SCHOOL LEADERS AS BOTH COLONIZED AND COLONIZERS: UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN AN ERA OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

BY

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DISSERTATION

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Abstract

This study positioned the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 as a reified colonizing entity, inscribing its hegemonic authority upon the professional identity and work of school principals within their school communities of practice. Pressure on educators and students intensifies each year as the benchmark for Adequate Yearly Progress under the NCLB policy is raised, resulting in standards-based reform, scripted curriculum and pedagogy, absence of elective subjects, and a general lack of autonomy critical to the work of teachers as they approach each unique class and student (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Mabry & Margolis, 2006). Emphasis on high stakes standardized testing as the indicator for student achievement (Popham, 2005) affects educators’ professional identity through dramatic pedagogical and structural changes in schools (Day, Flores, & Viana, 2007). These dramatic changes to the ways our nation conducts schooling must be understood and thought about critically from school leaders’ perspectives as their professional identity is influenced by large scale NCLB school reform.

The author explored the impact No Child Left Behind reform had on the professional identity of fourteen, veteran Illinois principals leading in urban, small urban, suburban, and rural middle and elementary schools. Qualitative data were collected during semi-structured interviews and focus groups and analyzed using a dual theoretical framework of postcolonial and identity theories. Postcolonial theory provided a lens from which the author applied a metaphor of colonization to principals’ experiences as colonized-colonizers in a time of school reform. Principal interview data illustrated many examples of NCLB as a colonizing authority having a significant impact on the professional identity of school leaders. This framework was used to interpret data in a unique and alternative way and contributed to the need to better understand the
ways school leaders respond to district-level, state-level, and national-level accountability policies (Sloan, 2000).

Identity theory situated principals as professionals shaped by the communities of practice in which they lead. Principals’ professional identity has become more data-driven as a result of NCLB and their role as instructional leaders has intensified. The data showed that NCLB has changed the work and professional identity of principals in terms of use of data, classroom instruction, Response to Intervention, and staffing changes. Although NCLB defines success in terms of meeting or exceeding the benchmark for Adequate Yearly Progress, principals’ view AYP as only one measurement of their success. The need to meet the benchmark for AYP is a present reality that necessitates school-wide attention to reading and math achievement.

At this time, principals leading in affluent, somewhat homogeneous schools typically experience less pressure and more power under NCLB and are more often labeled “successful” school communities. In contrast, principals leading in schools with more heterogeneity experience more pressure and lack of power under NCLB and are more often labeled “failing” school communities. Implications from this study for practitioners and policymakers include a need to reexamine the intents and outcomes of the policy for all school communities, especially in terms of power and voice. Recommendations for policy reform include moving to a growth model with multi-year assessments that make sense for individual students rather than one standardized test score as the measure for achievement. Overall, the study reveals enhancements and constraints NCLB policy has caused in a variety of school contexts, which have affected the professional identity of school leaders.
To my Mike and our children Oscar, Leo, and Daisy. Thank you, my family, for your love, care, and patience. This is for our future!
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Fall of 2008, while touring a Chicago Public elementary school with a group of prospective student teachers from my university, we walked into a third grade classroom, just as a man and woman in formal business attire were walking out. The teacher asked his class to tell us about their guest speakers. “They were here to tell us about business and farms and buildings and stuff,” offered one student in a dull voice. Intending to find out more about how this connected to their curriculum I simply asked, “Why?” Another student without hesitation shouted out, “So we can pass the ISAT!” Then the principal, who was guiding the tour, jumped in and asked the class, “And what happens if you don’t pass the ISAT?” Students chorused, “We go to summer school!” The principal questioned, “And how long is summer school?” Students chorused, “Six weeks.” The principal asked, “And what happens if you don’t pass summer school?” Students proclaimed, “We stay in third grade!” The principal smiled at the class, then turned toward the university students and me with a rather proud look on his face, seemingly to indicate all of the students knew what was expected of them.

The principal at this particular school has been there for over 20 years. During that time he experienced changes in student demographics, internal Chicago Public School policy mandates, external school reform, funding cuts, and most recently issues related to increased accountability under the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2002 (Public Law 107-110). As we walked around the school’s hallways, he stopped by a series of mid-sized boxes that had been placed on the floor, filled with colorful primary
reading books. He indicated the books had been brand-new to the school two years ago, but because the school had not meet *Adequate Yearly Progress* (AYP) as measured by school scores on the Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT), the school was on the “watch-list” and could not longer use the texts. Instead, a reading series mandated by the district as a way to teach more “test-related” skills was implemented. The principal sighed, “They were brand-new books, and it’s been a long time since we were able to get something like this, that so many students and teachers enjoyed, and…now it is just packed away.”

This interaction made me ponder what kind of school leader this principal is at the core of his professional self. I thought about the kinds of changes he might have made personally in his relationships with staff, students, and parents over the years, and what kinds of changes had been made in the school curriculum and community. I speculated that he had made shifts in his philosophy of how to help students’ achieve and maintain their curiosity as learners, and I questioned if he was able to lead in the ways he thought best for his school community. Mostly, I wondered in that hallway moment while looking down at boxes of books, why the sadness that was in his voice was such a contrast to the smile he had given to his third grade class and to our tour group moments before. I thought: How has NCLB had an impact on *who* this man *is* as a school leader?

I had the impression this principal had lost something much more than just new textbooks and thought somewhere in his struggle to lead; he had lost part of his professional self. Were there other leaders’ like this principal succumbing to the pressure to make adequate yearly progress with a smile for their students and staff, but a deep
sadness in their heart? It was like the principal had become colonized into a reformed mindset as his district responded to the NCLB policy mandate. He was more “test-related” and less like something students and staff “enjoyed,” as if this change had been forced upon him without his input and without his consent. Was his professional identity being packed away with the books and a colonized, yet smiling, version of his professional self emerging?

