance (as measured by test scores). This was coupled with heightened responsibilities for schools in ensuring desirable student outcomes.

During the Cold War, reforms were drafted to combat gaps in public schooling. In 1958, President Eisenhower signed the *National Defense Education* (NDE) Act, which raised graduation requirements in math and science, added gifted programs, and introduced advanced placement. In 1965, President Johnson signed the ESEA, which provided funds to schools serving poor students. This policy held schools receiving Title I federal funds accountable for their students’ performance. Title I schools were required to test their students annually and report the results.
Despite the injection of federal dollars into districts in need, by the end of the 1960s, critics claimed that schools receiving funds were failing to improve. Failing schools were blamed for not preparing students for the workplace, for national problems such as violence in urban areas, and for White middle-class flight (Cuban, 2004). In response, business and civic stakeholders launched plans to improve schools, stimulate economic growth and worker productivity, and increase the competitiveness of the US workforce. These efforts began in the 1970s, and marked the commencement of decades of business involvement and influence in public schooling. Since this period, public schools have become more business-like in governance, organization, management, and practices (Hursh and Martina, 2003; Cuban, 2004).

By the 1980s, the business community was heavily involved in influencing educational policy. They linked poor student performance to mediocre economic performance in the global marketplace (Cuban, 2004). Business interests believed that substandard performance resulted from excessive bureaucracy and lack of accountability. They argued that to raise academic achievement and economic performance, required schools to be managed efficiently, compete amongst each, and be subjected to incentives and sanctions.

In the 1990s, standards-based reform drove accountability to heavily emphasize “high-stakes” standardized testing, assessment, public information, and a system of sanctions for underperformance (Goertz and Duffy, 2003; Herrington and Fowler, 2005; Jennings, 2005; Louis, Febey and Schroder, 2003; Mitchell, 2003). The Improving America’s Schools Act of 1994 mandated states to develop assessments, to use the
assessments data to track student performance, and to identify low-performing Title I schools (Goertz and Duffy, 2003).

NCLB expanded the emphasis on student performance as started by the Clinton administration’s Goals 2000: Educate America Act, which was founded upon outcomes-based education. Although NCLB was influenced by previous federal reforms, the policy itself was based upon the strategies implemented by President Bush while he was Governor of Texas. His reform model was credited for improving the state’s public school system. President Bush brought Rod Paige, the former Houston Superintendent reputed for listening to the business community and raising minority student test scores, to Washington as the US Secretary of Education.

Media praise of the “Texas miracle” (as the public data on school performance indicated gains) helped NCLB pass with little opposition in 2001 (Goertz and Duffy, 2003). NCLB received both bipartisan support and business support and brought test-based accountability to new heights. By 2002, all states were required to publish district- and school-level report cards (that included data on students’ test performance, attendance, dropout and graduation rates, student-teacher ratios, and financial information) for public dissemination.

2.2.2 The Discourses of Contemporary Educational Reform

Based upon the previous subsection, it is evident that three discourses are deployed in order to gain support and sell educational reform to the public. They are: (1) the discourse
of crisis/failure; (2) the discourse of business/marketization; and (3) the discourse of fairness/equity.

2.2.2.1 The discourse of crisis / failure and blame

The public education system in the US has been under attack, and deemed in a state of crisis. In *The Manufactured Crisis* (1995), Berliner and Biddle argued that the so-called ‘educational crisis’ was socially constructed. Public education has been constructed as irreparable, an expensive “failed social service,” not worthy of repair (Kerchner, 1997). This flared up in the 1980s with the federal report *A Nation At Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (1983), which attacked the public education system (Herrington and Fowler, 2005), and was infused with the discourse of ‘failure’. In essence, the US public education system was socially constructed failing to educate its students. This message had a profound impact on the way the nation thought about educational policy, as report recommendations were adopted by the media, advocates of outcome-based education, and educational reformers (Louis, Febey and Schroder, 2003). Additionally, this discourse assisted in justifying the conservative call for standards, excellence, and accountability (Apple 2001). NCLB built upon this discourse, as supposedly schools continued to fail at educating the US student population. Schools were blamed for having low expectations of children as a result “too many children in America are segregated by low expectations, illiteracy, and self-doubt” (G. W. Bush, 2002). This justified the zero-tolerance backbone of NCLB, as “the soft bigotry of low expectations is no longer tolerated” (US Department of Education, 2005-2008). NCLB was justified as an
intervention that would turn the system around, a much needed change as “... the quality of our public schools directly affects us all as parents, as students, and as citizens” (G. W. Bush, 2002).
Contemporary educational reform policy can be situated within the rise of increasing global economic competition. The infusion of business ideals into educational reform became most apparent during the Reagan era. Central to the administrations’ federal policy discourse was the argument that the nation and its students needed to be globally competitive. Utilizing market language, public education was constructed as inefficient, bureaucratic, rigid, and unaccountable. This justified greater accountability and market choice in education. The deployment of NCLB’s underlying market discourse can be situated in the neoliberal turn of the 1980s, a decade that prioritized competitiveness, reduction in government intervention, privatization, deregulation, and personal responsibility. From that point forward, government was to take a hands-off approach in the provision of public education. The reduction of government involvement in education legitimized neoliberal measures that privileged the market as the best distributor of educational services.

Business ideals and the business communities’ agenda took precedent as the government developed tighter connections with the business sector (Stromquist, 2002). Among the stakeholders supporting the marketization of public education were business interest groups such as the Business Roundtable (BR), an organization concerned the US workforce supply and economic growth. According to the BR task force on 'education and the workforce' the business community is "committed to advocating public policies that improve education performance and workforce competitiveness in the United
States," and to preparing "US students and the US workforce to succeed in our changing world" (Business Roundtable, 2007).

Discourse justifying educational reform was infused with terms such as ‘global economy,’ ‘workforce,’ and ‘complex skills’, thus aligning language with business norms and needs. This can also be seen in contemporary rhetoric: “in a constantly changing world that is demanding increasingly complex skills from its workforce, children are literally being left behind" (G. W. Bush, 2002), and "we cannot prepare students for the global economy if we don't get them to grade level first" (Margaret Spellings, Secretary of Education, 2005-2008). These quotes exemplify the rhetoric used to sell NCLB and feed into the public’s distrust of public institutions (Gunzenhauser, 2006).

Rolling back government spending on social services and privatizing aspects of the public education are believed to create a “favorable business climate” and an educated labor force (Hursh and Martina, 2003). Thus, the public was distracted from the rolling back of government and educational funding. To avoid popular discontent, neoliberal governments strategically shifted social responsibility from society to the individual, and convinced the public of their access to equal opportunities. This powerful rhetoric on domestic policy convinced the public of the desirability of greater consumer choice in education, and that it is the responsibility of schools and individuals to make decisions that lead to educational success.
2.2.2.3 *The discourse of fairness / equality*

Governments provide a false appearance of concern over educating all citizens. The public has been convinced of the necessity and benefits of NCLB, particularly due to the discourse of fairness and objectivity which is embedded within it (Hursh and Martina, 2003). According to the US government, NCLB builds upon the principals of the *Brown*
v. Board of Education court case, which outlawed racial segregation in public schools, and provided equal educational opportunity for all. NCLB espouses improvement in education for all: “the bipartisan No Child Left Behind law ensures that schools are held accountable for the academic progress of every child.” (US Department of Education, 2005). However, achieving social justice in education was displaced by a neoliberal agenda and the marketization of public education. The discourse of failure proved to be an effective way of diverting attention from funding cuts and unequal opportunities in the US education system. The public was “influenced by diversionary rhetoric,” and the multiple discourses deployed convinced the public that the reform was fair (Berliner and Biddle, 1995).

The discourse of neoliberal reform strategically utilizes the powerful and appealing utopian concepts of liberty and freedom (Harvey, 2006). Liberal values of equal access to education for “all” were expressed in the NDE of 1958 and ESEA of 1965, which both sought to expand educational opportunities for the poor, and increase federal funding for education (Mitchell, 2003). Such legislation intended to deal with equity issues, and increase access to educational opportunities for all citizens.

Although in its rhetoric NCLB espouses a strong commitment to improving schools, getting every student to grade level, and redressing social inequities; the policy is devoid of the language of multiculturalism, democracy, and citizenship (Mitchell, 2003). Rather emphasis is placed on “attaining ‘complex skills’ necessary for individual success in the global economy” (Mitchell, 2003).
The underlying logic of NCLB is neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is an economic doctrine that privileges the market as the most effective way of determining production, and satisfying consumer needs (Stromquist, 2002). This doctrine prescribes universal cures, or one-size-fits-all policy strategies (Peck and Tickell, 2002) to address problems. NCLB is one such strategy. NCLB is a neoliberal reform of the public school system, whereby education is seen as a product or service; schools are to be managed in a business-like
manner; and taxpayers are shareholders entitled to information about the performance of educational products and services.

Neoliberalism is the discursive field in which the exercise of power in education is rationalized. It is a political-institutional mode of governance associated with the dismantling of the Fordist-Keynesian order (i.e., curbing state intervention and investment in public services) (Brenner and Theodore, 2002), and fiscal retrenchment. Neoliberal governments simultaneously institute educational reforms while cutting funding (Hursh and Martina, 2003). The 1980s saw the rolling back of the state; disinvestment in public services; implementation of strategies toward competitiveness and efficiency; and calls for personal responsibility (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). Neoliberalism as a form of regulation plays a decisive role in constructing the “rules” of competition by shaping the metrics (Peck and Tickell, 2002) by which public policy and school performance are measured.

Educational reform is deployed in order to align schools with the previously mentioned business norms. This intervention is two-fold. On the one hand, neoliberal regimes are unforgiving in the face of incompetence or non-compliance, punishing failure, and intervening around social issues like education (Peck and Tickell, 2002). On the other hand, intervention is justified when issues have economic ramifications, and can potentially impact growth and competitiveness. The quality of schools is important in attracting/maintaining residents, capital, and resources, all of which are “hypermobile and attracted to favorable conditions where investments are worthwhile” (Peck and Tickell, 2002). Thus government intervenes in reforming public education so as to ensure
favorable economic conditions. Not surprising then, contemporary educational policy reforms reflect the thinking of corporate leaders, policy analysts, foundations, conservative think tanks (e.g., the Heritage Foundation), and critics of public education (Boyd, 2005).

Interventions in public education are associated with the development and rolling out of new technologies of government (which I elaborate on in Chapter 4), the construction of discourses of “reform” (as discussed in the previous subsection), and the fashioning of new modes of service delivery (e.g., charter schools) (Peck and Tickell, 2002).

NCLB is founded upon the norms of: accountability, efficiency, quality control, and choice (Stromquist, 2002). An essential aspect of neoliberal reform is the understanding of students and parents as consumers of education that are entitled to choice. As a solution to school failure, NCLB offers a ‘choice’ option for parents whose children are stuck in chronically failing schools. This option is based on the assumption that all individuals act out of self-interest, in order to maximize individual welfare through rational choice. Proponents of the choice option argue that it empowers consumers of education, subjects schools to market forces that improve quality and efficiency through competition, and increases the number of charter schools; thereby leading to higher student achievement, reduced educational bureaucracy, and the equalization of educational opportunities. I argue otherwise in Chapter 3, and offer a critique of choice.
Illustration 2.7
2.4 CRITIQUE OF NCLB

Illustration 2.8

In this section I problematize NCLB as an aspatial and colorblind reform policy, and expose the importance of place and the ‘eraced’. The de-contextualized and colorblind nature of NCLB is touted in official discourse: “For the first time ever, we are looking ourselves in the mirror and holding ourselves accountable for educating every child. That means all children, no matter their race or income level or zip code.” (Margaret Spellings, Secretary of Education, 2005–2008). However, despite the laudable goal of improving education for all, NCLB applies “outdated, conservative economic ideas to the complex institution of education” (Berliner and Biddle, 1995). NCLB “screams out for equalizing student outcomes yet is conspicuously silent on the extraordinary inequities in a still racist and classist society” (Sirotnik, 2004: 152). In so doing, NCLB cannot redress chronic social inequalities found in US society, rather through its practices (e.g., sole
reliance on uncontextualized raw test scores to determine school performance/quality, failure identification and associated sanctions) it reproduces them.

My intent is to bring attention to the fact that both race and place matter, are interwoven, and need to be at the center of policy critique. Though NCLB is intended to improve education quality for all students, the reform is predicated on a neoliberal ideology that both subverts race and negates that racism is a persistent problem in US society thus, reproducing, reifying, and normalizing racism and educational apartheid via testing and the false hope of choice. I argue that NCLB is problematic given its aspatial, decontextualized, and colorblind nature.

NCLB is blanketed across space irrespective of context (i.e., urban school ‘realities’ and challenges). By negating the contextual realities of public schools (e.g., place-related factors that affect education provision and outcomes, wealth inequities, unequal access to resources and opportunities, and segregation), reform is tremendously problematic and likely to reproduce the status quo.

Although NCLB promises to focus on traditionally disadvantaged and underperforming students, the Act itself is purely a rhetorical commitment to “leave no child behind” (Ryan, 2004). The de-contextual nature of contemporary accountability strategies is not surprising since according to neoclassical economics, space is a ‘placeless’ level playing field (Prince et al., 2006: 259), that is homogenous and subservient to the market. Similarly race is denied as the market is considered colorblind, the ultimate regulator and just decision-maker (Hursh and Martina, 2003), thus allocating
services according to supply and demand, irrespective of the race of education consumers.

2.4.1 *A spatial / de-contextualized policy?*

Contemporary education reform “takes little notice of place” (Gruenewald, 2003), regarding schools “as operating divorced from historical, social, economic, political and educational contexts” (Tomlinson, 1997). However, policy is inherently geographic with spatially varying consequence. Space matters in school quality and student outcomes as “variations in educational provision and attainment are complex social phenomena which
… are located at the intersection of space, social structure and social processes” (Butler and Hamnett, 2007). Social theorists recognize that everyday life and society are situated, contextualized, and reproduced in space (Harvey, 1989; Soja, 1989). There are no aspatial social processes (Soja, 1996). As such schools play a mediating role “in the production of space (or social context) through the education of place makers (or citizens)” (Gruenewald, 2003). Schools are active entities with implications that expand beyond their walls, as they contribute not only to the production of space (as phrased by Lefebvre, 1974), but also to the reproduction of power relations (Gruenewald, 2003). Social reproduction theorists (Foucault, 1980; Lefebvre, 1974; Massey, 1994; and Soja, 1989) contend that the organization of space and their internal dynamics play a role in the reproduction of social and class inequalities (Smith, 2000). For both Lefebvre (1991) and Soja (1996), the social is produced through and constitutive of space: “places are not independent worlds of their own, and communities are not sealed ideological bubbles” (Bauder, 2001).

Considering context and local specificity are important in understanding the differential effects that policies have upon different places: “Policies enter existing patterns of inequality … They ‘impact’ or are taken up differently as a result” (Ball, 1994). Massey’s (1979) metaphor of sedimentation assists in recognizing the importance of context, as rounds of investment create a landscape of inequality (Massey, 1979). Each layer is embedded with a set of social relations, thus creating “differential effects in different places” (Massey, 1979). Not only will the current layer of educational reform touch down differently in different places due to the set of preexisting social relations and
conditions on the ground, but it will also be experienced differentially due to the \textit{power-geometry} of time-space compression. To understand place it is necessary to set it within its wider geographical context and recognize place specificity is constantly being reproduced (Massey, 1994).

\subsection{2.4.1.1 Metropolitan fragmentation and inequality}

NCLB is illustrative of a one-size-fits-all and myopic strategy that has been implemented irrespective of the uneven geography of opportunity in the US context; where the unequal distribution of wealth and opportunity has resulted in pockets of poverty and isolation across the urban landscape.

Economists argue that fragmentation and local control contribute to greater efficiency in the provision of public services as “residents can ‘vote with their feet’ and relocate to those areas that provide the level of taxation and public services that match their preferences” (Reed, 2001). When people leave cities they take their resources with them. Since the US public education system is connected to property taxes (as these fund schools), real estate values (influencing location decisions and local tax bases), and the socioeconomic characteristics of neighborhoods (schools reflect local characteristics due to attendance areas), the quality of schools is impacted by flight. Since the post-World War II period, decentralization of employment, residential and retail developments, coupled with urban flight of the middle-class has left inner cities with aging infrastructure, concentrated poverty and minority groups, a greater demand for social services, and a shrinking tax base.
The US system of jurisdictionally fragmented metropolitan areas has led to inequalities in resource allocation (Harvey, 1992), as unequally resourced municipalities rely on property taxes for financing public services. Funding levels and school quality are closely tied to community affluence, whereby suburban or wealthy schools are able to construct and staff better schools than poorer districts (Reed, 2001).

2.4.1.2 Segregation

The US Department of education recognizes that “in the greatest country in the world, we created two education systems – separate and unequal” (US Department of education, 2005). All groups supposedly have equal opportunity for schooling however the history of exclusion in the US tells otherwise (Hochschild and Scovronick, 2003). Currently, schools and neighborhoods are more economically and racially segregated than ever. The abject disparities in educational opportunity and outcomes between racial/ethnic groups are irrefutable (e.g., see Clark, 1987 for discussions of Black/White educational attainment disparities).

Despite efforts toward court-ordered desegregation of schools, as achieved by *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the removal of certain barriers (e.g., discriminatory housing ordinances and lending practices) deemed unconstitutional, informal segregating mechanisms remain in place; and so patterns of economic and racial segregation persist. Current patterns are not haphazard, but rather the product of a long history of discriminatory actions on the part of private actors and government policy. Federal, state, and local policies and programs have produced and reproduced segregation (Young,
2000). Actions at various scales have played a major role in maintaining segregation, and providing those that live in segregated neighborhoods with fewer and lower-quality public and private services. The present inequalities create the worst problems in schools that are in large and poor central cities (Young, 2000). These schools have fewer resources, increasing diversity, larger classes, inadequate facilities, classrooms and technology.

Patterns of residential segregation along racial and class lines plays a role in maintaining the urban-suburban divide (powell, 2001). NCLB touches down in a context of fragmented school districts which reproduce and exacerbate segregation. Class disparities among school districts are growing, as communities and even whole regions become more economically homogenous (Hochschild and Scovronick, 2003).

Jonathan Kozol, educator, activist, and author of books on public education in the United States, has documented these tremendous disparities in schooling, via narratives from children and stakeholders in large US cities (Kozol, 1992, 2005). Kozol argues that contemporary educational reform has reestablished educational apartheid along racial and class lines (Kozol, 1992, 2005). De facto ‘educational apartheid’ has been established whereby affluent children attend quality schools, and disadvantaged children are funneled into failing public schools (Apple, 2001; Khatri and Hughes, 2002); thus reproducing or maintaining a segregated geographic pattern.
2.4.2 Colorblind policy?