Rationale

Pressure on educators and students intensifies each year as the benchmark for Adequate Yearly Progress under the federal No Child Left Behind Act is raised. Currently, schools are expected to have all students meeting or exceeding the benchmark on state standardized tests by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. Many districts have far to go, so far that unfortunate compromises and potentially harmful practices are appearing.

Since the adoption of the NCLB legislation, increased pressures and tighter measures of accountability placed upon schools and school districts have resulted in standards-based reform, scripted curriculum and pedagogy, absence of elective subjects, and a general lack of autonomy critical to the work of teachers being able to individually adapt to each classroom and student (Crocco & Costigan, 2007; Mabry & Margolis, 2006). The emphasis on high stakes standardized testing as the indicator for student achievement (Popham, 2005) affects educators’ professional identity through dramatic pedagogical and structural changes in schools (Day, Flores, & Viana, 2007). Some of
these changes have been implemented quickly and without much thought in order to raise test scores and sustain the status of a “successful” school--changes like those in the Chicago school that had to switch its reading program after brand-new texts had just been purchased.

As school leaders interpret and implement NCLB mandates in their districts and schools, a reformation of professional identity has the potential to positively or negatively occur. Researchers support the need to further explore professional identity of educators and the ways they are responding to the reform (Day, 2002). As school leaders implement reform changes they have little control of or voice in, they are in a sense “colonized” under NCLB. As school leaders enforce reform changes by revamping expectations for teacher and student success, they also in a sense act as “colonizers” for NCLB. Policy that creates an increase in professional recognition for “successful” educators who help their schools make AYP, while at times compromising personal autonomy and professional practice, necessitates rethinking and resistance, "As a consequence of the paradoxes underpinning the changes in educational policy and practice the very idea of teacher professionalism and professional identity needs to be debated and resolved" (Sachs, 2001, p. 150). Perceptions of identity are important (Beijaard, Verloop, & Vermunt, 2000) because understanding issues of teacher identity helps us understand the teacher experience and response to reform policy (Sloan, 2000); understanding principal identity as part of school reform, is important as well. As researchers examine the impact of reform, it is important to "look for trends and to recognise the unintended consequences of policy making" (McNess, Broadfoot, & Osborn, 2003, p. 256).
Professional identity is thought to change overtime and in response to social context (Day, Kingston, Stobart, & Sammons, 2006). The response and responsibility of school leaders to NCLB policy may, therefore, be negotiated through their sense of their changing professional identity as educators who lead in an era of increased accountability. Remarkably, through this negotiation, school leaders find themselves in a syncretic space as both “colonizer” and “colonized” under NCLB policy reform. Syncretism occurs when differing beliefs, thoughts, and values are fused together to create a heterogeneous whole. The syncretic space is that part of a school leader’s identity where a leader interweaves and layers educational philosophies from their core professional self with new practices, ideologies, or in the case of this study, mandated reform. They negotiate power, re-envision and/or reaffirm their professional identity and the professional identity of those around them, and justify decisions and conflicts of practice in response to the accountability and pressure of the current education reform.

**Problem Statement**

Important changes in the ways our nation conducts schooling result from a response to pressures created by standardized testing and NCLB mandates; these changes must be understood and thought about critically. Changes are important to examine from multiple perspectives as a means to inform policy makers and school leaders. Policy changes that weaken and cause undue tension in school leaders’ professional identity and their ability to have a positive impact on student learning, teacher efficacy, and school climate and culture as a whole, should be resisted and retooled. Policy changes that
reshape the work and purpose of education as a whole by positively supporting marginalized groups, building teacher agency and capacity, and enhancing the professional identity of school leaders should be embraced and empowered.

**Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional identity of school leaders as shaped under the mandates and constraints of No Child Left Behind. This study looked at school leaders’ perspectives of the rewards, benefits, pressures, and tensions faced in schools and districts as a result of NCLB, and how these perspectives have an impact on leaders’ professional identity.

The central research question in this study was: How do school leaders respond to the constraints and pressures of No Child Left Behind as negotiated by their professional identity? Two major questions I addressed were: (a) How do school leaders’ understand their professional identity? and, (b) How do educators respond to the rewards, benefits, constraints, and pressures as their school districts respond to NCLB policy reform?

**Personal Position**

To make my position as researcher more clear, in this section I explain the nature of my ontology, axiology, and epistemology as an investigator who “cannot help but always be situated relative to” the social web of beliefs and experiences from which I interpreted my work (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007, p. 11). What I believe to be true about the work in schools stems from my experiences in a variety of school contexts; this
is my ontology. I have been connected to the work of education most of my life. I am the product of the United States public school system and am now fortunate to pursue graduate studies that reflect a culmination of my interests and experiences as a learner. Most recently I have begun working with student teachers at my university, and they freely share what they have experienced in many school districts throughout the state. As an instructor to these future educators, I am conflicted with how to prepare them for the current climate of standardized testing and accountability under NCLB, as well as a potential future climate of more diverse, authentic measures of achievement and autonomy. Before coming to teach and study at the university, I taught in K-8 schooling, where I was a classroom teacher for over 11 years in public, private, rural, and small, urban contexts before and during NCLB reform. The “truths” I have gathered about schools are holistically constructed from the interrelation of all of my experiences and perceptions about those experiences (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007), but it is my most recent teaching at a small, urban “failing” school where I vividly perceived my school principal as being both colonized and a colonizer under NCLB.