“In the US, race is present in every institution, every relationship, every individual. This the case not only for the way society is organized-spatially, culturally, in terms of stratification, but also for our perceptions and understandings of personal experience. We are compelled to think racially, to use racial categories and meaning systems in which we have been socialized. Despite exhortations both sincere and hypocritical, it is not possible or even desirable to be ‘color-blind’.” — Omi & Winant, 1986. *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1980s*

Covert societal and institutional racism are manifested by supposedly racially neutral or “colorblind” social forces, policies, and practices (Street, 2005). For instance, the reliance on local property taxes to fund public schools regardless of community context results in smaller tax bases in communities of color. Similarly, the high-stakes testing practices of NCLB, utilized irrespective of test-taker characteristics has resulted in lower test scores in schools serving communities of color.

In her newest book *Can We Talk About Race?: And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation* (2008), African American psychologist, educator, and author of “*Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?*” (1997), Tatum discusses the legacy of racism that has undermined the quality of education for all, and the resegregation of US public schools that has confined students of color to high-poverty schools (schools with fewer resources, lower test scores, higher dropout rates, and offer fewer courses); and urges that these be discussed publicly.
NCLB is an example of color-blindness, as it sidesteps race as a causal explanation for educational disparities. NCLB is an ‘act of whiteness’ that perpetuates a state of White privilege/hegemony (Leonardo, 2007). Leonardo (2007) argues for a color-conscious perspective that problematizes the race-neutral discourse of NCLB, a policy whose acronym is questionable, could it stand for “No Color Left Behind” or “No Caucasian Left Behind”? According to Leonardo (2007) it is necessary to recognize that the academic standards are highly racialized. However, colorblind discourse conveniently blames and denies the structural reasons for school failure. Past triumphs such as Brown v. Board of Education encourage the illusion that racism is no longer problematic and
that societal barriers have been removed (Street, 2005). As such, reforms neglect the critical role that racialized socioeconomic inequality plays in crippling the educational outcomes of minority inner-city children.

Illustration 2.12

“Inner-city black and Latino students suffer disproportionately from rotting school structures, inadequate school materials, chronic instability and under-qualification on the part of their teachers, and overcrowded classrooms with inordinately high student-teacher ratios. … Inner-city students of color are especially targeted by the authoritarian and mind- and soul-deadening standardized-test-based curriculum [or what Street (2005) calls “skill, drill, grill and mind kill”] that public authorities inflict with particular intensity on urban minorities and poor.”

-Street, 2005: 4.
According to Street (2005), the deepest inequalities originate and operate in the environment of the urban ghetto, beyond the reach of schools and educational policy. Children living in poor communities plagued by low income, high unemployment, isolation, high crime and violence, high incarceration rates, lack of access to quality medical care, and household instability; as nearly half of all black children do, bring racialized social class barriers to learning (Street, 2005).  

Operating in a context of concentrated poverty is an additional barrier to improving student performance. High poverty schools are defined as public schools with more than 75% of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. In 2005-06, approximately 15% of all elementary and secondary public school students (7.1 million) attended high-poverty schools (US Department of Education, 2008). Nationally, larger percentages of Black (32%), Hispanic (34%), and American Indian/Alaska Native (24%) students attended high-poverty schools than did White (4%) or Asian/Pacific Islander (10%) students in 2005-06 (US Department of Education, 2008). Among students attending city schools, 44% of Blacks, 46% of Hispanics, 27% of American Indians/Alaska Natives attended high-poverty schools, compared with 9% of Whites and 17% Asia/Pacific Islanders (US Department of Education, 2008).

NCLB suppresses complexities by adopting an “ideology of colorblindness,” and relying on numerical gains in academic performance as sufficient in dissolving socioeconomic disparities (Freeman, 2005). Disparities in achievement reflect societal

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9 Additionally inner-city schools feed into the school-to-prison pipeline where inner-city classrooms seats are used to determine the number of prison beds needed in the future, and academic failure is impetus for schools to push students out of the system.
disparities, and the fact that the non-academic needs of disadvantaged children remain unmet.

2.4.2.1 The illusion of opportunity - choice

Secretary of Education, Margaret Spelling has advocated for the elimination of race as a criterion for assignment in public school programs. The result is an ongoing struggle for equal access to publicly funded educational resources (Tatum, 2008). Rather than proposing school integration to alleviate educational inequalities and their spatial manifestations, NCLB offers parents of students “trapped in chronically failing and unsafe schools” the option to transfer their children to better performing schools. I argue that the ‘choice’ is merely an illusion. Under NCLB, all students enrolled in a school designated for school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring, have the option to transfer to another public school within their district. According to the US Department of Education (2008), in 2006-2007, over 5.4 million students were eligible for choice however only 2.2% participated nationally.

The so-called “real choices” of this NCLB provision rarely materialize as districts ‘in need of improvement’ often do not have the capacity in high performing schools to accommodate all students eligible to transfer. Districts are required to offer a range of schools as transfer options to any parent. However, many school options are often similar to the school a student attends prior to transfer (GAO, 2004). Since passage of NCLB in 2001, about 1 in 10 schools receiving federal funds for low-income students under Title I -approximately 1 in 20 public schools nationwide- have been identified for school choice
(GAO, 2004). In the 2002-2003 school year, approximately 5,300 schools attended by 3 million children were identified for choice, about 19,000 students transferred. In 2003-2004, the number rose to about 6,200 schools, and an additional 31,000 transferred (roughly 1% of those eligible). These schools had larger proportions of minority and low-income students enrolled than Title I schools that were not identified for choice (GAO, 2004).
2.4.2.2 Racial ramifications of testing practices

As Tatum (2008) points out, NCLB requires that we talk about race as the policy itself calls for student test scores to be disaggregated along racial lines. As a result, there is frequent discussion of racial differences in test performance. These disparities make headlines, as newspapers report the outcomes by race, thus reinforcing the public’s perception of inadequate school performance on the part of many Black and Hispanic students. This encourages administrators of White middle-class schools to exclude African-American, Hispanic, and poor students. Increased diversity within a school is equated with lower test scores, thus raising the chances that a school will fail to meet its state-established standard. Administrators are given further incentive to minimize the number of students of color and disadvantaged students in a school or district (Ryan, 2004). Additionally, non-Title I schools have an incentive to avoid enrolling disadvantaged transfer students who may bring the school’s performance down, thus subjecting the school to the stern accountability provisions of Title I (Ryan, 2004). Pushing out low-performing students is making it even more difficult for disadvantaged students to catch up to their more affluent peers (Ryan, 2004).

Civil rights advocates in New York and Texas have charged in court that high-stakes accountability systems discriminate against poor and minority students (Goertz and Duffy, 2003) concentrated in urban areas. Historically, poorly supported schools that serve the most disadvantaged children were the most likely to lose in accountability competitions given the “biases and unfair impact of accountability programs” (Berliner
and Biddle, 1995). I would argue that the same is true in today’s context. The schools and children “left behind” continue to be those that NCLB claims to assist.

Moore (2005) notes that NCLB standardized testing practices are biased and racialized; thus condemning disadvantaged students and their public schools to failure (Giroux & Schmidt, 2004), and reproducing marginalized students’ academic failure (Smith, 2000). Students least likely to test well in school are students from the poorest families- the kids who are least likely to have educated parents, stable housing, or adequate health care.

Despite these realities, the US Department of Education publicly touts performance gains of sub-groups. On their website (2008) a series of fact sheets on the national performance of African American children, Hispanic American children, and American Indian and Alaska Native children (see Figure 2.1 and 2.2) are made available. Accordingly, the same language and rhetoric are deployed for each, indicating improvement as a success of NCLB. If one distills these reports, it is evident that a copy and paste approach was taken in addressing performance issues of targeted student groups. As a result, the following fill-in-the-blank sentences are representative and can be completed with any racial/ethnic category, options include: African American, Hispanic American, or American Indian and Alaska Native.

- “In the past, too many ___________ * students have been shortchanged by our nation's schools.”
- “Schools are now held specifically accountable for the annual progress of ________ * students.”
“NCLB is working for __________* students.”

Figure 2.1: Stronger Accountability: How NCLB Benefits African Americans

Source: US Department of Education
How *No Child Left Behind* Benefits Hispanic Americans

"One in every five children under 18 is of Hispanic origin. We must work together to ensure all these children stay in school and have the chance to achieve their potential." – Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings

In the past, too many Hispanic American students were shortchanged by our nation’s schools.

- In the greatest country in the world, we created two education systems – separate and unequal.
- A growing “achievement gap” was evidence that some students were taught well while the rest – mostly poor and minority - were allowed to struggle or drop out.
- Language and cultural barriers, too often left unaddressed by schools, exacerbated the problem.

The *No Child Left Behind* law ensures that schools are held accountable for the academic progress of every child, regardless of race, ethnicity, income level or zip code.

- Because of *No Child Left Behind*, closing the achievement gap is now a national priority.
- Schools are now held specifically accountable for the annual progress of Hispanic American students.
- Schools must have high expectations for every child – the soft bigotry of low expectations is no longer tolerated.

Parents now receive important information about the academic performance of their child and his/her school.

- *No Child Left Behind* requires annual assessment of students in grades 3-8 and once in high school.
- The law requires states and school districts to give parents easy-to-read, detailed report cards on schools and districts, telling them which schools are succeeding.

When schools don’t make the grade, families are given new options.

- Schools that don’t meet state standards for two years in a row are identified as “in need of improvement.”
- Parents must be offered the choice of sending their child to another public or public charter school in the district that is not in need of improvement, as well as transportation to that school.
- Schools that don’t meet state standards for three years must offer free tutoring or other academic services to eligible low-income students.
- School officials must develop a plan with families, teachers, the school district, community leaders and outside experts to turn their underperforming school around.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* is working for Hispanic Americans.

- According to the Nation’s Report Card, reading and math scores for Hispanic nine-year-olds, and math scores for Hispanic 13-year-olds, are at all-time highs.
- Over the past 5 years, Hispanic 9-year-olds’ reading scores are up 12 pts. and math scores are up 17 pts.
- The achievement gap between white and Hispanic 9-year-olds in reading and math is at an all-time low.

President Bush and Congress continue to demonstrate their commitment to education.

- President Bush’s FY 2006 budget would increase total funding for *No Child Left Behind* to $25.3 billion, an increase of $8 billion, or 46 percent over FY2001 levels.
- The budget would increase Title I funding for low-income students to $13.3 billion, an increase of $4.6 billion, or 52 percent since the law was enacted.
- The President has called for more than $675 million – a 51 percent increase since 2001 – to help ensure that Limited English Proficient students learn English and meet high academic standards.

For more information on *No Child Left Behind* visit [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov) or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

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*Figure 2.2: Stronger Accountability: How NCLB Benefits Hispanic Americans*

2.4.3 Reproducing / maintaining the status quo

I argue that NCLB is reshaping the geography of educational provision, as affluent parents and decision-makers are given further incentives to segregate, and deploy strategies that further insolate themselves within the public education system (Butler and Hamnett, 2007). Exercising choice and utilizing school performance data in the decision making process is limited to those that have opportunities to do so. The children of the elite are the ultimate beneficiaries with greater educational opportunities and choices.

Historically, public education has been “a key mechanism used by dominant elites” to maintain “an unequal system of class relations” (Mitchell, 2003). As such the public education system has served to “uphold the existing power structures within the nation-state” and “normalized unequal relations of power, and served to solidify the rule of dominant classes, mediate class systems and colonize civil society” (Mitchell, 2003). Neoliberal policies in practice reproduce traditional hierarchies of class, race, gender and ‘ability’ (Apple, 1996; Whitty et al, 1998). The ‘quasi-market’ in education has led to the exacerbation of existing social divisions (Apple, 2001).

“Twenty-First Century US educational race apartheid is deepened by the ascendancy of neoliberal policy and ideology, which attack core moral and political bases for meaningful public commitment to equal minority education and intensify the steep disadvantages that many nonwhite children bring to the classroom.”

-Street, 2005: 6.

The marketization of education enables advantaged parents and advantaged schools to further enhance their relative advantage, thereby increasing educational inequalities and social polarization (Whitty et al., 1998). Privileged parents who believe that they are
entitled to better schools are in a position to maximize the educational advantage of their children by exercising choice in ways that exclude the “other”. They are able to take advantage of NCLB provisions as they have access to information about educational opportunities.

To conclude, it is necessary to place race at the center of one’s analysis of educational reform and when considering the implications of policies upon inner-cities, spaces that are raced and classed. Not only can we talk about race as Tatum (2008) suggests, but we will talk about race, because not doing so is to deny the US’s discriminatory past, and ever-present spatial patterns of segregation. Persistent inequalities are part of a long standing legacy that cannot be erased. In Chapter 5, I return to this discussion about race and education, and consider the role of critical race theory and the discipline of geography in further exploring these issues. Race must be placed at the core of one’s analysis of the current status and the multiple effects of educational policy as issues of whiteness lie at the core of policy and practice (Apple, 1999). As I discussed in this chapter, neoliberals and neo-conservatives creatively convince the public that policies are place, class, and race neutral / colorblind but they are not (Apple, 1999).

“We cannot expect one solution to be right for all kids, all areas, all teachers.

- Teacher, Grades: 3-5, 4 years.
2.4.4 **Persistence of educational inequality**

“Part of the attractiveness of the accountabilist ideology is its simplicity and reductionism: consequences (high stakes), easy to obtain evidence (testing), behavioralizing outcomes (or standards and performance), and laying the whole of the responsibility on the doorsteps of schools as if they existed in a social, political, and economic vacuum.”


Schools neither exist in a vacuum, nor can their challenges be addressed in a vacuum (Noguera, 2004). Schools operate within complex and diverse contexts. Thus, it is unrealistic to expect that a single reform will produce “wholesale improvement” as certain schools operate in impoverished communities that face numerous challenges including “inequality, poverty, and powerlessness” (Noguera, 2004: 79).

As argued in this chapter, NCLB fails to acknowledge these challenges and the uneven geographies of education upon which it touches down. Despite claims that reform will redress the deficiencies and social inequalities, NCLB does little to provide assistance to the schools and communities that need the most help (Noguera, 2004). The problems faced by schools reflect those of the community beyond their walls including: poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, underemployment, lack of affordable housing, and crime (Thirunarayanan, 2004). These are challenges that make it difficult for schools alone to redress inequities and raise student performance. Closing the achievement gap is a complex issue that “reflects the socioeconomic gap, the health gap, and the gap in opportunity” (Noguera, 2004: 73).
CHAPTER 3

THE NEOLIBERAL STRAITJACKET

“When your country...recognizes the rules of the free market in today’s global economy, and decides to abide by them, it puts on what I call ‘the Golden Straitjacket.’ [It] is the defining political-economic garment of this globalization era. (…) This Golden Straitjacket is pretty much ‘one size fits all.’ So it pinches certain groups, squeezes others and keeps a society under pressure to constantly streamline its economic institutions and upgrade its performance.”


3.1 TAILORING THE NCLB STRAITJACKET

The neoliberal straitjacket became the garment of choice of powerful nations in the 1980s. By wearing the ‘Golden Straitjacket’, a concept borrowed from Friedman (1999), nations committed to economic models and policies, which emphasized free-market competition (Larner, 2000). These policies entail the adoption of certain ‘golden rules,’ including privatization, deregulation, retrenchment, elimination of subsidies, and balancing budgets. Stitched together, these threads make up a one-size-fits-all garment that does not stretch or allow for movement. By donning the straitjacket, the US’s political and economic policy choices were narrowed.
The public education system has been outfitted with a straitjacket, as public education was deemed in a state of crisis, failing to prepare citizens for global competition (Louis et al., 2003). As discussed in Chapter 2, the discourse of failure allowed the government to intervene in education, but only to ensure favorable economic conditions. Educational reforms incorporated the neoliberal principles of efficiency and
accountability. The intent of school reform is to produce a skilled workforce in the absence of a state-sponsored safety-net, as government seeks to distance itself financially from the provision of education. Neoliberalization of public education is associated with the government taking a hands-off approach. To do so requires placing a straitjacket upon schools, to restrain or confine them, particularly failing schools, those that deviate from the norms of efficiency and success, and that pose a threat to social and economic order. The straitjacket is a form of treatment for schools that fail to perform up to standards; and indirectly a tool used to pacify the tax-paying public. The rationale behind placing schools in the neoliberal straitjacket is that it will assist them in regaining self-control, and maintain social order. NCLB posits that it must provide restraint upon schools that supposedly cannot supply it for themselves. However, I argue that the one-size-fits-all garment of choice has ‘pinched’ spaces of education (although differentially), pressuring schools to improve their students’ performance, streamline their operations, or face sanctions. Additionally, it is apparent that the straitjacket is being misused, resulting in perverse outcomes.

Urban public schools ‘in need of improvement’, their teachers, and students, are feeling the squeeze of the NCLB straitjacket. As targets of contemporary reform, these spaces and people are being subjected to regulatory practices that prescribe an essentialized identity, and have implications for the geography of educational quality (issues I elaborate on in Chapter 4).

In this chapter I discuss the tailoring of the one-size-fits-all straitjacket, and the ways in which educational reform has squeezed urban schools. I weave together
secondary sources with the narratives of inner-city teachers, as they reflect on their experiences post-NCLB implementation. The reflections of teachers provide rich data, for they are on the frontlines of reform, responsible for the implementation of the top-down NCLB accountability systems. I summarize what the teachers I surveyed think about the tools deployed to improve their schools, and the ways in which their school/classroom practices have been altered. By considering views from inside schools designated ‘in need of improvement,’ we can get a sense of the extent to which teachers are feeling the squeeze of the neoliberal straitjacket, or as will be discussed in Chapter 4, resisting the reform through counter-NCLB practices. Finally, I problematize the straitjacket by highlighting its role in reproducing inequities, and in condemning disadvantaged students and schools.

3.2 FEELING THE SQUEEZE OF THE STRAITJACKET

The straitjacket prescribes treatment for underperforming schools and students: (1) retrenchment; (2) testing and data collection; and (3) identification of failure (i.e., the name, shame, and blame strategy). These cures have left inner-city teachers feeling the repercussions of funding cuts, the increased pressure to improve student performance, and experiencing attacks on their personal teaching effectiveness.
3.2.1 Squeezed by retrenchment

“... for those who argue that it is only with NCLB that we finally have real teeth in school-level accountability policy, I argue that these teeth are false and the policy is disingenuous when, among other things, it provides nothing resembling the magnitude of resources necessary to turn around our most troubled schools.” (Sirotnik, 2004: 151).

Spaces of education, particularly those in urban areas, have been greatly impacted by the streamlining process, and continue to be dramatically affected by reductions in public spending. Urban decline and shrinking tax-bases have widened the gap between wealthy and poorer school districts despite federal dollars to redress the spending gap.
Public education under neoliberalism is intended to provide a population with skills at a minimum cost to the state. NCLB is constructed as an attempt to move beyond the welfare state’s "throw-money-out-hope-for-the-best" strategy (terms used by Margaret Spelling, US Secretary of Education) which the federal government claims it has done since 1965 with over $130 billion thrown out “to improve public schools”.

Neoliberal reform holds service providers accountable with little or no increases in funding, as past federal dollars are considered to have been wasted on public education. The myth of school finance, that funding does not matter, persists to this day. This myth gained momentum with the Coleman Report (1966) which congealed in the public’s mind that schools had negligible effects on children, and by implication school funding had minimal effect on student achievement. The reality is that extra funding, if spent wisely, means schools can enhance their facilities, cut class sizes, attract more qualified teachers, all of which help improve student performance. In fact, research shows a positive relationship between student achievement and factors such as teacher experience, lower enrollment, more library books and computer resources, and higher levels of parental involvement (GAO, 2002). Ideally, federal funding should go to pre-schooling and head start programs so that disadvantaged children are caught much earlier and provided with the tools needed to navigate the public school system.
“Urban neighborhoods are poor and receive inadequate funding.”
— *Science Teacher, Pre K-5, 10 years*

Although some inner-city districts spend more per pupil (e.g., Chicago: $4,529 inner-city versus suburb $3,975), city schools with high concentrations of poverty place them at a spending disadvantage (GAO, 2002), and they continue to have worse educational outcomes. Thus, funding is especially necessary for urban schools that serve poor children whose families lack resources to pay for school taxes, for proper nutrition, clothing, for medical attention, cannot afford to live in safer neighborhoods, and lack basic amenities at home.

Both states and the American Federation of Teachers (Koppich, 2005) have criticized the lack of funding provided by the federal government for implementation of NCLB. States are responsible for absorbing the additional costs associated with administering and scoring the state tests (Goertz and Duffy, 2003). Similarly school
districts are responsible for providing supplemental services such as tutoring in failing schools, and paying for busing when students exercise ‘choice’.

In addition to individual states voicing this grievance, policy analysts to reform-minded scholars, and critical researchers have argued that the cost of accountability systems is too high and the tool (i.e., testing) too weak to create real change in classrooms (Louis, et al., 2005). The funding shortfalls have resulted in failing schools facing severe sanctions, such as budget cuts or denial of resources, which are essential to remedying outcomes. The teachers I surveyed expressed concerns over their schools’ ability to improve student performance with their current resources.

“Funding and staffing have been cut back and there are more students in the school that are in dire need of the services which have been cut.”
- Teacher, Grades K-5, 22 years.

“There has not been enough money given to do a good job, nor time. Real learning is not going on- more time is spent preparing for testing.”
- Teacher, Grades 3-5, 16 years.

“The goals of NCLB are not realistic since adequate funding is not available.” – Teacher, Grades 3-5, 32 years.

“NCLB lack of funding has created additional paperwork, more tests, and less time to address student needs, and the foundation of curriculum building.” – Teacher, Grade 2, 40+ years.

Under contemporary reform, poor academic performance is entirely a school-induced problem; thus the solution is supposedly school-based. This theory diverts public attention from other explanations that call for substantial investments in educating urban and rural poor, and minority children (Cuban, 2004).
3.2.2 Squeezed by testing

“...other than for reasons of economy and efficiency, there is no educational justification for using on-demand, easily scored tests- and only those tests- to make high-stakes decisions about the educational well-being of children and their schools. No modern organization would ever use a single indicator to judge the worth of its operation.”

- Sirotnik, 2004: 156.

The growing reliance on a single test to serve multiple purposes is considered ineffective, as it cannot provide indicators of the quality of the education system. The National Education Association argues that NCLB’s system of “absurd” test results and ratings is “producing a picture that is complex, muddled, and often outright misleading” (NEA, 2006). This was corroborated by the teachers I surveyed who deemed standardized high-stakes testing an inaccurate measure of their school’s needs and quality. They exhibited outrage with regards to standardized testing, which cannot possibly measure the learning of their un-standardized students. Additionally, an administrator expressed frustration of losing students based solely on limited test scores.

“Test scores don’t really reflect the complete picture.”
- Teacher, Grades K-5, 24 years.

“Students test scores and report cards don’t fully represent students’ progress or the quality of our school.” - Teacher, Kindergarten, 2 years.

“Not a good representation of actual student performance in a well-rounded education.” - Teacher, Grade 3, 7 years.

“Inconsistent, inaccurate and has not truly demonstrated our students achievements and needs.” - Teacher, Grade 3, 10 years.
“We are testing children that are identified special education and this measures nothing! My class needs a different approach to reach the goals of NCLB. Standardized tests are not appropriate for my students, I have a 5th grader who reads at a 1st grade level but is being tested on standardized tests at a 5th grade level. These tests are only showing deficiencies not improvement, accomplishments, mastery or success.”

– Teacher, Special Education Grades 3-5, 5 years.

Additionally, the teachers I surveyed mentioned being overwhelmed by their school’s testing schedule. As a result, teachers must figure out a balancing act between providing higher order skills and more basic skills. Since teachers bear the blame for underperformance, the importance of test results influences their daily practices in the classroom. Teachers “have to give a lot of tests but we are not happy about it.” (Teacher, Grade 3, 7 years). While some “refuse to teach to standardized tests!” (Special Education Teacher, K-2, 3 years), most concede:

“Schools have placed more pressure on teachers to make their students succeed on tests.” - Teacher, Grade 3, 5 years.

“I have been forced to decrease the amount of time spent on phonics, comprehension, sight word recognition and numeracy in order to complete test prep given to me by the principal. Most of my students are significantly (2+ years) below grade-level in Reading and Math. I feel their time in school would be better spent on literacy & learning to read then on test prep.” - Teacher, Special Education Grades 3-5, 1 year.

“No one is getting real skills (living) in city middle schools.”
- Teacher, Grades 6-8, 31 years.

“more tests, and less attention to curriculum, behavior, and basic values.”
– 1st Grade Teacher, 32 years.
“Often teachers ‘teach to the test’ which does not support creative or constructivist thinking or authentic experiences for learning. Teachers will teach what is on the test and how to succeed in the test.” – Teacher, Special Education Grades K-2, 3 years.

Despite the limitations of testing, it remains an essential mechanism of NCLB. It is one that has greatly impacted educational behaviors. The performance status of the teachers’ schools resulted in less autonomy in their teaching practices, as it “removed a lot of decision-making from the classroom teacher.” Additionally, it “made academic high stakes tests scores the driving factor NOT quality teaching”. The teachers I surveyed noted that NCLB requirements affect classroom practices by narrowing curriculum and reducing the amount of time spent on certain subjects or skills not tested.

Among the teachers that have shifted their practices in concession with NCLB requirements, most mentioned accommodating the increase in testing mandated by NCLB, resulting in collecting more data, teaching to the test, and a decrease in time spent on other subjects and on teaching values.

“I find myself having to accommodate and prepare for testing that is neither needed nor helpful.” – Teacher, Grade 5, 5 years.

“More classroom time is given to testing strategies and test practice.”
- Teacher, Grades 3-5, 16 years.

“I have spent a great deal of time and effort preparing my students for taking tests. I have also had to deal with more pressure from parents on students’ performance.”
- Teacher, Grade 3, 5 years.

“We test more, tutor more, collect more data.”
- Science Teacher, Grades Pre K-5, 10 years.
“Mandatory assessments in addition to my classroom evaluation methods detract from my time working with kids and helping them learn.”  
- Teacher, Grade 3, 5 years.

“Because of NCLB a lot of teaching to the test is going on.”  
- Teacher, Grades K-6, 25 years, Restructuring school.

Researchers and educators argue that high-stakes testing and accountability systems have undermined good teaching, leading to teaching to the test; the narrowing of curricula (Goertz and Duffy, 2003) to reading and mathematics; and the burdening of teachers to improve outcomes in tested subjects (Louis et al., 2005). These perverse outcomes are note-worthy, as NCLB practices are intended to produce a skilled and competitive workforce.

Teaching to the test and the narrowing of curricula detract from the teaching and learning of non-tested subject areas, and do not necessarily lead to improved test scores. In fact, students in central-city schools continue to score lower on national assessments than their suburban counterparts (Thirunarayanan, 2004; US Department of Education, 2005). Additionally, there remains a large gap between urban and suburban high school graduation rates (Toppel, 2008). Education Secretary Margaret Spelling calls the gap “unacceptable, especially now that 90% of our fastest-growing jobs require education or training beyond high school” (Toppel, 2008). Many of the nation’s largest cities had less than 50% graduation rate in 2004 (e.g., Los Angeles: 45.3%; New York: 45.2; Dallas: 44.4; Minneapolis: 43.7; Columbus: 40.9; Cleveland: 34.1, Indianapolis: 30.5, and Detroit: 24.9). In terms of the urban-suburban divide, the rates are in stark contrast. For
instance the urban graduation rate in Baltimore, MD is 34.6% whereas the suburban rate is 81.5 (Toppo, 2008).

3.2.3 *Squeezed by the identification / labeling of failure*

As discussed in Chapter 2, school failure is a theme that dominates educational discourse (Stoll and Myers, 1998). The language of national policy, and the way language has been used by politicians and the media has often exacerbated and prolonged the problem of schools in difficulty. Such language has contributed to low teacher morale and influenced public perception by encouraging the belief that standards are low in most schools, and that public education is in a state of perpetual crisis (Stoll and Myers, 1998).

According to the US Department of Education (2008), of the 98,905 public schools in the US, 30% did not meet their state’s performance threshold in the 2006-2007 academic year. NEA predicts that even more schools and districts will fail AYP in the future (NEA, 2006). So called ‘failing’ schools are (geographically) located in urban districts, and their student body is comprised of disadvantaged children (Ediger, 2004; Gruenewald, 2003; Myers and Goldstein, 1998). These local communities of ‘failing’ schools are less well-resourced and have less power. The situation these schools find themselves in results in their disadvantaged position in the “power struggles, vested interests, and battles over resources” (Tomlinson, 1997).

In 2005-2006 alone, 2,790 Title I schools (approximately 5% of all Title I schools, serving over 2 million students) were in corrective action or restructuring status (see Table 2.1), that is they missed their state’s performance threshold for 4 years. These
chronically failing schools were more frequently located in urban areas (63%) than in suburban areas (22%) and rural areas (15%) (GAO, 2007). Cities with the most schools in corrective action and restructuring phases include: Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Detroit, Washington D.C., and Baltimore (GAO, 2007). Additionally, these urban Title I schools served higher percentages of racial/ethnic minority students compared to other schools (96% compared to 37%) and also enrolled a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students (83% compared to 54%) (GAO, 2007). Data for the 2006-2007 school year showed an increase of 60% with 4,509 schools of the 54,000 Title I schools, failing to meet their progress threshold for 4 or more years, this is more than twice as many compared to 2 years earlier (GAO, 2007).

3.2.3.1 Data collection

Teachers have become “more data and assessment conscious” (Teacher, Grades K-5, 24 years). Teachers are expected to collect data and use it to improve student outcomes. The teachers I surveyed indicated that the data are useless in helping them improve student performance. Although the teachers mentioned that the data are “meaningless”, “overwhelming,” “inconsistent over time,” the data are disseminated to the public. Rather than assisting teachers in improving instruction, the data are a burden.

“The data don’t help. I know my students because I spend time conferring with them. I also do my own assessments which are much more geared toward higher level thinking.” - Teacher, Grade 4, 14 years.

“The current system is driven by meaningless data at the expense of meaningful data which is being ignored.”
- Teacher, Grades K-6, 25 years, Restructuring School.
“I think the data and report cards are inconsistent, inaccurate and do not truly demonstrated my students achievements and needs.”
- Teacher Grade 3, 32 years.

“I have always used data to drive instruction, BUT believe it or not I have been unable to get the test scores for 2 years.”
- Teacher, Grades 3-5, 4 years.

Regardless of their limitations, the data collected by schools are reported up the educational hierarchy from the classroom, to the district, to the State Department of Education, to the US Department of Education and its statistics branch: the National Center for Education Statistics; and distributed publicly. Negative data and report cards circulate through society, and ultimately may “hurt many good schools” (Teacher, Grades 6-8, 31 years). This sentiment was felt by other teachers who believed that their school’s test scores and published report cards tarnished their school’s reputation and negated their efforts to bring about improvement.
3.2.3.2 Name, blame, and shame strategy

The deployment of mechanisms to identifying underperforming schools and publicize their failure, or to ‘name and shame’ them publicly (Stoll and Myers 1998; Nicolaidou and Ainscow 2005), is intended to promote improvement. The impacts of the ‘name, blame, and shame’ strategy of NCLB on teachers was evident in their survey responses. Teachers felt demoralized and disempowered by NCLB. Working in a school designated ‘in need of improvement’ “…makes our teachers and schools feel like failures, even
though we should not be compared equally to all schools in the state.” Teachers felt that NCLB practices “…sucked all the joy out of teaching and learning,” and “…increased pressure on teachers to improve.” On an individual level, teachers felt that their schools’ designation “…stigmatized us as ‘ineffective teachers.”

Insights from teachers help us understanding whether or not the data upon which school reputations are forged are in fact accurate representations of school quality and student performance. Under NCLB teachers are responsible for data collection, analysis, and implementation of corrective actions in their classrooms. I asked teachers to reflect on their everyday experiences with their school’s NCLB designation: ‘in need of improvement’. The teachers overwhelmingly pointed out the fact that designations are based on limited information, both partial and inaccurate:

“The label is based on the performance of half our students on a 2-hour test taken on just 2 days out of their school year. Also- how do we paste National labels on public schools based on separate state test results when each state's test isn't comparable to others?”
- Teacher, Kindergarten, 15 years.

“This label is given on test results only! There is nothing else or nobody else who evaluates the creative, innovative, and hard work of teachers.”
- Teacher, Grade 1, 5 years.

### 3.2.3.3 Impacts of labels on attitudes and behaviors

Despite the limitations of school quality labels, they are tremendously influential, both affecting internal and external attitudes. With regards to the impact of the labels on attitudes, the teachers indicated that their school’s label lowered teacher morale (91%), demoralized school staff (73%), demoralized students (73%) and demoralized parents
(27%) (see Table 3.1). As such, receiving a ‘failing’ label has had a significant impact on my sampled schools. Thus, as labels associated with poor performance are picked up by politicians and the media, this can exacerbate and prolong the problem of schools in difficulty (Stoll and Myers 1998). Stigmatizing schools as ‘failing’ may lead them to become further demoralized, thus stunting improvement by disabling internal capacity to bring about change (Tomlinson 1997, Stark 1998). Adopting a “name and shame” strategy leads to pessimism and a lowering of morale among individuals responsible for raising the achievement of disadvantaged students (Whitty 2002).

The media plays an important role in disseminating school performance information. Summaries of test score data and report cards are taken up by media and circulated in newspapers, online, and on television. When test scores are released and the overall performance of school districts is determined, the media are quick to interpret the results and report on the state of public schools. Teachers aired their frustrations with the biased reporting of local media with regards to school quality:

“Local media is not interested in fairly reporting what happens in public schools. My “conspiracy theory” is that the powerbrokers that control the media are out to destroy Public Education in America. I don’t think they intentionally want to create a caste system but that is what the effects will be. Why else would NCLB be punitive economically to those students who don’t succeed?” – Teacher, Kindergarten, 15 years.

“The media in [city name] is detrimental to local schools. The media focuses on only negative things that will create a bad taste for parents.”
– Teacher, Grade 1, 5 years.

“Media has preconceived ideas of [City] schools. [City name] has children of all social levels, especially low income; this impacts student performance.” - Teacher, Grades 6-8, 2 years.
The language of failure influences public perception by encouraging the belief that standards are low in most schools, and that public education is in a state of perpetual crisis (Gerwitz 1998; Stoll and Myers 1998). Labels come to represent space, as such they are a means of constructing what I term spaces left behind, schools that are identified, blamed for their low performance, and ultimately avoided by individuals that are in a position capable of doing so. This issue surfaced during focus groups and public hearings conducted by the Public Education Network (PEN) to assess the impacts of NCLB. Insiders voiced their “anguish over the labeling of schools” and PEN found that the ‘failing’ label had far-reaching consequences (PEN 2007). The ‘in need of improvement’ label and its transfer provision induced feelings of “betrayal of desperately needy schools” as instead of being a centripetal force, “the label caused the community to abandon schools” (PEN 2007).

"A school failing to meet its AYP target] “reflects on the community. Who wants to attend a failing school? What parent wants to live in a community where the schools are failing?” --Student, Columbus, Ohio, 2007. PEN.

The collection of performance data and the public availability of the findings shape the decisions of individuals (e.g., with regards to selecting place of residence or employment). The numbers are powerful in shaping the public’s perception and location decisions, as the privileged gravitate toward higher performing schools generally located in suburban areas.
The teachers I surveyed noted that their school’s label has impacted both the behavior of parents and teachers, leading to the transfer of students to better performing schools (73%) and the flight of teaching staff (45%) (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Impacts of labeling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The label has led to… (in percent)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School improvement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased pressure to improve</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departure of teaching staff</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Departure of administrative staff</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School restructuring</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transfer of students to better schools</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuts in funding</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposition of sanctions</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat of school closure</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In what ways has your school’s label impacted attitudes in your school? (in percent)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This label has lowered teacher morale.</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This label has demoralized staff.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This label has demoralized students.</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This label has demoralized parents.</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes have not changed.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other. Specify*, **</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*We try not to pass negative feelings onto our students but how must they feel when they don't pass and they understand the significance of this event.

**Parents not applying to enroll as often (we are a lottery school)

Over half of the teachers I surveyed disagree that identifying and labeling their school, and imposing sanctions on their school will lead to school improvement. Despite working in difficult environments, they believe their schools to be ‘good’ schools (91%) which provide their students with a quality education (see Table 3.2), high quality
curriculum, and are dedicated to improving their students’ achievement. These findings corroborate with those of Tracey (2005). Based on a 2004 survey, “No Child Left Behind: The Teachers’ Voice” administered in urban settings, Tracey (2005) found that teachers disagreed with the NCLB practice of identifying failing schools and that it will lead to school improvement. In fact school improvement requires more than labeling.

Table 3.2: Teacher perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(in percent)</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test scores are a good indicator of my school’s performance.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying and labeling my school will lead to school improvement.</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imposing sanctions on my school will lead to school improvement.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My school is a ‘good’ school, which provides students with a quality education.</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mechanisms of pressure and public humiliation espouse an effective means of forcing schools to improve student performance (Noguera, 2004). However, “…pressure alone will not produce substantial improvements in public education, particularly in communities with the greatest concentration of poverty” (Noguera, 2004: 79)

3.3 PROBLEMATIZING THE STRAITJACKET

The straitjacket is a one-size-fits all garment that does not take into account factors within a school and those beyond the school’s walls that affect performance, thus
indiscriminately squeezing people and places among them teachers, parents, students, neighborhoods, and school districts. This is not surprising, as argued in Chapter 2 NCLB is a de-contextualized reform implemented in school districts irrespective of local specificity or context.

NCLB ‘squeezes’ certain schools more so than others (Lipman, 2004; Meire and Wood, 2004). Historically, the schools in large inner-city districts, serving disadvantaged populations and minorities (over 75% of enrollment), have been particularly squeezed (Anyon, 1997; NCES, 1996; US Department of Education, 2005), as they are the ones under the greatest pressure to show improvement in test scores.