My axiology or the values that influence my thinking as a researcher, are influenced by my work as a teacher at the “failing” school noted above. One of my closely held values as an educator is that I be my authentic, professional self, sharing my gifts and talents with the students I work with, all the while learning from the gifts and talents each unique learner brings to my classroom. At the “failing” school, I was not able to hold true to this value as a teacher. Because “the role of values in inquiry asserts that far from being value-free, inquiry is value-bound” (Schwandt, Lincoln, & Guba, 2007, p.
17), my research was influenced by my value of educators being able to be themselves as they construct understandings of their professional identity. I began to think about how this process works in an era of increased accountability. My choice of a guiding theory in this study was postcolonial theory, a choice reflective of my values surrounding professional identity. Postcolonial theory provided a metaphorical, epistemological framework for my study; it is one way of perceiving and gathering knowledge about the professional identity of school leaders. In the following section, I explain this theory and thus the epistemology of the study.

Colonization by definition involves the brutal conquest of peoples, their cultures, and their lands. Postcolonialism is the looking back at the story of colonization from the perspective of the colonized and sometimes the colonizer; inevitably the story continues far past the point where the two have physically parted ways. Although I used colonization as a metaphor for this study, I do not wish to imply that the experiences of school leaders’ and school communities during the era of NCLB are as horrific and oppressive as the experiences of the nations and peoples who have at various points in history been colonized by those exercising hegemonic power and greed. I have used the metaphor to bring the power of changes in professional identity of school leaders in this era to light. Principals have a story and a voice, portrayed with gravity and perseverance through the lens of postcolonial theory. I regret any potential affront the metaphor might initially or continue to cause to a reader, and I am hopeful that for the purposes of this study, the framework was beneficial as a means to disrupt the governing discourse of policymakers.
Overview of Literature and Theoretical Framework

Postcolonial theory encompasses a heterogeneity of inquiry approaches and scholarly fields, all pointed toward developing a critique of the historical developments of European/Western colonization and imperialism (Prasad, 2003). It is commonly agreed that the theory was constructed in the 1970s and promulgated by Edward Said’s foundational book *Orientalism*. The theory is rooted in the struggles of post-colonial societies establishing their difference from the power which dominated them both physically and ideologically (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tifflin, Eds., 2002).

When thinking about postcolonialism, it is important to note that although many countries throughout the world are in some stage or state of post-colonization, no place or people experience the affects of colonization and decolonization in the same way. More than three-quarters of the people living today have had their lives influenced and shaped by colonialism to some degree (Ashcroft et. al, Eds., 2002). In this study, I explored the experience of school leaders negotiating their identity during the “colonial” era of NCLB. I recognize the impact of this reform, and other school reforms across the United States and other countries differ depending on individuals and school communities. The “postcolonial” experience of school leaders manifested itself in divergent and intricate ways. It was my hope to share the thoughts of leaders who had experiences both before and after the enactment of NCLB, and to share their experiences now, closer to the onset of “colonization” rather than waiting until the next reform movement takes hold. I made specific assumptions and analogies using this theory with regard to NCLB reform as explained in the review of literature. I used colonization as a metaphor that allowed me to
broaden traditional understandings of the experiences of school leaders and learn how leaders negotiate their professional identity and work in schools in an era of NCLB.

A gap within the literature is potentially endless when considering individual experiences through a postcolonial lens. My study pertains to specific individuals reflecting during a fixed moment in a time of colonization, therefore leaving ample room for further study of other fixed moments in time. I recognize, of course, that NCLB policy itself cannot “colonize” our schools because it is not a country or a person with power in and of itself. NCLB policy is composed of words and ideas; it is only an entity in the sense that it is a legislative document. However, the impact of the policy, the implications of the legislation, the lawmakers’ purposes behind the legislation, and in some instances the lawmakers themselves, may have a colonizing effect on schooling. The federal government may have acted like a colonizer by creating and passing NCLB policy. Changes in the ways schools prioritize learning have resulted from the policy’s enactment as interpreted by states, school boards, and school leaders; the lasting effects of NCLB policy reform on American school culture in this metaphor have colonized and are colonizing our schools because the power of the policy has mandated large-scale school reform. Therefore, I do refer to NCLB as an entity for the purposes of this study. Though I acknowledge that a policy on a piece of paper cannot colonize per se, I will take the liberty to use the metaphor of NCLB as a hegemonic power that is colonizing our schools. A metaphor is a tool that “gives us the opportunity to stretch our thinking and deepen our understanding, thereby allowing us to see things in new ways and to act in new ways” (Morgan, 1998, p. 5).
Establishing NCLB as a colonizing entity is likened to Etienne Wenger’s (1998) notion of *reification*. Wenger makes an idea or an abstraction into a concrete “thing” through “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into “thingness” (p. 58). Viewing NCLB as an entity and as a “thing” with power allows me to do what Wenger does with his reified objects, “In (reification) we create points of focus around which the negotiation of meaning becomes organized” (p. 58). NCLB is my “point of focus” as a reform policy that has an impact on the professional identity of school leaders through its colonization of leaders, school communities, and schooling.

A compelling reason to use postcolonial theory for this study now and not after current NCLB reform is replaced by other reauthorizations or reforms, is to avoid a postcolonial story where history is speculative and where the colonized remain in a passive role as their “history [is] made by others” (Ahmad, 1995). I wanted to study school leaders’ perspectives before there is a forgetting of who they were pre-NCLB. This forgetting amnesia is clarified by Dirlik (1994), “Postcolonial…is applicable not to all of the postcolonial period, but only to that period after colonialism when, among other things, a forgetting of its effects has begun to set in” (p. 339, italics in the original). I had the impression that it was possible, even likely, that the forgetting effect of what schooling was like pre-NCLB and how leaders defined their work pre-NCLB had already begun to take hold during the research. Leaders had been reconstructing their professional identity for some years under the mandate of NCLB. It was my hope to recapture as much of their past and present understandings as I could.
In addition to postcolonial theory, I also used components of identity theory to build a framework for defining professional identity. By identity, I mean the way an educator understands who he or she is in the context of his or her community of practice, the group of people and shared experiences which make up the (school) community (Wenger, 1998). “Teachers’ perceptions of their own professional identity affect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice” (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 750).