Currently, urban public schools in the US serve over 14 million students (based on the 2005-2006 school year), 54% of which are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (US Department of Education, 2007). In restraining schools operating in areas of concentrated poverty and communities of color, NCLB ignores school realities and the obstacles they face in improving their students performance (Noguera, 2004). The use of high standards, accountability, and equity in NCLB discourse “downplays, masks, or simply ignores” the challenges of implementing the reform’s requirements (Sunderman, 2008). Challenges include high dropout rates, low test scores, and discipline problems. Regardless of these contextual issues, the NCLB goal to “ending the tyranny of low expectations” holds all schools to the same standards, regardless of the needs of the population served and school realities.
3.3.1 Unmasking school / classroom realities

Illustration 3.5

“Our teachers are dedicated, creative, and hard-working. We have obstacles to work with.” – Teacher, Kindergarten, 15 years.

The teachers I surveyed identified a number of obstacles that hinder their students’ performance and school’s improvement. Internal factors identified include: classroom/school characteristics such as concentrated poverty, a high number of students eligible for free lunch, students with behavioral/emotional problems, bused students, students lacking school preparedness, lack of parental involvement, lack of remedial
classes, large class size/overcrowding, large number of English Language Learners students and parents, unmotivated students, safety concerns, lack of financial resources, loss of staff positions, cuts in arts and technology and subject areas not tested.

Additionally, external factors hinder student outcomes. Factors beyond school walls include student backgrounds (i.e., their family situation and socioeconomic status) and neighborhood factors (i.e., residential segregation, shrinking tax base, violence/crime), all of which teachers mentioned are “things we cannot control”. An issue mentioned by teachers was the lack of preparedness of their student population as many children come to school with few basic skills and little background knowledge; and some do not speak English. Research shows that home and parent resources have strong implications for student success no matter what school environments can provide (Gerwitz, 1998). In fact what takes place in schools is heavily influenced by the socioeconomic and discursive environments within which they operate (Gerwitz, 1998). ‘Internal’ school-based determinants of ‘success’ are not divorced from ‘external’, context-based determinants (Gerwitz, 1998). This argument became widely acknowledged with the findings of the Coleman et al. (1966) report *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, which indicated that the characteristics of students’ home backgrounds and those of their classmates were important determinants of their achievement regardless of the nature of the school district. This is true in inner-city school districts that struggle to raise students’ performance within the challenges of urban school environments and the influence of home environment on performance outcomes.
Factors that pose additional challenges to improving student academic performance include neighborhood violence and student mobility (GAO, 2007).

Illustration 3.6
By not taking student backgrounds into account in test performance, students are essentialized, prescribed an equal identity, in which each is able to acquire knowledge and be tested regardless of access to resources, such as textbooks, extra help and preparation, proper nutrition, etc.

“Philosophically I agree with the intentions of NCLB. But the issues that the act professes to address are not the sole responsibility of public education. The children being left behind in education are those same children who were “left behind” since conception. ... Many of my students come from families struggling with poverty & illiteracy for generations. They are not guaranteed the best prenatal or pediatric care. They are not free of the ill effects of malnourishment; child abuse, child neglect, lead poisoning, multiple ear infections, lack of environmental stimuli, on and on. Let’s start assuring these children the best services and care from the beginning & I guarantee you their education will be much more successful!”-Teacher, Kindergarten, 14 years.

This teacher’s comments highlight the fact that NCLB is deceptive in that the discourse does not match up with educational realities. Although NCLB promises to focus on traditionally disadvantaged and underperforming students, it is misleading. The Act itself is a rhetorical commitment to “leave no child behind” (Ryan, 2004). The Act’s title was co-opted by the Bush Administration from The Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), a child advocacy and research group whose motto “Leave No Child Behind” encapsulated their mission to lobby the Federal government and states on behalf of children. CDF’s “Dodd-Miller Act to Leave No Child Behind” introduced in 2001 intended to provide fully-funded quality childcare, lift all children out of poverty, ensure healthcare coverage for all children and parents, end child hunger, improve literacy rates, provide quality after-
school and summer programs, ensure decent affordable housing, protect children from violence, aid families leaving welfare so as to ensure success in all sphere of society. Unlike NCLB, this legislation recognized that school reform needs to coincide with reforming other spheres such as healthcare and housing to address the many challenges that hinder school improvement.

This discussion of internal and external factors reminds us that closing the achievement gap between advantaged and disadvantaged students is a complex issue that requires more than accountability mechanism and rhetoric. The surveyed teachers emphasized limitations of NCLB as it applies to school contexts:

“Not every child is exposed to the things that are needed to do well. There is still a gap between the children living in poorer school districts and those living in other districts.” - Special Education Teacher, Grades 3-5, 26 years.

“There is a negative effect of busing- children traveling long distances, having to wake up early, arriving at school sleepy or late, unable to arrive in time for breakfast so they go to class hungry and are unable to learn and test well. Add that to growing class sizes, loss of staff positions, and behavioral issues and you have a mountain of obstacles.”

“I do not believe that this Act is the answer to providing equality. It is an attempt on the part of the school system but how are other very important factors that influence a child’s success being addressed? E.g., parent support.” - Assistant Principal, K-5 school, 19 years.

Improving educational quality for all will require more than “a fad or gimmick- a quick-fix solution” (Noguera, 2004: 79). Policies targeting schools operating in contexts of concentrated poverty are needed. Programs targeting such schools need to be evaluated to
ensure that they are effective and are not hindering progress. Policies need to focus on the problems facing low-performing schools “the schools need help not humiliation” (Noguera, 2004) and assistance in creating the capacity and conditions for improvement. Additionally schools need to form a system of mutual accountability between schools, parents, and students that share responsibilities in the education process and forge strategic partnerships with organizations to assist in meeting the needs of urban schools and students (Noguera, 2004: 78). Schools need to reconsider current assessments and consider whether they reflect academic growth, and can be linked to effective teaching and learning.

3.3.2 Teacher resilience

Although inner-city school teachers are under pressure to improve student performance, they are not overpowered by the straitjacket. Many affirmed that they are doing the best they can within the constraints of the straitjacket, and remain committed to high quality teaching regardless of the reform-of-the-week. Many teachers were adamant about the consistency of their classroom practices regardless of NCLB or any other top-down reform. They view their role as separate from en vogue reforms that fall in and out of fashion, while they continue to education US children. Teachers mentioned not changing their practices as they believed they use “best practices” (Teacher Grades 3-5, 4 years), and have always been doing “most of what has been proposed” by NCLB (Teacher Grades 6-8, 31 years).
“I’m committed to teach children regardless of any reforms.”
- Teacher, Kindergarten, 2 years.

“Regardless of reform I am always searching for different methods and ideas that could help me to use the best practices in my teaching.”
- Science Teacher, K-5, 18 years.

“I would strive to do my best—regardless of any law or doctrine— that is why I chose to teach.” - Teacher, Kindergarten, 5 years.

“I’m doing everything that should be required that I have control over.”
- Special Education Teacher, Grades 3-5, 26 years.

“The students’ education, health, and safety have always been my first priority. –Teacher, Grade 1, 3 years.

These teacher comments highlight their resilience in face of NCLB and the straitjacket imposed upon their school. A theme that warrants further exploration is that of resistance. In Chapter 4 I briefly discuss the possibilities of resistance to top-down one-size-fits-all reform.
CHAPTER 4

BIOPower AND TECHNIQUES OF NCLB GOVERNANCE

“the people who are paying the bills ought to use it [the accountability system] to move the ball, raise standards .... Our federal commitment is about those disadvantaged kids, and, by damn, we're not doing right by them. But finally we're starting to care about them enough to find out how they are doing... That's what the job is.”

The objectives of school accountability are to know and identify individuals and spaces that are to be governed. “Governing is a matter of space” (Rose, 1999) whereby school spaces are monitored and performance made calculable as “to govern, it is necessary to render visible the space over which government is to be exercised” (Rose, 1999). Neoliberals implement their reforms without direct intervention. Rather they do this by “steering at a distance” (Ball, 1994) or governing at a distance (Graham and Neu, 2004) through mechanism of control. This hands-off approach is adopted by NCLB via auditing and accountability strategies that are supposed to improve schools by “exerting top-down control, from the federal government to the states and from the states to local districts” (Hannaway, 2005: 25).
The Foucauldian notions of *biopower* and *techniques of governance* are powerful analytical tools for dissecting NCLB, and exposing the mechanisms of power used “at a distance” to “know how they [schools] are doing” (Spelling in Ramirez, 2007), restrain underperforming schools, and shape their conduct to the norms of success, efficiency, and high performance. In this chapter I discuss the various techniques or codes deployed by NCLB to govern schools. These taken-for-granted straitjacket techniques are productive forces as they produce power/knowledge about school performance, which in turn I argue have socio-spatial consequences. The power/knowledge of school representations circulates throughout society and becomes part of our perceptions of the quality of public schools. In Chapter 2, I highlighted the problematic nature of NCLB and so one must be weary of the techniques of governance deployed which are anything but innocuous, as well as critical of the knowledges and hegemonic representations they produce. I problematize the unquestioning acceptance of school representations that are affixed to people, places, and perceptions. I provide a critical analysis of the construction and consequences of school representations or labeling practices by drawing on insights from philosopher Michel Foucault, geographers Lefebvre and Sibley, cultural theorist Stuart Hall, semioticians Saussure and Barthes, and social psychologists Hudak, Kihn, Moscovici, and Oyserman.

4.1 GOVERNING SCHOOLS: REFORM AS BIOPOLITICS

“the people who are paying the bills ought to use it [the accountability system] to move the ball, raise standards .... Our federal commitment is about those disadvantaged kids, and, by damn, we're not doing right by them. But
finally we're starting to care about them enough to find out how they are doing... That's what the job is.” -Margaret Spelling, US Secretary of Education (in Ramirez, 2007).

As a federal policy, NCLB is a top-down federal intervention in which policymakers prescribe certain interventions and norms. NCLB forms the basis of what Foucault termed biopower (Foucault, 2003). Biopower is an intervention at the level of a population or “generality” (Foucault, 2003: 246) in order to deal with problems that can potentially affect society, social order, the economy or the political system. Power
intervenes “in order to improve life by eliminating accidents, the random element, and deficiencies” (Foucault, 2003: 248). Biopower is a form of power over bodies and by bodies (Hewitt, 1983: 230), it is a massifying power, in an attempt to control random events that have mass effects (Foucault, 2003). Its aim is the health, welfare, and productivity of bodies (Foucault, 2003) and is intended to achieve an overall equilibrium.

Social policy is one of the main apparatuses of the state for harnessing and circulating power through mechanisms of control. “[Social policy] promotes and organizes knowledge, norms and social practices to regulate the quality of life of the population” (Hewitt, 1983: 225). Social policy, such as NCLB, is a means to ensure a productive labor force, regulate unproductive institutions, and order space (Hewitt, 1983: 230). To do this, policy identifies problems or targets upon which power is inscribed (e.g., deprived individuals and neighborhoods). Policy “provides a capillary through which state power is circulated throughout the social body” (Hewitt, 1983: 231). NCLB was developed to regulate underperforming schools which are the targets of the reform. The ultimate purpose of reform policy is to bring about change by controlling schools and the populations they serve through regularizing techniques of power (e.g., surveillance, examination, and statistics) that align behavior with government established norms (Foucault, 1978, 2003). The mechanisms utilized to deal with underperforming public schools and monitor “how they are doing” are the techniques of governance. These techniques, as Foucault’s conceptualization of power entails, are productive (Foucault, 1980: 119) for they produce forms of knowledge and discourse about schools and normalize school bodies.
Biopolitics of the population establishes “subtle rational mechanisms” (Foucault, 2003, p. 244) or *regularizing* techniques of power to deal with “population as political problem” and align behavior with norms. The mechanisms introduced by biopolitics include “forecasts, statistical estimates, and overall measures” (Foucault, 2003: 246). Biopower has to quantify, measure, appraise, and hierarchize (Foucault, 1978: 144), it is a normalizing power. NCLB targets the social body by imposing calculative strategies intended to gage the overall quality of public schools through the “calculated management of [school] life” (Foucault, 1978: 140). These strategies anticipate the alignment of behavior with government established educational performance norms (norms that are established at the Federal-, State- and district-levels). The data generated from calculations are supposed to pressure teachers, administrators, parents, students into internalizing norms that will result in behaviors that lead to higher test scores and school improvement.
4.2 TECHNIQUES OF GOVERNANCE/ TECHNOLOGIES OF POWER

Techniques of governance are the practices and tactics that allow for the exercise of power. They are the regime of practices that are part of governing, the mundane practices of everyday life which reinforce the ‘rationality’ or ‘mentality’, discussed in Chapter 2, underpinning rule. The exercise of power is a “conduct of conducts” and a management of possibilities. …To govern is to structure the possible field of action of others.” (Foucault, 2000e: 341). Thus behavior and discourses are produced via a ‘code of conduct’ that is inscribed in practices or systems of practices.

Unlike biopower, techniques of governance can be considered in relation to Foucault’s conceptualization of power. According to Foucault, power “traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse” it is “a productive network which runs through / circulates the whole social body.” (Foucault, 1980: 119). Power is not bottom-up or top-down, located in government or institutions but diffuse. Power has no ‘margins’ (Foucault, 1980: 141), it lies deep in the social nexus. Thus to understand the power imbued in reform policy requires an ascending analysis of power based on the “study of the techniques and tactics of domination” (Foucault, 1980: 102) or “infinitesimal mechanisms” (Foucault, 1980: 99) that circulate the social body. According to Foucault (1980), “only if we grasp the techniques of power and demonstrate the economic advantages or political utility that derives from them in a given context for specific reasons, that we can understand how these mechanisms come to be effectively incorporated into the social whole.” (Foucault, 1980: 101). Such is the
case for NCLB and the taken-for-granted mechanisms of power that are intended to steer students and schools away from deviance toward normalization.

In this section I explore the various techniques of power deployed by NCLB. According to Foucault (1995) there is a triad of techniques of power in modern disciplinary society including: observation, normalization, and examination. Disciplinary technologies of power render bodies visible through surveillance, controls, ordering of space, examination, micro-power concerned with the body (Foucault, 2003). I explore this triad and consider the various mechanisms of the NCLB accountability scheme as summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: NCLB and its techniques of power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code / Techniques of power*</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Specific to NCLB</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surveillance</strong></td>
<td>Observing, watching, the public “gaze”</td>
<td>Collection and dissemination of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Normalization</strong></td>
<td>Setting and requiring standards</td>
<td>Drive toward standardization and comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Differentiating groups of individuals from one another, classifying them</td>
<td>Classification of schools, districts, and students Performance labels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totalization</strong></td>
<td>Specification of collectives, giving collective character</td>
<td>Decouple context and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exclusion</strong></td>
<td>Define difference, boundaries, setting zones</td>
<td>Segregating schools and students based upon a performance binary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regulation</strong></td>
<td>Controlling by rule, subject to restrictions, invoking rule, including sanction, reward, punishment</td>
<td>Sanctions upon schools failing to meet the state standards.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.1 The “Gaze”: observation / surveillance / visibility

Surveillance refers to observing and collecting information about what is being observed. To control or have power over people is achieved through observation. Deviant behavior is a major concern in a disciplinary system, as it indicates failure to reach a set standard. The solution is to reform or bring the deviants to standards or norms. This is achieved by imposing norms (the process of “normalization”) and judging behaviors through as normal or deviant. Judgments are pervasive in education and determined by national standards, state-determined benchmarks, standardized testing, and dissemination of school/district performance in report cards. By using these measures to hold schools accountable, their performance is perpetually monitored and they are under constant gaze of the public. It is by “throwing a web of visibility” (Rose, 1999), that schools are expected to align themselves with the norm of high performance. Constant scrutiny is intended to shape the conduct of schools.
4.2.1.1 Testing / examination

“...testing is the only way to identify and help students who are falling behind ... I refuse to give up on any child. And the No Child Left Behind Act is opening the door of opportunity to all of America's children.”

Examination is a method of control, a form of power/knowledge that interweaves observation with normalization (Graham and Neu, 2004; Gunzenhauser, 2006). School testing creates truths about tested students (tells what they learned/know) and schools (indicates their level of performance/school quality) and controls their behavior.
Standardized tests remain an important technique of government. Examination is deployed by NCLB whereby test outcomes determine school quality and render schools visible as student performance is subjected to public scrutiny. The technology of examination is utilized to remake schools and students into measurable objects that can be governed (Graham and Neu 2004; Gunzenhauser 2006) by “a normalizing gaze” (Foucault 1984) The yearly release of test results promotes a culture of auditing (Basu, 2005) in which schools are watched by government entities, the media, and the public. The media forge a “landscape of perpetual spectacle” (Basu 2005) as schools across space are under constant public scrutiny or “geo-surveillance” (Basu 2005). This system “reinforce the assumption that student, teacher, and school achievement can be measured by classroom routines alone and that the only kind of achievement that really matters is individualistic, quantifiable, and statistically comparable” (Gruenewald, 2003).
Current reforms rely on standardized tests to determine whether schools and districts are making their state’s performance thresholds. NCLB mandates that students be tested annually in reading, math, and science in grades 3 to 8 and once in grades 9 to 12. These tests are used to gauge student learning, teacher efficacy, and ultimately school performance or quality. The collected data are compiled annually into school and district
report cards by state departments of education. Thereafter, the data are widely disseminated to the public and made available from: the US Department of Education’s Institute of Education Sciences (IES), SchoolDataDirect a site operated by Standard & Poor’s, the education section of online newspapers, and real estate sites. These data are intended to empower stakeholders in public education including: parents, citizens, educators, administrators, and policymakers; and to precipitate school improvement in response to the pressure of parental preferences and choices, as well as societal demands for competitiveness in a global era.

4.2.1.2 Data collection

Under NCLB, each state is required to created assessments to measure what their students know and learn in reading, math, and science in grades 3-8 and once to all students in grades 9–12. The mandatory collection of this performance data is according to President Bush, “the only way to identify and help students who are falling behind” (Bush, 2004). The data from annual assessments are made available to the public in annual report cards on school performance and on statewide progress. These data is intended to empower stakeholders in public education including: parents, citizens, educators, administrators, and policymakers. Performance data are disaggregated according to race, gender, and other criteria to demonstrate how well students are achieving overall but also progress in closing the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and other groups of students (US Department of Education, 2007).
Coinciding with the enactment of NCLB, support departments focusing on education research and statistics were established. The US Department of Education houses and supports organizations that provide research, evaluation, and statistics. A key player is the Institute of Education Sciences (IES) which was established under the Education Sciences Reform Act of 2002 to “provide rigorous evidence on which to ground education practice and policy.” IES houses the National Center for Education Statistics, a federal organization responsible for collecting and analyzing education data; and the National Assessment of Educational Progress, which issues report cards on the state of education in the US or as phrased “what America’s students know and can do in academic subjects.”

Figure 4.1: The Nation’s Report Card on the Institute of Education Sciences’ webpage. Source: http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/
4.2.1.3 Data dissemination

The data collected are available online at SchoolDataDirect, a site operated by Standard & Poor’s, a division of the McGraw-Hill and Companies, Inc. This comprehensive, publicly-accessible and free database offers information and analysis for public schools, school districts, and state education systems. Data include information on student proficiency, financial information, and students and community demographic data. The data are compiled from state departments of education, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), and the 2000 Census of Population and Housing. According to Standard & Poor’s, “the website’s primary audience consists of education leaders who work within the NCLB environment, and it is designed to assist these leaders with the decisions and challenges they face in improving student achievement for all students.” Additionally, the site “offers comparison tools, benchmarks, and performance indicators designed to help policymakers and educators better understand how public schools and school districts are performing, how much is being spent relative to student achievement, and where it may be necessary to focus resources or attention to improve performance.”
Beyond the national level, school and district report cards and associated data are disseminated by every state’s department of education website. In addition to these institutional sites, school data search engines are available through online newspaper’s education pages (e.g., The Columbus Dispatch’s Great Schools search engine featured below) and real estate sites.
Figure 4.3 Main page of the Greatschools database affiliate of the *Columbus Dispatch* newspaper.

*Source*: [http://columbusdispatch.greatschools.net/modperl/go/OH](http://columbusdispatch.greatschools.net/modperl/go/OH)

### 4.2.2 Normalization / benchmarking

Normalization can be defined as the setting and requiring of standards. Through benchmarking, NCLB promotes standardization across and comparison between schools. Every State establishes a definition of "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) which refers to the minimum level of improvement that states, school districts and schools must achieve each year as they progress toward the goal of having *all* students at proficiency-level on
state tests by 2014. For schools to make AYP, each student subgroup must perform at, or above state-established performance average. This indicator is supposed to highlight schools in need improvement and identify any Title I schools that have not met state standards for two consecutive years (US Department of Education, 2007).
NCLB imposes the federal-level benchmark: ‘adequate yearly progress’ (AYP) upon states. Each state is responsible for defining and implementing measurements to determine whether its schools and districts are making AYP. This measure sets a minimum level of proficiency that a state, school districts, and schools must achieve every year on annual tests, eventually reaching 100% student proficiency by 2014. Schools that receive federal Title I funds (i.e., schools with a large%age of low-income students) that do not make AYP for two consecutive years are labeled ‘in need of improvement’. These schools must develop an improvement plan and offer all students the option to transfer to better performing public schools in the district. After three consecutive years of not making AYP, a school must continue to offer choice and free tutoring to low-income students. Schools that remain in improvement status for more years are subject to sanctions, ‘corrective action,’ ‘restructuring’ and possible school takeover. In addition to these federal-level accountability designations, states have established their own typologies of performance (e.g., Ohio school labels include ‘Academic Watch’, ‘Continuous Improvement’, ‘Effective’, and ‘Excellent’).

Government and non-government stakeholders utilize theses labels of schools and districts as a mechanism to regulate behavior. Labels are used to manage the ‘other’ (Armstrong 2003) by aligning school behavior to government-established norms (Foucault 1980). School labels are representations intended to normalize educational outcomes in the US across space.
4.2.3 Classification, totalization and exclusion

Classification, totalization, and exclusion are entwined strategies that have socio-spatial implications. These codes impact both people and place by constructing place-images and identities. Classification implies the differentiation of groups of individuals from one another and placing each into a particular category. This applies both to the categorization of student subgroups by performance and the classification of schools and districts into a typology of overall educational quality. Anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1979) argued that groups impose meaning on the world by ordering and organizing things into classificatory systems (Hall, 1997: 236). Binaries play an important role in classification, as difference needs to be established in order to classify. Difference is necessary for the production of meaning, the formation of culture, and for social identities and subjective sense of self (Hall, 1997: 238). With regards to totalization, in order to be classified, groups and schools must be given a collective character or identity. In this case, student performance and school quality are decoupled from contextual factors affecting outcomes. Additionally, diversity internal to schools goes unrecognized in lieu of a homogenizing blanket of characteristics and homogenizing label. Labels simplify diversity by enabling the labeler to represent those who are different as “a mass of comfortably blurred ‘others’” (Asher 2001: 77). Finally, classification and totalization contribute to exclusion. To define difference is a means of setting up psychological and physical boundaries that can ultimately lead to the exclusion of underperforming students and stigmatized schools.
4.2.3.1 Classification of schools / performance typologies

Although State and local education agencies (LEAs) have been granted greater flexibility, they are required to follow federal guidelines with regards to schools identified as ‘in need of improvement’ (after not making AYP for two consecutive years) and must prescribe schools to a list of consequences: “school improvement,” “corrective action” and “restructuring” (see Table 2.1 for school improvement sanctions, Chapter 2). While NCLB requires that all public schools in the US be held accountable for their performance, it requires specific actions or corrective interventions only for Title I schools that repeatedly miss their yearly performance goals. Immediate interventions are required for Title I schools that have not met their performance goals for two consecutive years in order to improve the school’s performance. Students attending such schools must be given the opportunity to transfer to other schools under the school choice option (US Department of Education, 2007).

In addition to these federal-level criteria and accountability designations, states have established their own typologies of performance. For instance in the state of Ohio, schools and districts can be designated as: ‘Academic Watch’, ‘Continuous Improvement’, ‘Effective’, and ‘Excellent’. These designations are featured on school and district report cards as in the one featured below.
Figure 4.4: Sample school year report card

Source: Ohio Department of Education, [http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/](http://ilrc.ode.state.oh.us/)
4.2.3.2 Totalization: place-images and identities

It is through statistics or the science of government that it is possible to identify problems specific to population (Foucault, 1991) and schools. Those identified as failing are given collective character. Collecting data on these underperforming schools and their subgroup populations allows experts to identify those schools and individuals unable to self-govern thus requiring re-attachment or their exclusion to be managed (Rose, 1999). Decoupling context and performance, schools are essentialized and placed in categories of deviance (Apple, 2001).

Dominant representations, the oversimplification and stereotyping of school spaces result in “place-images” (Shields 1991). These have implications for struggling schools and the identities of teachers and students as place and identity are intertwined (Reay and Lucey 2000, Bauder 2001). Duveen (2001) argues that “representations always imply a process of identity formation in which identities are internalized and which results in the emergence of social actors or agents” (Duveen, 2001: 257). Takahashi (1997) notes that stigma and place mutually define one another as places inherit the stigmatization of persons and groups, likewise persons and groups become stigmatized through their interactions with devalued places (Takahashi 1997).

Media plays an active role in disseminating place-images and in constructing identities (e.g., teacher identities), impacts identity and morale (Blackmore and Thorpe, 2003). These school images are spatialized thus have clear socio-spatial implications. School labels are both experienced by and affixed to people and place, and outsiders
potentially accept negative school images thus resulting in geographies of avoidance and patterns of spatial segregation.

Inscribing “identities of deviancy and social pathology” (Bauder 2001: 288) may disempower schools and the communities they serve (Reay, 2004). Demonizing and stigmatizing inner-city schools and “pathologized spaces” (Reay, 2004) or “places on the margins” (Shields 1991), are presented in the media in uncontested ways (Hastings, 2004).

4.2.3.3 Exclusion
Identifying, categorizing, and labeling are mechanisms that play an important role in social ordering and exclusion (Armstrong 2003). These practices construct groups, individuals, and places as other with different needs, thus rationalizing their exclusion and marginalization (Armstrong 2003). The spatial manifestation of the process of labeling entails separation, as labels work to isolate (Hudak and Kihn 2001). I argue that negative school labeling or stigmatizing practices may lead to “differential treatment, systemic avoidance, segregation, and marginalization” (Dovidio et al. 2000: 8).

Negative labels confer a lesser status upon underperforming schools. Such ascribed labels can be understood as stigma, indicating a sense of rejection, difference, and inferiority (Hudak and Kihn 2001). Stigma is a sign or a mark that designates the bearer as flawed, thus not meeting normative expectations (Goffman, 1963, in Dovidio et al. 2000). Stigma identifies difference, categorizes and separates ‘us’ from ‘them,’ results in status loss and discrimination (Link and Phelan 2001). Considering this with regards to
the labeling of schools, ‘in need of improvement’ schools come to bear the stigma of low academic achievement, thus placing them into the category of ‘failure’, potentially resulting in the disabling of their internal capacity to improve student performance, the demoralization of teachers and staff, the forging of a negative reputation, and the avoidance by consumers of education (Stark 1998; Tomlinson 1997; Whitty 2002). Additionally, negative school labels are reinforced in the mind of the public by the symbolic imagery that is evoked by the notion of a ‘failing’ school (e.g., marginalized neighborhoods, poor instruction, large classes, decaying facilities) thus congealing in the public’s mind the negative reputations of schools that are stigmatized.

Stigmatization is contingent upon access to social, economic, and political power that allows for the identification of difference, the separation of the labeled into categories, and their rejection and exclusion (Link and Phelan 2001). Which particular groups or places become stigmatized depends upon the function stigmatization serves for the dominant group (Dovidio et al. 2000). People in power can ensure that society recognizes and accepts labels of difference; they are able to create the ‘other’ category and make it stick; they are in a position to control access to opportunities and maintain exclusion.

4.2.4 Regulation

Regulation refers to controlling by rule, the imposition of restrictions, sanctions, rewards, and punishment. In considering its applicability to NCLB, I view regulation as two-fold: (a) the regulation of schools through a system of incentives and sanctions, and (b) the
regulation of self. Underperforming schools are both punished for their failure and blamed for it as well.

Illustration 4.7

4.2.4.1 Carrots and sticks of NCLB

Schools receiving Title I money to assist disadvantaged students are under pressure to raise student performance or else face sanctions. When a school does not meet its state’s
AYP benchmark for two consecutive years it must (1) develop a strategic plan for improvement, and (2) offer every student the choice to leave for a better performing school. The school becomes scrutinized by the district, the state, and public. In addition to these requirements, after three consecutive years of failing to meet AYP, the school must offer disadvantaged students supplemental educational services such as free tutoring and pay for these services. If the school continues to be designated an underperforming school, it may be restructured, taken over, or closed. Restructuring schools entails firing school administrators and teachers and replacing them with outside professionals. School takeover implies that either the state or a corporation becomes responsible for managing the school. Fears of restructuring and takeovers, pressure administrators to demand that teachers increase student performance, and in turn teachers pressure students to performing better so that their school makes AYP, is not sanctioned, and school staff remains employed.

The NCLB accountability system is based upon the auditing strategies and performance sanctions of the business world. Operations such as restructuring, takeovers, and closures are often part of corporate discourse regarding management; increasing productivity and efficiency; and cost-minimization. These practices have infiltrated educational reform and reflect business involvement in the formulation of social policy as mentioned in previous sections.
Neoliberalism brought a change in the way the state dealt with the groups identified as ‘other’. Those struggling or designated ‘at risk’ are blamed (Apple, 2001). They are conceived as “authors of their own misfortune” (Rose, 1996). However their status of disadvantage is not redressed given the constraint of market discipline (Tikly, 2003). Governmental organizations have constructed low-performing schools’ failure as the clear responsibility of schools in order to gain ideological power as agents of accountability (Thrupp, 1998). Thus the state merely plays a “coordinative, arbitrary and preventive” role (Dean, 1999).

School spaces are responsible for the minimization, localization, and avoidance of risk (e.g., they are responsible for their performance and are to blame if their students test poorly). Schools are to be governed “by throwing a web of visibilities” over conduct or what is termed “government through the calculated administration of shame” (Rose, 1999). Through a label of shame, schools are governed into conforming to the goals of neoliberalism or what Larner (2000) terms “market governance” that normalizes behaviors and actions. By rendering schools self-responsible for failure, the politics of blame support the ideology of the market, whereby schools either succeed or fail because they are simply ‘good’ or ‘bad’ (Thrupp, 1998) and market forces ensure that good schools survived while ‘bad’ schools disappear as the accountability system encourages competition. Thus blame is a technique for devolving power.

By holding schools accountable to the public it is believed that underperforming schools will be pressured to improve educational outcomes so as to suit consumer
demand. By providing consumers of education with knowledge about school performance/quality, “the state can distance itself from problems in education by blaming parents for making bad or ill-informed choices and by blaming schools for poor self-management, the misuse of their autonomy” (Ball 1994). Consumers of education are responsible for making proper decisions. Under the current accountability system, parents are supposed to utilize the publicly-available accountability data in order to exercise their choice. From a neoliberal perspective, consumers will send their children to ‘good’ schools (e.g., high performing suburban schools, charter schools, magnet schools) as such bad schools (e.g., underperforming inner-city or rural public schools) will disappear. The publicly available school performance data is believed to assist in the name of efficiency and equity. Empowered parents consult the data and determine which schools perform best thus they will be mobilized to move where schools are performing better. However, if disadvantaged parents ‘choose’ to keep their children in underfunded, decaying, and ‘bad’ schools in inner cities or rural areas (due to constraints such as limited access to transport and lack of information), they are blamed for making ‘bad’ consumer choices (Apple, 2001).
According to Foucault (1980) power and knowledge are inseparable, to control we must know and we must know to control. Mechanisms of power collect information of the activities of individuals and produce knowledges that can be used to reinforce the exercise of power. Knowledge about schools is produced through observation, measurement and statistics. In order to control schools it is necessary to know how they
are performing, and thereafter the judgment and data collected can be used to sanction and control.

The calculative techniques of NCLB discussed in Section 4.2 create knowledge about schools through the generation of data and hegemonic labels. The data generated are assumed to be objective and represent educational quality. However dominant representations of educational performance are created by the reification of official statistics by those with the authority (i.e., state policymakers and reformers) to identify, label, order, and record difference across space. These actors are positioned to select the tests and measurements that supposedly determine how well a teacher teaches, how well students learn, and overall school quality. Regardless of the location of schools and the context within which they operate, they are uniformly subjected to expert-established “norms, standards, benchmarks, performance indicators, quality controls and best practice standards, to monitor, measure and render calculable” their performance (Dean 1999: 165).

Based upon test results, schools are labeled either ‘effective’ or ‘failing’ (Myers and Goldstein 1998). Thus labels are either discursive devices used to signal deviance from the dominant social values or accordance with the norm. This normalizing power is associated with the production of knowledge generated from testing, measurement and statistics (Foucault 1978, 2003). NCLB federal policymakers and state departments of education determine what school performance norms ought to be and any school that deviates will be marked and flaunted publicly. Labels are a means of maintaining power, and hegemonize social values and practices (Armstrong 2003). “Knowledge and truth are
[about space] inextricably bound up with the limited perception, historical prejudices, predilections, and personal interests of the knower” (Dear and Flustly, 2002).

Educational reform policy selects targets upon which power is inscribed, specifically underperforming students and schools. Schools labels are socially constructed, they are based on societal values and individual understanding (Hudak and Kihn 2001). “Labeling is an act, a label embodies both a product and a process” (Hudak and Kihn 2001: 2). The practices of labeling in capitalist societies “operate within complex historically defined relations of power, systems of representation, and sites of identity formation where those in power have the privilege to frame the identity of those unable to name their own world collectively” (Hudak 2001: 14-15). Student and school identities are produced by neoliberal policies. School labels are value-laden. They are a means of communicating judgment, and they represent the meanings of school quality and social norms.

The school classification labels are imbued with power as they are forms of knowledge which are “hegemonically constructed, reconstructed and reinterpreted” (Armstrong, 2003). The knowledge creates representations that “are prescriptive, that is they impose themselves upon us with an irresistible force” (Moscovici, 1984: 10). Certain groups and individuals have the power to define others. For Foucault (1980), experts (or those with authority) are responsible for identifying, measuring, categorizing, labeling, ordering, and recording difference between groups and individuals and the imposition of notions of normality. This contributed to the emergence of power relations which privileged certain forms of knowledge over others (Armstrong, 2003). Thus “those
oppressed and marginalized in society often do not have control over the production of images of themselves.” (Hudak, 2001). This is intentional as hegemonic meanings given to places regulate and organize conduct and practices. Thus representations of schools assist in governing and ordering social life.

4.3.1 Production of school space

According to Foucault (2000), power is understood through governance techniques that are dependent upon the manipulation of space. Thus power/knowledge is a theorization of space and power. The school accountability calculative practices attempt to capture what takes place in spaces of education thus generating specific information about places, information which is powerful and influential.

The knowledge generated produces school space, as “(social) space is a (social) product” (Lefebvre, 1991). These representations of school space are the dominant understandings that are central to forms of knowledge and truth claims (Lefebvre, 1991) about school performance. These hegemonic representations of space are produced by policy makers, politicians, reformers, scientists, social engineers. These dominant conceptions of space use a system of signs that intervene and modify “spatial textures,” informed by knowledge and ideology (Lefebvre, 2002). The dominant spatial representations are founded upon authoritative knowledge, a single version of “the way things are” (Dear and Flustly, 2002) regardless of the multiple realities and alternative conceptions of space. These representations are legitimized and become part of our collective knowledge.
4.3.2 Representing school space

When affixed, NCLB labels produce knowledge about people and places through what Berg and Kearns (1996) term “complex constellations of power knowledge” (Berg and Kearns 1996: 104). Labels are a system of representation that communicates meaning about people and place.

Representing schools is a way of giving them meaning. The “…words we use about them, the stories we tell about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the ways we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them” constructed meaning (Hall, 1997: 3). Meaning is constructed / produced by signifying practices. A semiotic approach allows one to understanding the how of school representation, primarily how language produces meaning. Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) developed this approach to understand representation by explaining the relation between sign and meaning. Signs are composed of two elements: the signifier or
actual word/image, and the signified or the corresponding concept/idea it is associated with in your mind. Both play a role in producing meaning “but it is the relation between them, fixed by our cultural and linguistic codes, which sustains representation” (Hall, 1997: 31). In his seminal work *Mythologies* (1972), Barthes developed the idea of signification or the process whereby places, peoples and things are attributed meaning through forms of representation.

The understandings of Saussure and Barthes focus solely on meaning, they do not address questions on the power in meaning (Hall, 1997: 33). Foucault (1980) bridges this gap by focusing on issues of knowledge and power. Knowledge is produced through discourse, a way of representing knowledge. Foucault (1980) focuses on discourse as a system of representation, as discourse produces knowledge through language and influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others (Hall, 1997: 44). Foucault’s discursive approach to representation is concerned with the effects and consequences of representation, its politics, how knowledge produced by a discourse connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities. According to Foucault (1980) power is productive, it produces forms of knowledge, it circulates through mechanisms deployed to regulate and discipline practices.

To name the reality of place is a form of norming as names provide “legitimacy to those who dominate the politics of place representation” (Kearns and Berg 2002: 285). Schools are given a code for naming and classifying their performance/quality. In naming school performance we locate it in “the identity matrix of our culture” (Moscovici, 1984: 139).
Thus representing schools is part of social representations that are shared or part of a common-sense view of schooling. These social representations make up the “maps of meaning” (Hubbard, 1996) or “conceptual maps” (Hall, 1997) we use to make sense of or interpret daily life and space. School performance labels become part of our ‘maps of meaning’ to make sense of educational quality and spaces of education. Our maps of meaning are heavily influenced by dominant discourse and the tools utilized to disseminate it, namely the media.

4.3.3 *Media(ting) representations of schools*

News media play a key role in producing and controlling knowledge. National media are a business enterprise, as a stakeholder their success rests on appealing to their public and so it works in their favor to offer simplistic representations that coincide with dominant interests although these may be (mis)representations (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002). The media play an important role in constructing schools and influencing the public’s perceptions of public education, for they are the primary source of information about schools and school reform (Anderson, 2007; Gerstl-Pepin, 2002).