NCLB reform has created rapid changes in some schools because of the tightly defined measure of success indicated by a benchmark standardized test score. In times of change, identity is not a "fixed" thing (Beijaard et al., 2000), but rather a negotiation of meaning based on the everyday school context in which leaders and teachers take part. Professional identity is mediated by experiences that occur inside and outside of schools, personal values and ideas about what it means to be a teacher or leader, and also what kind of professional an individual aspires to become in his or her career as an educator (Sachs, 2001). How one interprets "teacher professionalism" is "a contextual and multidimensional issue that varies among different contexts and times" (Lai, & Lo, 2007).

**Gap in the Literature**

Numerous studies, both psychological and sociological, have been conducted on the subject of identity and identity formation; however, relatively few of these studies
research and define professional identity as a means to better understand educators and their careers (Beijaard et al., 2000). Though studies on the professional identity of teachers are becoming a more developed body of literature (Sachs, 2001), studies involving the professional identity of school leaders are few in comparison. Therefore, I used studies on professional identity of teachers to examine school leaders’ professional identity as informed by, but distinct from, that of school teachers. Studies on teachers’ sense of professional identity in response to school reform are foundational for building an understanding of principals’ professional identity in a time of school reform, and this study offered the principals’ perspective as a contribution to a gap in the body of professional identity literature.

As school leaders reflected on experiences leading schools in an era of NCLB, it was my hope that they would more fully interpret the meaning and impact of NCLB in their workplaces. An “epistemic reorientation takes place on a very personal level, (when) an individual’s recognition and conscious acceptance of her feelings makes possible the process of search and discovery through which she comes to discern crucial features of her situation” (Mohanty, 1993, p. 41). The features of the “situations” I explored with leaders were often those features of postcolonialism that aligned with and enlightened the consequences of NCLB legislation.

Methods

This study was situated in the state of Illinois, and gathered the perspective of principals who have served as school leaders both prior to NCLB adoption and since
NCLB adoption (a minimum of eight years). Research studies on national education policy mandates and large school reform have been conducted in many developed countries. This study adds another perspective to global school reform, especially through the postcolonial lens.

I gathered qualitative data through interviews with 14 elementary and middle school principals in Illinois and two follow-up focus groups. I recruited a purposeful sample using a snowball technique. All participants led schools prior to 2002 and were acting as school leaders at the time of the interviews. In order to achieve a possible postcolonial perspective, only leaders who had been a part of schooling prior to the reform were recruited, since I thought they would best be able to reflect on the impact the reform had on their professional identity.

I was interested in learning from urban and suburban principals at elementary and middle school levels, leading both in “successful” or “unsuccessful” schools as measured by AYP. At the onset of the study, I wondered if the kinds of pressures and rewards experienced in successful and failing schools would lead to different effects of colonization. After interviewing the principals I transcribed, coded, and analyzed their responses as explained in more detail in chapter three.

Assumptions

I made several assumptions when conducting this study. The first assumption was that educational leaders have a professional identity and “calling” that directly impacts who they are and how they work in the field (Palmer, 2007). I believe the work of
educational leaders has a direct impact on student learning and achievement, school climate and culture, and teachers’ sense of professionalism (Marzano, 2003; Day et al., 2007). A second assumption was that professional identity could be supported and challenged by external forces such as NCLB policy and reform, occurring presently in the United States. A third assumption, which was examined specifically through principal interviews, was that school leaders understood their own experiences and teacher perceptions of reform benefits, rewards, and constraints in their school and district. A final assumption I made was that through cultural resistance, school leaders could help themselves and their teachers negotiate a sense of professional identity that responded to the challenges and advantages of NCLB reform policy.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

This was a qualitative study that explored the situated context of the school districts and persons interviewed at a point in time. Although the findings may be used to pose questions extending beyond the situations analyzed, a limitation of this study is that it was a small-scale exploration of the issues present in specific schools with specific principals. In this way, data collected through interviews provided individual, not group findings, that could be used to consider larger populations of educational leaders, but may not be generalized to larger populations of educational leaders. Another limit to the study was the ability of participants to fully remember their experiences and feelings prior to or at the onset of NCLB, as that was some time ago. I delimited the principals I interviewed to elementary and middle school principals that have served in a principal role for at least
eight years, available to me through the snowball technique. I chose not to include high school principals in the study because the pressures faced by high school campuses, which are typically larger than elementary or middle school campuses, are potentially very different from the K-8 experience. Also, high schools in Illinois take a different standardized test from the Illinois State Achievement Test.

**Significance of Study**

By the time federal and state reform policy reaches the classroom level it has been interpreted and altered by several intermediaries. Researchers need to better understand the ways school leaders respond to district-level, state-level, and national-level accountability policies (Sloan, 2000) as they serve in a middle-manager role. If teacher identity is, “arguably central to sustaining motivation, efficacy, commitment, job satisfaction and effectiveness” (Day, 2002, p. 677), all of which are factors commonly agreed to have an impact on student learning and achievement, then school leader identity must also be central to the success of schooling. Leaders and teachers are present at the school-level, where “the strength of the effects of reform upon identity are mediated not only by the nature of the reform itself but also by teachers’ personal sense of vocationalism and the leadership, cultures, and pupil populations of the schools in which they work” (Day, 2002, p. 688).