Additionally, the media play a key role in dissemination school performance and perpetuating representations of school performance. “We live in a media-saturated world that provides constant spectacle and surveillance” (Anderson, 2007) where media controls and distorts information (Anderson, 2007). In the case of NCLB precise language has been carefully crafted to frame the issue of education reform in a particular way so as to distort reality and convince the public or justify the policy’s necessity (i.e.,
the need for publicly humiliating “failing” schools and disciplinary techniques) 
(Anderson, 2007).

Reality is “mediated” by television, film, radio, newspapers, and magazines 
(Anderson, 2007). No analysis of contemporary education politics can ignore the role of 
the media (Anderson, 2007). The media is an arm of those in power that are capable of 
using it to their own ends and at times in deceptive ways. Government relies on the media 
because it provides one of the key ways to communicate with the public (Levin, 2004) 
providing the education consumer or stakeholder with information. As such government 
entities have their own communications staff to handle media inquiries, prepare press 
releases, and consult on media relations. An example of this would be the Department of 
Education’s paying a public relations firm to produce a favorable spin campaign around 
the Bush administration’s educational reform policy No Child Left Behind, which the 
General Accounting Office (GAO) described as “covert propaganda.” 

For instance, the creation of the “Houston miracle,” a political spectacle created to 
promote the Houston school district as a national success story. Ultimately this succeeded 
in passing NCLB with little opposition given that there was proof that the formula 
worked in improving school quality.

The media are a primary source of information for the public and a way in which 
individuals inform themselves about educational issues. However, media coverage is a 
bias of discourse (hegemonic discourse; Gramsci, 1971). The media wear a “veil 
of objectivity” (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002). The media are political players in determining which 
educational issues will be covered (e.g., extensive coverage of “hot” issues while
ignoring the invisible and the voiceless marginalized, poor, disadvantaged), how they will be represented, how stories will be framed, how much coverage will be given, in addition to what points of view will be reflected (Levin, 2004).

Media tend to oversimplify complex issues, to want to assign blame, and to neglect issues of long-term importance (Levin, 2004). Despite the complexity of issues, media create simplistic sound bites for their consumers. Media are business entities that are trying to maintain their audience’s attention and so sensationalizing, selectively picking the most attention grabbing topics, and simplifying complex issues are merely part of this process. Additionally, media coverage that places blame or exposes wrongdoing/scandal draws public interest (Levin, 2004). For instance media coverage focuses on identifying who is to blame for educational problems rather than what are the underlying issues that help explain them.

Education issues cannot be reduced to sound bites. Education reform and student performance are complex issues, and constructing them simplistically (e.g., a school is failing according to the publicly available performance data) where schools either succeed or fail minimizes the importance of issues such as discrimination, segregation, inequity, and the impacts of these on performance.

Institutions and actors both internal and external to places (e.g., media, real estate agents) play a role in contributing to and maintaining the negative image of certain people and places. For instance, media coverage of school performance influences representations and reputations of school spaces. By focusing on the poor performance of a school, the media shape the public’s perception and perpetuate dominant
representations about particular schools that in turn influence the perceptions of consumers of public education. In fact school reputations affect residential choices when “people think there are significant differences” in school quality (Cox, 2002).

The media is critical in the (re)production of policy as discourse (the three discourses discussed in Chapter 2), in that it becomes both the medium and the message for what policy is read to mean. The media simultaneously creates and taps into educational discourses (popular, professional, and academic) that take on particular dominant readings in specific contexts, and is in this sense critical to the popular construction of understandings about education, and the popular readings and meanings of certain key works, such as ‘standards’ (Blackmore and Thorpe, 2003). Information is reported however not critically debated and alternative perspectives are ignored (e.g., the concerns of teachers and minority groups) (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002). Representations of education in the media tend to reinforce and reflect public assumptions that the US educational system is failing (Berliner & Biddle, 1995). This perspective oversimplifies educational problems and portrays them as fixable by federal education policy. For instance, hegemonic representations and maps are a click away on the Internet such as Figure 4.5 from the Cleveland Plain Dealer school report database are very powerful.
2006-07 Ohio School Report Card
Click on a county to zoom in, then click a district for more details.

Figure 4.5: The Cleveland Plain Dealer: Ohio School Report Card Interactive Map
4.3.3.1 The media spectacle

The media craft the political spectacle, they “name the problem,” define the public educational crisis, while appealing to scientific, rational, and neutral discourse; and in so doing they manage the meaning of educational reform. They adopt the political spectacle of NCLB, as constructed by politicians and business leaders (Anderson, 2007). They uncritically use the NCLB report cards in their reporting, which is seen as a public
service. They cast the villains of reform (e.g., teachers that are critical of the system, teachers unions, the welfare state, etc.) and portray them in a negative light and in need of control (Anderson, 2007).

Media influences our perception of the magnitude of urban educational problems, their causes, and society’s capacity to solve these problems (Dreier, 2005). Media images focus on social pathology (e.g., crime, homelessness, failing schools, etc), define daily realities of urban life as problems, and create of a distorted view of cities as sites of social and economic problems (Dreier, 2005)\(^\text{10}\). The media fail to contextualize these images in the structural factors that reproduce urban problems and school underperformance. Framing techniques that present failure as school-based problem rather than a societal issue rooted in economic and political inequality further reinforce the public perception that the disadvantaged are undeserving of assistance (or what are the media frame as ‘handouts’).

Media continue to use the destructive images of the 1980s and early 1990s which contributed to public support for the dismantling of the welfare state (Bullock et al., 2001). Unfortunately, the coverage of the education system as a whole tends to be negative, stressing conflicts, problems, and failings (Gerstl-Pepin, 2002). This perpetuates and reinforces the negative and misleading view of urban areas (Dreier, 2005) and urban schools.

\(^{10}\) There are however exceptions to this type of coverage as occasionally media report on success stories, success being attributed to the their individual character, these are framed as “islands of success in a sea of failure” (Dreier, 2005).
4.3.3.2 The power of media images

Media representations could make or break school reputations, upon which school survival hinges. Despite the ephemeral nature of media coverage, certain images / representations / portrayals stick.

Failure remains the predominant term used to describe schools ‘in need of improvement’. The all-or-nothing label is taken up by the media, the complexities of schools are oversimplified, the difference between districts serving diverse student populations and operating in various circumstances are not taken into account, thus leading to what Kernan-Schloss (2004: 16) calls “a superintendent’s worst communications nightmare.” This is because schools find themselves increasingly bound to the task of managing or mediating how they are represented publicly (Gerwitz et al. 1995. Blackmore et al, 1996, Whitty et al 1998).

4.4 DEMYSTIFYING / CONTESTING SCHOOL REPRESENTATIONS

My focus here is on the politics of identifying and qualifying space. NCLB representations of schools are official policy judgments of educational quality affixed to spaces thus producing geographies of school performance. These hegemonic qualifiers or judgments are intended to speak to the quality of a school and the teaching and learning that takes place within. To hold such spaces accountable to parents, community residents, and local tax payers, labels are communicated publicly and widely disseminated however they are but a limited representation of school performance.
The systems of symbolization and socially constructed meanings, discussed section 4.3, are imposed upon schools and society in such a way as to be accepted as legitimate (Bourdieu, 1977, 121) and naturalizes these meanings in the interest of certain groups. The representations of hegemonic groups are those that are widely circulated throughout society (Moscovici, 1984: 51), and imposed on school space.

NCLB labels that represent schools are convenient; they make us believe that we are able to know and understand education quality and distinguish between schools. The performance data, upon which labels are determined, become reified thus obfuscating school realities and transforming labels into knowledge that infuses the public’s perception of educational quality. These collective representations are seen as “natural order” and “read as factual system” (Barthes, 1972: 131). The further these representations are propagated, the more naturalized they become (Barthes 1972). The public comes to see school labels as ‘true’ in and of themselves, as prevailing labels limit our vision and ‘pre-package’ the individual (Asher 2001) and schools.

Hegemonic representations of school space are problematic for they are partial, based on slivers of information. The authoritative knowledge upon which representations are legitimized advances version of ‘the way things are’ that do not reflect multiple realities. As asserted by Haraway (1991) all knowledge is “situated knowledge” localized by the position of the “knowing self” in social space. Thus knowledge is produced by different ways of seeing, entailing that any perspective is partial (Haraway 1991). As such it is necessary to question the naturalness of hegemonic representations, and unmask
the signs in collective representations. We must be wary of misinterpreted NCLB report
cards and misrepresentations of school space.

Presently schools are labeled as either ‘succeeding’ or ‘failing’ to educate all their
students. However schools cannot be represented adequately by a ‘good’ school / ‘bad’
school binary, essentializing tags, fabricated indicators, and manufactured representations
(Ball 1997) as they are complex and contradictory organizations. Despite major
limitations, this binary is widely dissemination, having clear social and spatial
ramifications including: impacting the city images, impacting the perceptions of the
public, affecting the behaviors of educational stakeholders, affecting the identities of
struggling schools, and their capacity to improve.

4.4.1 School representations and the neoliberal city

The negative representations of school space are problematic for they play an important
role in the image construction of urban public services and cities. These images are
powerful, shaping both public perceptions and the local urban business climate. As
discussed in Chapter 1, urban areas have undergone a shift in how they are governed,
with emphasis on prosperity, competitiveness, and the ability to attract jobs and
investment (Hubbard, 1996). These modes intensified city marketing practices coinciding
with redevelopment and repackaging the urban landscape, as cities and their amenities
are to be consumed. Urban leaders have encouraged the commodification of the city and
the spread of positive urban images through media, press, and advertising to promoted a
favorable business climate and influence public perceptions and place-images of the city.
Urban re-imaging involves the manipulation of city images to render places more attractive. Part of this process is to play up diversity and the quality of local amenities (e.g., schools, parks, transportation networks, neighborhoods) and render invisible socioeconomic problems (e.g., inequality, poverty, segregation, and discrimination). Thus the new entrepreneurial urban landscape both “diverts and entertains” (Hubbard, 1996) as the entrepreneurial city can be considered an imaginary city constituted by images and representations (Hall and Hubbard, 1998). So when a school district within the neoliberal city context is designated as ‘failing’ this does not bode well for the overall image of the city.

4.4.2 Demystifying representations

Although hegemonic labeling is a technique deployed to control and produce desirable behaviors both within and outside of school space, individuals and groups are not passive receptors of hegemonic representations, but independent thinkers and producers of their own representations. Thus there is room for the interpretation, contestation, and negotiation of these imposed myths or labels. This can take place in what Lefebvre (1991) termed spaces of representation, discursive spaces offering “complex re-coded and even de-coded versions of lived spatializations and veiled criticisms of dominant social orders” (Lefebvre, 1991).

As demonstrated in this chapter, labeling schools ‘failing’, a euphemism for ‘in need of improvement, has clear socio-spatial implications. This totalizing representation may misrepresent the performance / quality of schools. The capacity of performance data
to accurately reflect reality is limited. The publication and dissemination of the data may cause inappropriate inferences to be drawn about schools (Myers and Goldstein 1998). Often the NCLB report cards and data are misconstrued, as the discursive construction of school space is influenced by media and public interpretations of data. Various actors have been pushing for reconsideration of the terminology used and meanings associated with NCLB representations.

The American Federation of Teachers has argued that the use of the ‘fuzzy’ terminology: ‘failing school,’ is misleading and does not appear in the NCLB law. Although the language is not present in official policy documents, the term surfaces when states release their federally-mandated lists of schools that are not making AYP. This leads to “tarring a building with a ‘failing school’ label—a term that shortchanges schools which frequently have made progress, even eye-opening gains, under the most challenging of conditions” (AFT, 2003).

Similarly, the Business Roundtable (BR) a staunch supporter of NCLB, issued a campaign in 2003 to raise awareness about the misinterpretation of performance data. As part of its efforts, the BR created a toolkit of resources entitled “Please don’t call a school a ‘failure’ if it isn’t”. In an issue ad the BR states “if a school is a failure, call it a failure. But please don’t call a school a failure if it isn’t” (Business Roundtable 2003) (see Figure 5.2). The BR acknowledges school failure as being a reality for chronically underperforming schools: “Of course, some schools are failures. … But most schools don’t fall into that category, and don’t deserve to be painted with the same brush” (Business Roundtable 2003). Recognition of the public’s linguistic sensitivity to the term
‘failure’ and its associated characteristics is a clear indication of the impact that language has on our perceptions and behavior. This highlights the need to contextualize dominant judgments of schools.
Please don’t call a school a “failure” if it isn’t.

The adequate yearly progress (AYP) provisions of the No Child Left Behind Act are complex—to say the least.

AYP measures how much improvement a school is making toward meeting state academic standards for all student subgroups. Some schools meet or exceed their AYP targets. Some schools fall far short. And some come close.

Of course, some schools are failures. They’re the ones that persistently fail to make any sort of progress at all, year after year. But most schools don’t fall into that category, and don’t deserve to be painted with the same brush.

So what words would we suggest for describing schools that don’t make AYP?

The state said P.S. 101 is a failing school.

The problem is that people sometimes lump together all the schools that don’t make AYP— the ones that miss it by a lot and the ones that miss it by a little—and call all of them “failures.”

That’s just unfair, and doesn’t give the public a truly accurate picture about what’s going on in our schools. Worst of all, mislabeling a school a “failure” can demoralize students, teachers, parents, and the community. None of us wants that.

Think of it this way: If two people go on a diet and set out to lose 10 pounds, is it fair to say they’ve both “failed” if one lost 9-1/2 pounds while the other didn’t lose an ounce?

The federal government suggests “in need of Improvement” to describe schools that do not make AYP for two years. Many states are developing their own language to differentiate among schools that show different levels of progress toward making AYP.

We realize that reporters sometimes use the word “failing” to describe schools because education officials themselves use it. The fact is that we all need to be as accurate as we can.

The distinction is important.

Figure 4.6: Issue Ad “Talking About Adequate Yearly Progress.”: Please don’t call a school a “failure” if it isn’t

State officials have also critiqued the use of the failing label. For instance officials in Massachusetts pushed for a “kinder, gentler euphemisms for failure” to “avoid poisoning teacher and student morale” (Jan, 2008). The state labels were created following the 1993 Education Reform Act to highlight chronic failure. NCLB in 2001 pushed for more accountability from schools and placed the spotlight on failing schools. Symbolic changes proposed include changing the wording from: “underperforming” to “Commonwealth priority” / “high needs schools” and from “chronically underperforming” to “priority one” (Jan, 2008). Critics say this is “all word games” as “changing the name doesn’t change the reality” (Jan, 2008) rather efforts should be focused on working to fix schools rather than name them. However, as I have discussed earlier in this chapter, when schools are labeled underperforming, students and districts are stigmatized, and uniformly branded as underperforming. Not only is it “a blow” that “demoralizes staff completely” but the label bruises egos, and punishes schools (Jan, 2008). Superintendents in Massachusetts complained that the “label underperforming unfairly casts blame on educators, hinders the recruitment of talented teachers, and erodes students’ self-esteem” (Jan, 2008).

4.4.3 Resisting (mis)representations

Although the privileged are in a position of power to have their labels stick, stigmatized places and the people within need not be passive victims (Link and Phelan, 2001). Those actively challenging stigmatization are able to provide an insider’s perspective of stigma and contest misrepresentations of their schools and identities. Capturing the responses to,
experiences with, and beliefs of the process, as well as the paradox of being both an
active constructor of one’s everyday reality and an involuntary target of negative
attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that shape this reality (Oyserman and Swim, 2001)
allows us to understand more comprehensively the effects of prejudice. This includes its
influence on the ways the stigmatized define themselves, the strategies they use to cope
with stigma, the source of opinions they value, and the methods they use to deflect
societal stigma (Oyserman and Swim, 2001). As such “knowing more about the
stigmatized, we are able to understand their resiliency and strengths rather than simply
understanding them as objects or victims of others’ prejudice” (Oyserman and Swim,
2001).

Though hegemonic labels are intended to manage “the possible field of action of
others” (Foucault 2000: 341), schools need not be viewed as victims of labeling or any
other NCLB practice, for they are in a position to resist and contest labeling practices and
actively choose an alternative truth (Kearns and Berg 2002).

According to Foucault (2000), under conditions in which people are free,
individuals can resist normalizing pressure by questioning the rationality of prevailing
norms. Given the agency of individuals and the diversity of contexts in which NCLB is
enacted, power is not homogenous, it is played out in different ways and differently in
different contexts (e.g., in a suburban district, a rural district, an inner-city classroom,
etc). In The Subject and Power, Foucault states that power “is not where you find it”
(Foucault, 2000e) it is not located in institutions but rather it is everywhere, rooted deep
in the social nexus (Foucault, 2000e: 343). Power is not a top-down process located in
government or institutions or bottom-up but rather is diffuse, it ripples through society. Although NCLB is a federal initiative its implementation and maintenance is dependent upon actors at multiple scales (e.g., state-level, district-level, school-level, parents/consumers of education; and the general public). Power in this sense is productive, as people at all scales are producing and reproducing NCLB norms if they align themselves with the policy’s prescriptions. Similarly to Foucault I recognize that individuals have the possibility to oppose/resist as “there is no power without potential refusal or revolt” (Foucault, 2000d: 324). Questioning the system is in itself a form of resistance. At the level of the school, teacher resistance to NCLB practices is manifested in their surveys as they questioned/critiques the accountability system.

As discussed in Chapter 1, resistance is part of governmentality as “…govermentality’ implies the relationship of the self to itself” and it covers “the whole range of practices that constitute, define, organize, and instrumentalize the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other.” (Foucault, ‘97a: 300). Foucault’s conceptualization of resistance is novel as conventionally resistance is understood as opposition between entities (e.g., one group against another). For Foucault (2000) resistance is the refusal to accept subjectivity given to an individual by a system. Subjectivity refers to how it is that an individual’s identity is formed relative to norms, influences, and expectations that impose an identity on an individual. Active subjects have the possibility to struggle against subjection (Foucault, 2000) and promote new forms of subjectivity by refusing the one imposed (Foucault, 2000). A school can refuse
to accept the subjectivity given to it by the NCLB system; while individuals have the choice to resist / to question the accountability system.

Critique is “an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse … [challenge directed to] what is.” (Foucault, 2000: 236). Resistance is critique when individuals scrutinize assumptions and underlying rationality of socially constructed discourses and truths. The act of critique or resistance is to proactively engage with one's surroundings. For Foucault (2000), resistance occurs at the micro-scale, at the level of the individual. Critique takes place in the mind of the individual, who behaves purposefully, reflects and is aware of what he/she is doing and their role in the process.

Foucault would argue that administrators and teachers would start by critiquing the system and questioning their own subjectivity at the individual level and then link-up or scale-up. An example of resistance would be teachers connecting-up with a national union, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). This has occurred in order to resist the NCLB mechanism of testing. Teachers in Texas were frustrated with high-stakes testing, concerned about overtesting, the mismatch of tests to standards and curriculum, the slow turnaround of results and timely data that can help improve classroom instruction, the lack of diagnostic help, and too much time to test prep and not enough to teaching (AFT, 2008b). These teachers linked up with their state's AFT branch and launched a campaign to "Reclaim Your Classroom" calling attention the amount of time lost each school year to benchmarking, exam prep, and administration (Texas AFT). Teachers were encouraged to quantify the time they spend on testing and report that to the AFT and Congress. The national AFT took on this cause and called upon Congress to
end the "testing frenzy" that NCLB has fed (AFT, 2008b). This is just one example of possible action.