When educational leaders articulate and are true to their identity and calling in the profession, they can lead with vision and purpose (Palmer, 2007). If professional identity is compromised or enhanced by external policy reform as suggested by much of the
literature, school leaders’ ability to negotiate new meanings of identity for themselves, their staff, and their school community is a research priority. As NCLB policy implementation “colonizes” and results in radical changes in many school districts, schools, and classrooms, principals gain or lose power and position as they respond to that colonization. The way leaders understand the changes and act upon them have an impact on the success or failure of reform and a newly constructed sense of educator professionalism.

Thus, this study explored the impact of NCLB reform on the professional identity of school leaders and their work in their communities of practice. The study informs the literature on leaders’ professional identity critical to policy makers’ understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of policy reform and implementation. For school leaders, this study brings to light the power and professionalism they hold and their importance to the success of real school reform. For policymakers, this study is layered with school leaders’ expertise and vision. These 14 leaders share their voices, but there are many more who policymakers would be wise to listen to.

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter Two is a review of literature on both identity and postcolonial theory where I introduce the metaphor of colonization into some of the basic principles of the theory. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology and methods for recruiting and selecting participants, data collection, and analysis. I present the findings in two chapters Four and Five, where I share outcomes from the data as related to the study’s purpose and research questions. In Chapter Four, data are presented through the lens of identity theory and in Chapter Five, data are presented
through the lens of postcolonial theory. Chapter Six offers my interpretations of the findings as related to the literature and theoretical framework, and I make recommendations and propose ideas for future research.
Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

In this review, I examine the literature of postcolonial and identity theories to craft a critical lens by which to examine No Child Left Behind policy reform and its implications for schools, school communities, and school leaders. I posit that NCLB acts as a colonizing power influencing the professional identity of school leaders; this professional identity acts as a vehicle for leaders to negotiate the implementation of NCLB reform in their workplaces. By drawing analogies and parallels among prevalent ideas in postcolonial theory and components of NCLB policy, I construct a framework for understanding how leaders negotiate the impact of NCLB in current practice.

The literature is reviewed in three major sections. In the first, I explore major concepts and two foundational theorists of postcolonial literature that apply to the K-12 education community. I investigate ways schooling may or may not be viewed in postcolonial terms within the NCLB context. In the second section I provide a synopsis of ideas from several identity theorists and explain the need to use a theory of identity that relates to shared, communal experiences when examining school leaders’ professional identity. In the last section of the review, I present studies of school reforms as they affect professional identity of teachers, and I explain in this section how the body of literature around professional identity of teachers in times of school reform is a more developed field than professional identity of school leaders. Before launching into the first two sections on postcolonial and identity theories, I present a short rationale for using these theories in my study of NCLB policy and its affect on the professional
identity of school leaders. Figure 1 shows the literature construct that I conceived for this review, where school leaders are situated in a time of school reform as understood through the dual lenses of postcolonial and identity theories. This construct will be repeated and added to in this chapter and in chapter six.

![Figure 1](image)

*Figure 1.* Literature map situating school leaders in a time of school reform.

**Rationale**

Postcolonial theory is infrequently used to examine the broad field of management and organizations when compared to other critical theories such as postmodernism, post-structuralism, feminism, and so forth (Prasad, 2003). Instead, “...critical organizational scholarship has mostly elected to ignore the insights offered by postcolonial theory and criticism” (Prasad, 2003, p. 9), insights that I believe are useful to understand and conceptualize the culture of schooling in which school leaders work in an era of No Child Left Behind. Therefore, in this review, I examined both the literature as
well as sought the applicability of postcolonial theory to NCLB reform by developing the metaphor of colonization.

The work of school leaders within school organizations should be examined from multiple theoretical perspectives, and postcolonialism (which includes both postcolonial theory and postcolonial criticism) serves as an alternative lens through which to study and construct new understandings. By specifically examining the professional identity of school leaders in an era of NCLB using postcolonial theory, I addressed a gap in the literature as I conducted this scholarly inquiry contributing to the field of management and organization of schools.

Some research argues that studies of test-based accountability systems are often concluded to be “all-bad” or “all-good” (Sloan, 2006) and that instead, “researchers [need to continue] exploring and reporting the complexities and uncertainties involved in trying to understand the ways individual teachers experience and respond to test-based systems of accountability” (p. 121). As I examined the literature, it was my hope to discover the complexities and tensions leaders might feel and experience in response to NCLB policy reform and relate this when applicable to understanding the interview data. Although I used postcolonial theory as a way to critique NCLB reform, the data will show there are varying degrees to which this reform and its impact are positively and negatively influencing the work in school communities.
Defining Postcolonial Theory

The multiple dimensions, definitions, spellings, usages, and contexts for postcolonial theory are vast. As with most scholarly terms, postcolonialism and postcolonial theory and critique have important and distinct debates around definition; there are variances in hyphenation, suffixes, and forms of the root word “colony” that occur throughout the literature. The terms colonialism, postcolonialism, imperialism, decolonization, and anti-colonial have multiple and shifting meanings (Prasad, 2003).

When the postcolonial time period starts, if and how it ends, who postcolonialism involves and where it occurs are questions asked with respect to postcolonial theory. In a well-known book The Empire Writes Back, a time for the postcolonial is proposed:

We use the term ‘post-colonial’ however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. (Ashcroft et al., Eds., 2002, p. 2)

One could also argue that post-colonialism begins prior to the physical occupation of colonial rule in that colonization actually “begins the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others” (Slemon, 1991, p. 3). “Others” is a term used frequently throughout postcolonial writing to refer to the colonized as viewed by the colonizer. The “Other” is an object to be dominated and subjugated throughout colonization and colonial conquer. Through the literature of poets and novelists inscribing themselves as informants of the uncivilized Other to the soon-to-be colonial power, the Other is dominated and defined by the colonial voice even before a territorial invasion, thus beginning the process of “othering.”
Both of these ideas inform “when” to mark the postcolonization period of NCLB. Formally, the moment of colonization occurred when NCLB legislation was enacted by President Bush on January 8, 2002. Considering Slemon’s (1991) definition, however, I could argue that the federal government had used a form of imperial power to inscribe itself onto the writing and reporting on the field of education for some time. With the release of A Nation at Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform, a landmark education report published by the federal government in 1983, the federal government began seriously calling into question the professional authority of schools, educational leaders, and teachers as well as the need for dramatic local and national education reform. In this way, members of the federal government have positioned themselves as superior authorities over the “uncivilized” education system for many years, and to set a specific date as a “moment” of colonization remains complex.

As school leaders’ enter an increasingly hybrid state under the mandates of NCLB reform, they conceivably take on new facets of their professional identity. As their identity changes, leaders may be incapable of fully remembering their story at the moment of colonization thereby allowing this moment in history to be “made by others” rather than remembered and told by them. In my study, I wanted to avoid a history “made by others” to the greatest extent possible, though I acknowledge I am a re-teller and interpreter of leaders’ stories. Accompanying the need to avoid a “forgetting” of the effects of colonization is the need to define school leader professional identity as understood during current NCLB reform. Depending on who defines the professional identity of principals, principals could potentially have an identity “made by others” as
well as a *history* “made by others.” Instead, “If the teaching profession wants to be the author of its own identity or professional narrative then now [in an era of NCLB reform] is possibly the time for this to occur” (Sachs, 2001, p. 159).

A definition that encompasses the interdisciplinary approach of postcolonialism states that postcolonialism is “grounded in the belief that justice and human freedom are indivisible, and that achieving true freedom and justice requires a genuine global decolonization at political, economic, and cultural levels” (Prasad, 2003, p. 7). This definition, to me, means that colonial power must be fully removed in order for the colonized to achieve an opportunity for freedom and a rebirth of identity, forever changed by the history of their colonization, but with the possibility to seek a new identity. Removal of a colonial presence is not as simple as ceasing to physically occupy a country, but much more entwined in political, economic, and cultural issues where the colonizer and colonized may find they have a familiar and even dependent influence on one another.

A concept commonly found in postcolonial literature is *neocolonialism*, which refers to any time period after decolonization where colonies achieve political independence from (typically) Western rule, but continue to remain economically dependent on that ex-colonial power. This continuation of rule by “nontraditional means” leaves neocolonial countries with elements of political, economic, and Western cultural control remaining to present day (Prasad, 2003). Spivak, known for her ideas involving postcolonial critique states, “Neo-colonialism is not simply the continuation of colonialism; it is a different thing. That is what I call ‘postcoloniality’” (1991, p. 224).
This idea is a critique of the label for the in-between state “neocolonialism,” where the hegemonic power has removed itself, but that removal leaves the colonized in a place where they are still deeply connected to the former colonizer. Instead, in postcoloniality, the colonized seek to redefine and regain their power, emphasizing their difference from the colonial ruler.

If NCLB policy is terminated or radically rewritten, some effects of colonization are likely to exist in school communities, affecting school leaders because the continuation of a former colonial power will still influence the mindset and priorities of schooling as well as the funding structure. However, postcoloniality will be a time when teachers, leaders, and school communities take back power and author their own stories again. At the time of the interviews, it had been nearly seven years since NCLB was signed into law, sufficiently long enough for a forgetting effect to set in to the memories of leaders and school communities. To establish the time of postcoloniality for this study, I set used the definitions and ideas explained in this section. Formally, I set the “onset” of colonization in 2002, when NCLB law was mandated, but as building momentum toward this onset by “inscribing” on the space of educators since 1983, when A Nation at Risk was distributed. In the following section on postcolonialism, I employ the metaphor of colonization as it relates to NCLB, introduce two foundational authors of postcolonial literature, and draw metaphors between colonization and NCLB through an explanation of major tenets of postcolonial theory.

**Power and voice.** Edward Said, is a respected foundational writer in postcolonial theory. His publication Orientalism (1978 [1991]), laid the groundwork for postcolonial
discourse and critique, and is regularly cited in postcolonial texts, whether for purposes of agreement, expansion, and/or dispute. A part of Said’s definition of Orientalism is “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the ‘Orient’ and (most of the time) ‘the Occident’” (1991, p. 2). Said explains that Orientalism must be examined as a discourse and “because of Orientalism, the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action” (p. 3).

Orientalism reveals how European colonial power over the East shaped and defined knowledge about the “Oriental” as an “Other” based on negative, untrue stereotypes perpetuated throughout the decades before, during, and after colonial rule.

...The Orientals were viewed in a framework constructed out of biological determinism and moral-political admonishment. The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien. Orientals were rarely seen or looked at: they were seen through, analysed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined, or—as the colonial powers openly coveted their territory—taken over. (p. 207, italics added)

In one sense, Said’s view describes what some might say the intent of NCLB (in name) tries to do. Leaving no child behind implies a close look at individual people (i.e. children), cared for and carefully attended. Monitoring the achievement of students by grade level, subject area, and subgroup as well as family participation, attendance, and graduation rates published on state school report cards implies a level of detailed analysis. At the school level, it was my hope that principals would focus on the value of each child. I wondered as I began this study if principals would say they saw subgroups as “problems to be solved or confined.” If the test scores of a subgroup or a group of students at a particular grade level fail and become “problems,” I thought: Are children
who failed to meet standards on the test lumped together as the “Other,” no longer looked at as individuals but categorized into \textit{problems to be solved}? The very presence of a subgroup implies a “problem to be solved” rather than a careful assessment of each child so that truly \textit{no} child is left behind.