According to Foucault, free subjects “are faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available” (Foucault, 2000e: 342). Herein lies one of the limitations of Foucault’s understanding of resistance, though he acknowledges the choice and capacity of individuals to resist and recognizes their freedom, he does not consider the fact that for some their field of possibilities may be constrained. For instance, as I argued in Chapter 2, the neoliberal straitjacket has selectively squeezed schools. Thus governmental practices or accountability strategies have impeded the capacity of schools to improve and placed further constraints on contexts and individuals already struggling with obstacles. I acknowledge that in many instances it is possible for people to work around constraints, for instance a collective can take advantage of cracks in the system, people can move around the system, and use the system to get around the system (Cooper, 2006). Future research should explore this topic further, as well as explore how official policies are resisted through everyday practices.

Resistance to NCLB is possible and is occurring at multiple spatial scales: (1) at the micro-level within schools and the communities they serve, and (2) at the cyber-level where anyone with access to the Internet can weigh-in on NCLB and school performance. On the one hand, teachers reflecting on NCLB and coinciding behaviors can be perceived as forms of resistance. On the other, by posting comments, a narrative is accessible in
cyberspace that provides an alternative to the widely disseminated report card data, thus acting in some cases as a means of countering official school labels.

Cyberspace may be an outlet for counter-narratives to hegemonic school performance labels. At SchoolMatters.com individuals with access to the Internet can find district and school data, compare the data, rate schools, and read parental reviews of schools. Anyone can rate schools on a 5-star scale of the following school attributes: overall quality, teacher quality, extracurricular activities, safety; after-school, and special needs programs; and leave qualitative comments. For instance the following was left by parents of children in a school designated as ‘failing’:

"[School name] does its best despite the immense pressure on the district to bring up test scores. There is a lot of focus on test prep, unfortunately. Teachers are committed and some are downright phenomenal. Like all schools, some teachers are not as good as others. Parents are welcome in the school at any time and this helps create a wonderful community. This school nurtures children. However, class sizes are far too large and classrooms are overcrowded (Some children have to sit on the floor due to a lack of chairs.) The school is dirty and teachers must make do with scant resources provided by the district, which frankly just doesn't ‘get it.’ ”
– Parental rating for overall school quality: 4 out of 5 stars.

This first-hand account is both unique to the individual however in its dissemination online may speak to the experience of other parents with children in the same school or similar contexts. This account highlights the argument I made in section 4.4.1, that hegemonic labels often do not present actual school quality as lived by parents, students, teachers, administrators and communities.
Greatschools.net 'Involved Parents. Successful Kids' plays a role in disseminating district and school performance. The Midwestern school district within which my surveyed schools are located received a 3 out of 10 City Rating based upon district test performance in comparison to the state's standardized test results. In its explanation of the ratings system, the disclaimer to keep in mind when comparing schools “it’s important to factor in other information, including the quality of each school’s teachers, the school culture, special programs etc.” However it is questionable as to whether most people heed this warning. Sample public comments of site users include those with opinions that are pro- GreatSchools ratings, accepting them as fact, and those that are skeptical and/or concerned over the ratings noting its limitations as a useful source of information, the need to account for factors that influence yearly-test scores, biased parental reviews/commentary and the subjectiveness of ratings:

"Although there may be some validity to this rating service, it certainly has a limited use based on the results I have reviewed. Additionally, a score on a standardized achievement test does not always reflect an accurate picture of a student's level of achievement nor the quality of instruction; research indicates multiple assessments should be given to provide a more comprehensive picture of achievement for a student. Additionally, I am concerned about a parent(s) who has/have an axe to grind with a teacher and take it out on the school in this type of forum. Let's be honest. There are a number of parents in each community who are operating under a high level of dysfunction." – Concerned user.

"As an educator, I find your system disappointing as well as misleading. There is no way to judge a district, school, or teacher based on the test results of one class. There are so many influences that factor into test scores, both positive and negative, that make this rating system completely useless. If you want to do this well, factor in some real
measures like socio-economic standing, age of students to graduate high school and college, real writing ability, etc. That might begin to give me information I could actually use." – Concerned user.

"I would not go to a school based on its ratings because statistically speaking they are just that randomly put there so you will think the school your children are attending is a great school."
– Concerned parent of a student with learning disabilities.

4.5 PROBLEMATIZING REPRESENTATIONS

School representations are determined by NCLB labels that are intended to identify space, leave a mark, affect decision-making, place pressure on schools and students to bring about desired outcomes (i.e., increase proficiency or higher test scores), and to track deviant schools and people.

Representing schools is an important topic of exploration that can be generalized to the provision of other public services. Not only do place judgments affect our perceptions and use of space (e.g., a geography of neighborhoods or spaces to avoid) but ultimately the allocation of funding, and so may result in the closing of public schools, the shutting down of public service, and other negative community outcomes.

With regards to NCLB, it is necessary to challenge the hegemonic school labels as they are imbued with power and maintain the privileged position of dominant groups. It is particularly necessary to challenge the oversimplified and homogenized images/representations of inner-city school quality, and the discourses/framing of urban education issues. The public needs to better understand that the “reality” of educational reform and policy decisions is constructed through the media and mechanisms that make
it possible (Anderson, 2007). Our public image of a class- and color-blind society needs to be challenged. The media play an important role in the construction of the political spectacle though at times reporting informs the public on issues in a way that challenge the status quo images perpetuated by dominant groups (Anderson, 2007).

By incorporating the views and lived experiences of schools, it is possible to open up spaces of representation that challenge dominant constructions of “the way things are” (Reay 2004). I corroborate with Hudak and Kihn (2002) in that labels can be left behind. By unveiling school labeling as a process, I call for a replacement of oppressive labeling practices with the ‘true word’ generated by lived experience in spaces of education.

Geographers are in a position to comment on the role of school representations in the marginalization of inner-city schools (Bauder 2001). In order to understand how labels and stigma are experienced, it is necessary to capture the words and perceptions of the stigmatized, the labeled, the ‘other’, those people and places pushed to the margins of society. In other words, how is the landscape of school labels ‘read’, ‘decoded’, ‘interpreted’ by the people and spaces being represented? The school performance labels fix meaning about school performance so firmly that it comes to seem natural, inevitable, and true. Yet it is necessary to allow people to express how they feel about the world in their own terms (i.e., do they agree with the classification of schools based on narrow indicators of quality?).

This topic warrants further exploration with regards to (1) the ways in which school labels are experienced on the ‘inside’ from multiple perspectives (i.e., students, teachers, and administrators); and (2) the ways in which dominant NCLB representations...
impact perceptions and identities in negatively labeled spaces (i.e., the psychological impacts of hegemonic representation).
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

“In order to change the world, we have first to understand it. In order to change the world, we have to create human practices with respect to the realities around us.” (Harvey, 2001: 36).

In the preceding chapters, I present a critique of NCLB. However, more avenues of research lie ahead to solidify the call for reforming educational reform policy. Here I discuss future research on the critical geographies of education and some of the tools that will be useful. Particularly I consider critical race theory and anti-racist geography as lenses through which to explore future geographies of education in the US, and the inequities stemming from NCLB. Additionally, as a geographer and educator I cannot help but address the implications of NCLB on geographic education and the discipline of geography. Geography is essential in today’s global context however under NCLB the subject appears to be ‘left behind’.
5.1 RESEARCHING THE CRITICAL GEOGRAPHIES OF EDUCATION

5.1.1 Future avenues

As a geographer I recognize the importance of space and context in understanding the ways in which policy as a process affects spatial patterns. Further research is necessary utilizing a mix of methodologies (educational statistics, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, ethnography, etc.) to flesh out the multiple impacts of NCLB in various contexts, particularly those which the policy rhetorically seeks to assist. Geographers are in a position to scrutinize contemporary reform and its socio-spatial implications. Although geographers have touched upon certain spatial aspects of education in the U.K. and Canadian contexts (e.g., Burgess and Wilson, 2005; Warrington, 2005; Taylor, 2002; Basu, 2005) and addressed school segregation,
education inequalities and neighborhood effects on education outcomes in the US context (see Dittmer, 2004; Talen, 2001; Clark, 1987), further contributions can be made by US geographers. Given their spatial and contextual knowledge of places, geographers are in a position to bring space-consciousness to the foreground and in so doing inform public policy. I corroborate with Martin (2001) that geographers are in a position to expose “the crucial ‘difference that place makes’ in the construction, implementation and impact of public policy”. According to Harvey (2001) geographers are morally obligated to both understand contemporary challenges confronting the world and take action.

This work seeks to both create greater understanding of the spatiality of contemporary educational reform policy and highlight future areas of inquiry. Although this work focuses on inner city contexts, rural school contexts are equally worthy of exploration, as they too have been squeezed by NCLB. Future research ought to excavate the knowledges excluded by NCLB, and consider the ways in which NCLB and its ascribed identity are being resisted by actors at multiple scales. Geographers are positioned to make contributes to educational research, and US geographers should not be discouraged from exploring such avenues, and suggesting alternative practices (e.g., a move away from standardized testing) and policies.

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11 Based on my experiences organizing paper sessions on the Critical Geographies of Education at the 2008 and 2009 meetings of the Association of American Geographers, it appears that interest in the topic is mounting, and geographers are taking notice.
5.1.2 Insights of Critical Race Theory

Based on the discussion of colorblind policy in Chapter 2, I suggest that an anti-racist and/or critical race theory perspective would provide helpful theoretical insight into research on educational inequalities. In fact, to date few geographers and social scientists have recognized race and its embeddness in US society. To not recognize the importance of ‘race’ in educational policy outcomes, researchers would merely perpetuate silences via their work thus reproducing the status quo and continuing a history of denial.

The discipline of geography and particularly North American geographers scantly engaged with issues of race until the 1960s. The interest in race coincided with the Civil Rights movement. At the time, geographers turned to conducting socially relevant work and radical geographies, however all within the dominant analytic paradigm (Kobayashi, 2003). Yet the work that highlighted difference actually served to reproduce it as it failed to recognize that racialized identities and racialized places are mutually constructed. When addressed, ‘race’ was taken as an invariant category, and spatial inequality as the problem. Space, not ‘race’ was the object of geographical knowledge (Kobayashi, 2003). Additionally, explanations of racial inequality were seen through a Marxist lens as an effect of class relations thus subverting ‘race’ from being explicitly addressed (Kobayashi, 2003).

In the 1980s and 1990s, geography experienced a ‘critical turn’ which allowed geographers to move beyond an understanding of ‘race’ as a taken-for-granted fact to recognizing its socially constructed status (Kobayashi, 2003). More recently geographers have attempted to re-ignite research on ‘race’ and advance the study of racism, whiteness
and geography (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). This is part of the recognition by some geographers that “no geography is complete, no understanding of place or landscape comprehensive, without recognizing that American geography, both as discipline and as the spatial expression of American life, is racialized” (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000).

Issues of racialization have been silenced historically in the discipline of geography and considered outside of the geographer’s responsibility (Kobayashi, 2003). This is partly due to the fact that it has been a discipline “dominated by whiteness” (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). As such the minds of geographers are not acutely tuned to issues of racialization. In fact the discipline of geography has emulated public discourse which is dominated by whiteness. “‘Whiteness’ is recognized as a normative, ordinary power to enjoy social privilege by controlling dominant values and institutions and by occupying space with a segregated social landscape” (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). Thus whiteness is associated with privilege and power, it is the opposite of blackness, in other words “living in privileged and virtually all-white neighborhoods, with “good” schools, safe streets, and moral values to match” (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000).

The discipline of geography is guilty of filtering space and place through a “normative white gaze” that exercises the option to write “race” out of the equation (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). Such a silence is indicative of geographers holding a place of privilege (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). According to Kobayashi and Peake (2000) it is necessary to recognize that “all representations of space and place reflect dominant ideologies, thus reinforce difference and by default, devalue places associated with racialized people.” Yet geographers and other social scientists denied race and denied

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racism as a social issue by defining themselves “as neutral observers, neither reflexive nor agents of social change” and detached from the spatial patterns being studied (Kobayashi, 2003). New directions in the discipline will need to accept that ‘race’ and ‘space’ are in fact intertwined and that “geography matters just as ‘race’ matters” (Kobayashi, 2003).

Race is not only a social construction but it is also a “geographical and historical construct whose specificity and effects must be named” (Peake and Schein, 2000). ‘Race’ is embedded and has permeated US society. The entire US landscape is deeply racialized (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). According to Kobayashi and Peake (2000) “‘racialization’ is the process by which racialized groups are identified, given stereotypical characteristics, and coerced into specific living conditions, often involving social/spatial segregation and always constituting racialized places.” Thus racialization has a specific geography and all geographies are racialized (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). Given the pervasiveness of racialization, there is a pressing need to consider it as a fundamental aspect of geographical understanding (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). It is necessary for geographers to engage places, that is to understand “how a variety of social processes comes together in places, as well as how certain places assume more power than other by restricting and controlling spatial access” (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000).

Similarly to geographic research, educational research has failed to probe how issues of race and racism still permeate the educational landscape (Lopez, 2003). Additionally, there is scant evidence that critical race theory (CRT) has impacted educational research (Ladson-Billings, 1998). However, certain educational researchers
have recognized the utility of CRT (see Lopez, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, 1995), this is particularly the case for scholars exploring educational inequities. From the perspective of such scholars, education inequities “are a logical and predictable result of a racialized society in which discussions of race and racism continue to be muted and marginalized” (Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, 1995). Racism is endemic and deeply ingrained in American society (Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, 1995). According to Ladson-Billings and Tate IV (1995), part of the problematic nature of race is that it remains untheorized in the analysis of educational inequality and that class- and gender-based explanations are not powerful enough to explain all the difference in school experience and performance. As such the authors theorize race and use it as an analytical tool for understanding school inequity and in so doing they challenge the “traditional claims of legal neutrality, objectivity, color-blindness, and meritocracy as camouflages for self-interest of dominant groups in American society.” The authors believe that a critical race theoretical perspective is needed to “cast a new gaze on the persistent problems of racism in schooling” (Ladson-Billings and Tate IV, 1995).

According to Delgado (2000), CRT spawned in mid-1970s with the work of Derrick Bell and Alan Freeman who expressed distress over the slow pace of racial reform (as stated in Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT recognizes the normalization of racism and its enmeshing into the fabric of social order and its ingraining into the landscape (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Delgado, 2000). Researchers employing CRT must unmask and expose racism which has been taken for granted
As an “outgrowth of the Civil Rights movement and the Critical Legal Studies movement, CRT’s premise is to critically interrogate how the law reproduces, reifies, and normalizes racism in society” (Lopez, 2003).

CRT is an “important and social tool for deconstruction, reconstruction, and construction: deconstruction of oppressive structures and discourses, reconstruction of human agency, and construction of equitable and socially just relations of power” (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT highlights the ways in which our beliefs, practices, knowledge, and apparatuses reproduce a system of racial hierarchy and social inequality (Lopez, 2003). CRT acknowledges that race is socially constructed and that social reality is composed of multiple stories/narratives. CR theorists recognize that storytelling is a means of giving a voice to the racially oppressed (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Thus communicating the experience and realities of the oppressed and in so doing the storyteller and audience come to understand how the individual came to be subjugated. As part of CRT’s methodology, stories or narratives provide CRT scholars with “necessary contextual contours to the seeming “objectivity” of positivist perspectives” (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This is part of a move away from ahistorical and acontextual research, thus un-muting the dispossessed and marginalized and acknowledging the silences. In CRT the voice component is about “naming your reality” in other words a way of communicating the experience and realities of the oppressed (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT privileges stories and counterstories, providing two different accounts of reality, the dominant reality and the suppressed racial reality. “By highlighting these subjugated accounts, CRT hopes to demystify the notion of a racially neutral society and
tell another story of a highly racialized social order: a story where social institutions and practices serve the interest of White individuals” (Lopez, 2003).

While CRT has the potential to illuminate thinking about school inequity and the persistent problems of race, racism and social injustice, educational researchers need to familiarize themselves with and situate CRT in the legal literature (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Utilizing a CRT framework for educational equity requires exposing racism in education in addition to proposing radical solutions to redress the situation (Ladson-Billings, 1998).

CRT can be a powerful explanatory tool for the sustained inequity that people of color experience in school (Ladson-Billings, 1998). In the neoliberal climate, schools are a sorting mechanism in the larger global market. Thus schools have a reproductive function (Lopez, 2003) where people of color, women, and the disenfranchised are prepared to fit a marginalized role in society. As discussed in Chapter 2, neoliberal reform subverts race and negates that racism is a persistent problem in US society. In fact the only difference from the past is that racism of today is “more subtle, invisible, and insidious” as popular beliefs in color blindness and equal opportunity have driven racism underground (Lopez, 2003). The system of identifying schools based on student outcomes/performance has led to a landscape of labels which revere some schools and stigmatize others. This adds to the negative reputation of inner-city schools, as “urban schools lack the status and reputation of suburban (white) schools” (Ladson-Billings, 1998).
5.2 NCLB AND THE NARROWING OF CURRICULUM
Geography not tested, geography not taught

Implementing a neoliberal agenda in education is intended to create/produce a skilled workforce for the global economy. Since this is the case, geography ought to be an emphasized part of Kindergarten to 12th grade curriculum. Teaching geography is an essential to preparing students for their global futures. However as previously discussed perverse outcomes of NCLB include the narrowing of curriculum and teaching to the test. Geography is not tested under NCLB regulations and so it is not a prioritized subject area. Although NCLB espouses improving education for all, schools failing to meet AYP are prescribed scripted curriculum that focus on reading, mathematics, and science. As such disadvantaged students are further disadvantaged as they are not given the opportunity to learn about geography. Knowledge about people and places around the world is transferred to high performing schools and advantaged children.

5.2.1 Geographic literacy and NCLB

Despite the fact that “geography is not a subject that can be isolated from the rest of the curriculum. Geography is everywhere” (Douglas, 1998: xvii), it is clearly not reaching all students. Recent national headlines have brought attention to the knowledge gaps in geographic literacy of 18-24 year olds in the US Headlines include:

- Study: Geography Greek to young Americans (CNN.com, May 4, 2006)
- Young Americans shaky on geographic smarts. (MSNBC, May 2, 2006)
These articles highlighted the findings of the 2006 National Geographic-Roper Survey of Geographic Literacy. Findings presented by My Wonderful World and the National Geographic Education Foundation indicated that recent graduates of the US educational system are unprepared for their increasingly global futures as they lack national and global awareness and understanding of global connections. These students were not equipped with the most basic skills for navigating the international economy or an understanding of the relationships among people and places that provide critical context for world events. Specifically, 18-24 year olds answered only 54% of all the survey questions correctly, with the majority failing on questions testing their basic geographic literacy. For instance: under 30% thought it important to know the location of countries in the news; only 37% were able to locate Iraq on a map, though US troops have occupied the country since 2003; 50% could not locate New York on a map; 33% could not locate Louisiana, even after Hurricane Katrina; 75% could not locate Israel on a map of the Middle East; 47% could not locate the Indian Subcontinent; 20% think Sudan is in Asia; 48% believe the majority population in India is Muslim; 75% incorrectly named English the most widely spoken native language; and 30% thought the US-Mexico border to be the most heavily fortified border in the world.