As long as not too many of the Other (children who fail to meet standards on tests) reside in a school or are enrolled in a particular grade level, the Other remains \textit{confined} and overlooked by the structures and safeguards set by states interpreting NCLB policy. An example of an NCLB safeguard would be the need to, first, have a certain number of children of a particular subgroup at a school before the school becomes accountable for that subgroup (i.e. one or two minority children at a school is not a subgroup). NCLB also \textit{confines} failing schools by placing them on academic watch lists, removing site-based decision making, and controlling resources. The message to leaders might be: “Don’t become one of those failing schools filled with \textit{Other} children, or it will be impossible for you to make AYP on the standardized test!” This display of power manifests itself over the Other within school districts, individual schools, individual subgroups, school leaders, and so forth.

While power “may manifest itself in a show and application of force, it is equally likely to appear as the disinterested purveyor of cultural enlightenment and reform” (Gandhi, 1998, p.14). The government “forces” NCLB upon school districts that need to receive federal funding; therefore, NCLB \textit{is} manifesting power as a purveyor of cultural enlightenment and reform. Perhaps our educational system needs some enlightenment and reform, but not through coercive \textit{representations} of what “works” in schools as
measured only by math and reading standardized test scores. Standardized test scores measure the knowledge agreed upon by policymakers who decide what is important or “adequate” for schools to teach and for students to know thus, “Knowledge is least like itself when it becomes institutionalized and starts to collaborate with the interests of the dominant or ruling elite” (Gandhi, 1998, p.75). The NCLB “ruling elite” are the policymakers at the federal and state levels who create criteria for standardized tests that promote the hegemonic, dominant, White-European norm. Standardized tests administered under NCLB are “instructionally insensitive” because they “measure not what students are taught in school but what those students brought to school” (Popham, 2005, p. 23). Students that bring middle and upper class White-culture with them continue by and large to be successful and promote the ruling elite. And everyone else? They are still “left behind.”

Colonialism occurs as both a physical conquest of territories and a psychological conquest of “minds, selves, and cultures” (Nandy, 1983). Colonization requires the use of force and coercion so that, “colonialism colonises minds in addition to bodies and it releases forces within colonized societies to alter their cultural priorities once and for all” (Nandy, 1983, p. 6). This alteration of cultural priorities is likened to cultural enlightenment and reform as explained in the previous paragraph. The questions in relation to NCLB are: Whose cultural priorities are being reformed and/or being advanced? Who will benefit and who will be harmed from this reform? Can the cultural priorities of schooling be decided upon by central government requiring uniformity for success?
NCLB uses the institution of school as a means for colonizing the cultural priorities of our school society, as decided by the ruling elite and dominant White culture. We must have a remembering of our purposes for schooling and not forgo these purposes to educational priorities that are under-supported or non-existent in NCLB; priorities like developing a child’s critical thinking, democratic mind that is able to respond and reflect in creative, moral ways. Such a mind cannot be developed with a single-minded institutional priority on AYP. School leaders and teachers should resist such an alteration and attack on the cultural priority of their schools. The psychological resistance of the colonized to the civilizing mission of the colonizer is something that postcolonial theory reveals (Nandy, 1983). Using postcolonial theory to examine ways that school leaders maintain and establish cultural priorities in schooling in an era of NCLB gives voice to such resistance. That “the psychological resistance to colonialism begins with the onset of colonialism” (Gandhi, 1998, p. 17) again reiterates and supports the urgency for this study.

Lawmakers and schoolmakers. The hegemonic power of NCLB implies superiority of lawmakers over “schoolmakers.” I use the term “schoolmakers” to mean all of those most directly involved in making the creation of a school community. There is a divisive plan within the colonial agenda that goes beyond “accumulation and acquisition” of land. “Both (imperialism and colonialism) are supported and perhaps even impelled by impressive ideological formations which include notions that certain territories and people require and beseech dominion, as well as forms of knowledge affiliated with that dominion” (Said, 1993, p. 8).
NCLB has changed and is changing the way schoolmakers conduct schooling, as do school reform efforts around the world. Did the schoolmaker require a cultural reprioritizing, an enlightenment and reform to bring test scores up for different groups of children across the country in order to leave no child behind? Was it “benevolent” for lawmakers to step in and take over education because the schoolmakers beseeched them? Does the “superior” position of the lawmakers over the inferior position of the schoolmakers smack of manifest destiny where “a subject race, dominated by a race that knows them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves,” (Said, 1991, p. 35) and continue to advance a superior agenda? Does the voice and power of the lawmaker smother up the voice of the schoolmaker, leaving the schoolmaker no choice but to reform with or without resistance?

Introduction to Hybridity

Homi Bhabha is a postcolonial theorist whose work “examines points of similarity” of the colonizer and colonized, unlike Edward Said whose writing is developed around the many differences and divisions between the colonizer and colonized (Childs, Williams, & Williams, 1997). Bhabha uses Said’s work “as a point of departure” (p. 122) to develop the concept of hybridity, “a concept that increases steadily in its importance to his theoretical stance” (p. 123). Within the concept of hybridity, Bhabha explores his ideas of ambivalence, stereotype, and mimicry. I first explore these three concepts within hybridity before going back to this term in summary of the postcolonial literatures relating to NCLB.
Ambivalence. Ambivalence is a duality in Bhabha’s postcolonial critique where an object Other is always marked as unwelcome, different, and denied by the colonizer while at the same time desired and attractive to the colonizer (Childs et al., 1997). This duality produces an ambivalent colonial identity that “lies between colonized and colonizer” (p. 125). Ambivalence surrounding colonial discourse of the Other makes the Other a subject that through mimicry “continually produce(s) its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). The colonial object is not just rejected for its difference, but that difference is desired in order to maintain the colonizer’s superior identity. Ambivalence therefore is both love and hate, where the Other is both derided and desired, entirely knowable and yet disapproved of based on its “difference” (Childs et al., 1997).