These findings are reminiscent of those found in the 1980s. Concern over the apparent ignorance of US students of places and events within and beyond national borders is longstanding and has been present for nearly three decades. According to surveys such as the 1988 Gallup Organization, National Geographic Society and The Geography Learning of High School Seniors, and National Assessment of Educational
Progress (1990), 18-24 year olds “seriously lacking in basic geographic knowledge and skills.” Contemporary survey results appear to indicate that the situation is deteriorating. In today’s world, there is greater concern over the state of geographic literacy and an urgency to understand and correct knowledge gaps.

According to the National Geographic Education Foundation, “America is facing a geography crisis!” Similarly, Edelson (2009) argues that today’s global generation or Generation-G is not prepared to confront the challenges of their world:

“Are we teaching Gen-G students what they need to know about their world in order to succeed in that world? … The stark answer is that we are not. The K-12 curriculum contains shockingly little instruction about either the social, cultural, and political world or the world of the physical environment.” (Edelson, 2009)

Edelson (2009) argues that not only does geographic education need a place of importance in the K-12 curriculum but the curriculum must be revamped. For most geography experienced in school is about memorizing facts, place names, features, and coloring and labeling maps; however modern geography is about “planning, problem-solving, and decision-making in a complex world” (Edelson, 2009).

5.2.2 Geography on the agenda

It was not until the 1980s that geography was on the educational agenda. A commitment to K-to-12 geographic education was established with the publication of the Guidelines for Geographic Education (Joint Committee on Geographic Education, 1984),
Association of American Geographers (AAG) and the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE).

Attention to geography resulted from concern over the 1988 Gallup poll results revealing geographic illiteracy among the US population. The alarming findings precipitated the contemporary movement in geography education. A major achievement of the national network of geography alliances came in 1989 when the Bush administration included geography as one of the five ‘core subjects’ in the National Education Goals. Another milestone came in 1994 under the Clinton administration with the Goals 2000: Educate America Act in which the US Department of Education funded the development of high academic standards with 6 of the fourteen states adopting standards in geography. Once again geography was included as a core subject. Since these developments, the National Assessment of Educational Progress Geography Assessments of 1994 and 2000 have highlighted the areas of improvement and weakness in geography education (including a racial/ethnic gaps in geographic performance between Caucasian and Asian students compared to black and Hispanic students).

However since the 1990s, it would appear that geography has been pushed to the wayside and runs the risk of becoming the ‘subject left behind.’ Though geography is included in NCLB under “core academic subjects,” only English, reading or language arts, mathematics and science are required in state academic standards and mandatory assessments. Another requirement is that all core subjects be taught by teachers who are highly qualified, demonstrating competence in the subject matter. However Douglas (1998) argues that geography is not being taught and teachers are not prepared to teach
the concepts and methodologies of the discipline thus they do not enter classroom practices.

The “limited place for geography within NCLB has serious implications for the discipline” (GENIP, 2003: 4). Particularly because there is no established geography program under NCLB or funding provision thus the subject gets deprioritized. As a result a generation of US citizens will be ill equipped to make sense of the space around them, lack the ability to think and reason geographically. Awareness and concern for the implications of NCLB on the discipline were raised in the Geography Education National Implementation Project (GENIP) report “No Geographer Left Behind” A Policy Guide to Geography Education and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2003).

“You may be wondering to yourself, “If the world is becoming flat, or post-American, or potentially close to collapse, how is it that Geography – THE subject in school that addresses these issues so well – is given such short shrift?” – Shearer, 2008.

The answer is: policy! Both the teaching of physical and human geography have been “pushed to the margins” and “federal policy in education is tending to push them even further to the periphery as an unanticipated side effect of the narrow focus of the No Child Left Behind Act’s accountability requirements” (Edelson, 2009). NCLB has resulted in the narrowing of curriculum and the practice of teaching to the test. This detracts from time on subjects such as geography, important to the development of educated citizens and the development of skills such as map reading skills, critical thinking, and spatial awareness.
Geographic educators are in a position of power/influence both with regards to (1) what they teach and how they teach and (2) taking action to counter-NCLB practices at the K-12 grade levels. Educators can either perpetuate misconceptions, stereotypes, unquestion fact s, provide static material or expose realities, present dynamic material, assist in development of geographic skills/ways of thinking. Inaction is certainly not an option as geographers ought to be concerned for many reasons but foremost because education is fundamental to reproducing the discipline (Bednarz and Bednarz, 2004).

5.2.3 Macro-scale calls to action

5.2.3.1 Association of American Geographers

In the July/August 2007 issue of the AAG Newsletter, Doug Richardson wrote a piece entitled “Educating Congress on Geography Education” which included the section “Call to Action: How You Can Help.” Richardson argued that the geography community must seize the reauthorization of NCLB as an opportunity to encourage Congress to allocate funding or implement programs to further the teaching of geography at the K-12 level. The AAG encouraged members to write to their state Senators and Congressmen about the following points: (1) providing adequate funding; (2) implementing widespread teaching of geography in elementary and secondary schools which is not done under NCLB; and (3) tell them about the importance of geography in the development of citizen’s civic responsibility, global citizens, and a competitive domestic workforce. According to Richardson (2007) “without a geographic frame of reference, tomorrow’s leaders will be lacking one of the central perspectives they need to formulate sound
public policy in areas ranging from environmental conservation and transportation to national security and international trade.”

Along this same thread, the October 2007 AAG Newsletter featured an article entitled “Help Advance Geography Education” once again called upon the geography community to contact their congressional leaders and advocate for the importance of geography in K-12 education in the US. Key points raised include:

- Geographic understanding is important to every American and it is critical to the informed exercise of each citizen’s civic responsibility.
- Geography helps us understand the connections between people and places and with the natural environment.
- Geography education is key to achieving international understanding and economic development, and also provides essential workforce skills needed to maintain US competitiveness.
- The study of geography enables students to access the explanatory power of maps and increasingly ubiquitous geospatial technologies.
- Geography helps us to understand and enhance our own communities as American citizens and informs our understanding of the challenges facing the United States in an uncertain world.

In October 2007, AAG Executive Director Douglas Richardson sent a letter to “uniquely positioned” Congressman Tim Walz, of Minnesota and former geography teacher, urging that he “play a key role on behalf of (geography) as the NCLB legislation is finalized and comes to the House floor for a vote” and work with the AAG to develop a proposal on the teaching of geography in the NCLB reauthorization. This was followed-up by a November 2008 meeting of AAG staff on Capitol Hill with key staff of the House Education and Labor Committee and the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pension Committee to promote attention of geography education in the reauthorization of NCLB.
Additionally, the AAG has set up a web link devoted to NCLB featuring an overview of the NCLB reauthorization process as well as “How You Can Help”

5.2.3.2 National Geographic Education Foundation

The National Geographic Education Foundation provides online information on the two bills in Congress, the *Teaching Geography is Fundamental Act* (S. 727 and H.R. 1228) (TGIF) which calls for the funding of geographic education (an unfunded core subject), $15 million annually, and for teacher training and research in geography education. According to the TGIF bill S. 727:

“(1) Geographic literacy is essential to a well-prepared citizenry in the 21st Century … (2) In a recent National Geographic-Roper 9-country survey of geographic literacy among young adults aged 18 through 24, Americans ranked second to last. … (3) The economic stature and competitiveness of the United States requires increasingly sophisticated levels of geographic knowledge and mastery of geographic tools.”

Although a required subject and periodically assessed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress: The Nation’s Report Card on Geography\(^\text{12}\), geography is the only subject that does not receive federal funding. Without funding, curriculum cannot be developed and disseminated, and research and assessments conducted.

Geography curriculum in the K-to-12 classroom is essential because by the time students enter university they are lacking geographic knowledge or spatial thinking skills.

\(^{12}\) Most recent assessments were in 1994 and 2001 for grades 4, 8, and 12. Overall proficiency levels remained somewhat similar (slight increase in scores for grades 4 and 8, no significant difference for grade 12) and Black and Hispanic students continued to score lower.
Remedial actions become necessary and include laying the foundation for the basic building blocks of geography. In my experience teaching at one of the top Geography departments in the US, students enter my classroom lacking the most basic geography skills. This resonates with the experiences of my graduate colleagues and that of faculty: "it is very much on my mind: the ignorance of basic geography on the part of the students is in my experience simply appalling." (Professor of Geography, email April 2009). One can argue that these Generation-G students presently in university-level geography classrooms are the product of NCLB and thus have been impacted by the narrowing of curriculum. Although actions must be taken at the K-12 level, I argue that more needs to be done at the University-level regardless of the type of geography department (e.g., research 1, liberal arts college) or departmental specialization (i.e., whether or not geographic education is considered a sub-discipline or field of research). Geographers in Higher Ed have a responsibility to ensure that geographic literacy improves among their students. In the following section I elaborate on my personal experiences and reflections in teaching introductory geography courses.

5.2.4 Micro-scale practices: Geography in a university classroom

I am acutely aware that when my students enroll in my General Education Curriculum-fulfilling courses that they may not have been exposed to geography, many indicate on their ‘student information’ survey (which I have them complete on the first day of class) that they have had minimal training in the subject, have never traveled outside of the U.S, and do not follow global news. Given this starting point it is very important to me that I
raise my students’ geographic literacy, teach them to “think geographically,” expose them to content that challenges their worldview, and get them to think critically about information. Ultimately I want my students to see for themselves the importance of geography in their lives and how they are connected to the rest of the world.

At the beginning of each quarter I have my students take a short pre-test based on the most recent National Geographic-Roper Survey of Geographic Literacy (2006) (see Appendix). Based on four quarters of surveying (Autumn 2006, 2007, Winter 2008, and Spring 2008) and 229 students, my findings corroborate with those of the National Geographic, the majority did poorly on questions of basic geographic literacy (e.g., only 24% could locate Iraq and 25% could locate Israel on a map of the Middle East).

Given these shortcomings and the recognition of my responsibility to my students, it has become one of my main goals to raise my students’ geographic literacy. As a geographer in-training and instructor of introductory-level geography courses it is my responsibility to ensure that after a quarter, my students are better prepared to be global citizens by providing them with geographic tools to build their literacy (e.g., critical map-reading, geographic vocabulary, information about the interconnections between places, emphasis on spatial patterns and processes). I operationalize this objective through carefully selected course content, the incorporation of real world examples, and through activities such as current event assignments which increase my students’ awareness and knowledge of geography by exposing them to the realities of an ever-changing and dynamic world.
The first class of every quarter I offer my students metaphorical glasses with geographic lenses in hopes that from that point on they will see geographic themes in their everyday lives. To get my students to “see” spatial patterns requires that I teach them to “think geographically” (i.e., what it means to bring a geographic perspective to issues), that I teach them geographic concepts and to ask geographic questions (the where? and why? questions of scientific inquiry).

Identifying that geographic literacy is lacking amongst college students is not enough. Neither is blaming NCLB or any other policies. Action must be taken at the classroom-level to address these knowledge gaps. I myself have struggled to equip my students with the basic geographic tools they will need to confront the challenges of their global futures. My struggle is the result of lack of preparation and pedagogical training, and taking for granted my expert status when teaching geography to novices. More needs to be done to both prepare educators at the K-12 levels and in Higher Education to teach geography and assess geographic literacy.
APPENDIX A

Mutual Influences among the material, imaged, and imagineered cities

Figure A.1: Mutual influences among the material, imaged, and imagineered cities
(Redrawn from Holcomb, 2001: 38, Figure 2.1)
APPENDIX B

Survey: ‘Your School and No Child Left Behind’
(Midwest and Northeast school districts)
YOUR SCHOOL AND NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

(Participation is voluntary. Survey responses will be entered in a database for analysis and all records will be destroyed upon project completion.)

1. Your role within the school:  
   - Teacher  Specify grade: __________________  
   - Administrator  Specify role:  __________________

2. Number of years you have worked: at this school: ________ ; in the district __________

3. How much do you know about the No Child Left Behind Act?  
   - Nothing at all  
   - A little  
   - A lot

4. You were primarily informed about No Child Left Behind by: (Check only one)  
   - The Ohio Department of Education  
   - The Columbus School District  
   - School administration  
   - Workshop / professional development  
   - Colleagues  
   - Local or national media  
   - On your own  
   - Other. Specify_______________

5. Please list the top three ways in which No Child Left Behind’s accountability system has impacted your school.  
   (1) ________________________________________________________________  
   (2) ________________________________________________________________  
   (3) ________________________________________________________________

6. Overall, what impact do you think NCLB is having on your school?  
   - Negative  
   - None  
   - Positive

7. Please indicate whether you agree, neither agree nor disagree (neutral), or disagree with the following statements about No Child Left Behind (NCLB).  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. No Child Left Behind adequately addresses the needs of my school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. NCLB adequately addresses the needs of disadvantaged students.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. NCLB will raise student achievement.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. NCLB judges schools equitably.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Current accountability practices are biased against urban schools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Your school’s performance

8. Your school has been labeled as: ______________________________________________

   (a) Is this an accurate representation of your school’s performance/quality?  Yes  No

   (b) Briefly explain your answer to question 3(a) in the space below.

         _________________________________________________________________
         _________________________________________________________________

9. This label has led to: (Check all that apply)

   - School improvement
   - Increased pressure to improve
   - Departure of teaching staff
   - Departure of administrative staff
   - School restructuring
   - Transfer of students to better performing school
   - Cuts in funding
   - Imposition of sanctions
   - Threat of school closure
   - Other. Specify________________________

10. In what ways has your school’s label impacted attitudes in your school? (Check all that apply)

    - This label has lowered teacher morale.
    - This label has demoralized staff.
    - This label has demoralized students.
    - This label has demoralized parents.
    - Attitudes have not changed.
    - Other. Specify________________________

11. What is needed in your school in order to improve school performance? (Check all that apply)

    - Funding for educational materials
    - Collaboration
    - Professional development
    - Smaller classes
    - Greater parental involvement
    - Availability of tutoring
    - Opportunities for students to transfer
    - Rewards for improving student performance
    - Public recognition for improving performance
    - Other. Specify________________________

12. What actions need to be taken in order to improve your school? (Check all that apply)

    - Seeking additional funding
    - Collaboration with the district
    - Professional development
    - Greater parental involvement
    - Offering supplemental education services
    - Informing parents of transfer options
    - Other. Specify________________________
13. Please indicate whether you agree, neither agree nor disagree (neutral), or disagree with the following statements about your school and its practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Teachers and staff in my school are committed to improving student achievement.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Teachers and staff meet regularly to discuss ways in which to improve my school's performance.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Test scores are a good indicator of my school’s performance.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. My school uses a variety of criteria, beyond those mandated by No Child Left Behind, in order to measure student learning and progress.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Assessment of student’s performance has led to positive changes in my school’s practices.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. Identifying and labeling my school will lead to school improvement.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. Imposing sanctions on my school will lead to school improvement.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. My school is receiving assistance from the district on how to improve.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. My school is a ‘good’ school, which provides students with a quality education.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. My school has sufficient resources to meet the NCLB adequate yearly progress (AYP) criteria.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Your experience

14. From your experience, what are the three main challenges your school faces in improving its performance?

(1) ______________________________________________________________
(2) ______________________________________________________________
(3) ______________________________________________________________

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### Representations of your school/district

15. (a) Do you feel that your school’s/district’s performance is properly represented by news media?  
   [ ] Yes  
   [ ] No

(b) Briefly explain your answer to question 15(a) in the space below.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

(c) What issues are ignored by the media’s coverage in representing public education?

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

### Additional comments

Please provide any additional comments in the space below.

________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________

Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

If you have any questions please contact Suzanna Klaf at: klaf.1@osu.edu.
APPENDIX C

Additional Survey questions
(Northeast school district)

Additional survey questions:

1. Has NCBL Act impacted schools?

2. Have you changed your practices as a result of NCLB? If so, in what ways? If not, how have you resisted to it?

3. What is your opinion of the data generated from the results of students’ tests and report cards? Do the collected data help? If so, in what ways? If not, why?

4. Do the data accurately represent the quality school?

5. What are the major challenges that your school faces in achieving the goals of NCLB?
APPENDIX D

Geographic Literacy Survey
(World Regional Geography)
Geography 200
World Regional Geography

Geographic Literacy
(questions drawn from the 2006 National Geographic-Roper Survey of Geographic Literacy)

1. Locate the following places on the maps (see back):
   a. New York
   b. Louisiana
   c. Iraq
   d. Israel

2. Where is Sudan located? (i.e., which continent?) ________________________________

3. What religion is most widely practiced in India? ________________________________

4. Globally, what is the most widely spoken native language? _______________________

5. Which border is the most heavily armed in the world? ___________________________

i. Please indicate the level(s) at which you have studied geography (please select all that apply):
   - Elementary
   - Secondary
   - University
   - No prior study

ii. Rate your level of geographic literacy*:
   - Poor
   - Good
   - Excellent

*Geographic literacy refers to more than knowing which places and physical features are located where. It includes having an understanding of international phenomena (e.g., economic, social, environmental, political issues that take place at multiple geographic scales and provide the context for understanding world events).

iii. Do you follow current events on a regular basis?  
   - Yes
   - No

   Please indicate the frequency:  
   - Daily
   - Weekly
   - Monthly
   - Other

iv. Your source of global information include(s) (please select all that apply):
   - Newspaper
   - Television
   - Internet
   - Radio
   - Other

   indicate which one(s):
   indicate which station(s):
   indicate which site(s):

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APPENDIX E

Art Show of Critical Visuals
(March 30 – April 1, 2009)
Figure E.1: Photograph of Art Show in Hopkins Hall

Figure E.2: Photograph of audience viewing the critical illustrations
What a great way to engage the public with your "academic" work!

This made me think about my own experiences as a student of supposedly "integrated" N.Y.C. public schools and my later experience as a teacher of children in Seattle—both poor and wealthy kids.

It made me sad and angry!

I enjoyed your work a great deal. Particularly the Foucault inspired selection. This made me think about how the panopticism of schools largely empowers only teachers and other authorities, and makes it difficult, in turn, about transparency. To what extent can other interested parties (parents, reformers, etc.) "see" what is going on in schools? Lastly, this raises the question of agency: to what extent do students act back upon these forces (both socially and materially)? To what extent are they successful? At least one major study has considered this, suggesting cliques for b/c students have little control over anything else. Looking forward to further work from you.
LIST OF REFERENCES


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SchoolDataDirect. Standard & Poor’s, McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.


Tracey, C. 2005. Listening to Teachers: Classroom Realities and NCLB. In *NCLB Meets School Realities*. Ed. Sunderman, Kim, and Orfield


US Department of Education. Fact Sheet on the Major Provisions of the Conference Report to H.R. 1, the No Child Left Behind Act; http://www.ed.gov/nclb/overview/intro/factsheet.html

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