Teachers hold the love/hate tensions of ambivalence when they love the children they teach, but hate the bureaucracy of schooling. Children can easily become objects of ambivalence, for example, as schools wish to do well in teaching subgroups of students but perpetuate the need to categorize a “sub” group. Principals experience the tension of ambivalence when they desire to cultivate and encourage the professional efforts of teachers, but deride teachers’ close-mindedness to change and progress with the times. Teachers play a crucial role in the successful implementation of school reform (van Veen, Sleegers, & van de Ven, 2005) and are needed by policymakers, but derided for their inabilitys and threatening authority as educators.

Ambivalence toward schooling and the culture of schooling is present in American society. Through NCLB policy reform, the “Other,” in this case schools and
schooling, can be made “entirely knowable” by defining and labeling a knowable school and school system in terms of what meets “knowable” success in terms of AYP. Though Americans tend to need, support, and even love their schools, NCLB policy exposes the disdain some families and some politicians have toward public schooling by drawing away support from public schooling in terms of private and home-schooling, vouchers, and charter schools.

The need and support for NCLB policy reform as passed by lawmakers indicates a *disapproval* of what schools were accomplishing prior to 2002. This disapproval goes all the way back to *A Nation at Risk* in the year 1983. The recognition and “disavowal of an otherness that holds an attraction and poses a threat” (Childs et al., 1997, p. 125) makes up Bhabha’s ambivalence. Through disavowal of the Other, the need to control schooling as an entirely knowable system seems fits with Bhabha’s ambivalence. The colonized object, the school system, leaders, students, etc. either will “continually produce its…difference” under NCLB reform or become successful in the knowable measure of AYP.

NCLB reform aims to make school success the same, measurable, and knowable. The Other (schools) are the object of desire and attraction under NCLB in that the policy now defines and controls schools that accept federal funding; the Other is under NCLB mandates and reform. This Other poses a constant, menacing “threat” to the power of NCLB reform. For example, each state has the potential to threaten the hegemonic power of the federal government. Such was the case in Utah in 2004 when Utah’s House of Representatives voted 64-8 not to comply with any provisions in NCLB for which the
federal government had not supplied enough money. This is an example of Bhabha’s ambivalence where the state is both an object the colonizing power desires to control, while deriding the power to reject and resist that control.

**Stereotype.** Bhabha’s concept of stereotype fixes the Other “as unchangeable, known, and predictable” (Childs et al., 1997, p.125). Stereotypes represent groups of people, and serve to categorize them into something both familiar and fearful. Stereotype is a compromise reached through the ambivalent discourse because it allows for the Other to be feared as different, yet familiar as fixed and predictable. Through the creation of stereotype by the colonizer, the colonizer is able to feel greater control over the Other by fixing it with a stereotype that is forever different from the colonial subject and forever knowable to them (Childs et al., 1997). “The stereotype is there to cover a fear—to negotiate a crisis of authority by reaffirmation of the unruly, and therefore threatening, native who justifies its dominance” (p. 129). Within this concept, Bhabha (1994) refers to the idea of a metonymy of presence where the Other is desired as an inconsistent representation, like referring to successful business women as “skirts” rather than what they are—women. An example in education would be, referring to a group of active teachers in the teacher’s union as “veterans” as a way to represent them as adverse to change or standing in opposition to the district.

Applying Bhabha’s stereotype of “Other,” to schooling under the dominance of NCLB, implies that schools are unchangeable, known, and predictable, in a plausible but not hopeful view. Schools may be Othered in this way as we think about how NCLB promotes the stereotype of the “failing” school. Failing schools are Othered in the sense
of an “unruly native” who justifies dominance. NCLB stereotypes failing schools, and failing subgroups by categorizing them and imposing sanctions until they become adequate, less unruly, and conformed to the uniform definition of a successful school that meets AYP. The failing school community is not really helped under NCLB policy, it just reforms until it appears to be like the successful school in terms of AYP, giving policymakers a sense of control over success.

**Mimicry.** Mimicry is necessitated by the colonizing authority in its “desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122, italics in the original). Mimicry is a strategy of colonial power where the colonizer wishes for an Other he can approve of, but the Other will never be the same as the authority (Childs et al., 1997). In mimicry, the colonizer sees part of himself in the colonized, but never fully reaches a point where they are the same.

Through mimicry, the colonizer both approves and disapproves of the colonized as almost the same, but always different; “the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualizes power” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). Mimicry revises the Other until the Other becomes a “good native” who becomes almost like the colonizer while all the time remaining different. Mimicry’s effect is not to change but to camouflage (Childs et al., 1997).

When internal colonization sets into a territory and people, there is an “othering” of one’s own culture in submission to the hegemonic norms. The colonized gain power by continuing the work of the hegemonic nation through subtle conformity or even
hostility toward their own culture and people. NCLB requires leaders who manage their teachers and students in ways that successfully secures AYP. Some leaders may continue their work with staff and students unfazed by NCLB, making AYP without significant change or effort in their approach, unknowing or uncaring *mimics of success*.

Conversely, leaders whose school staff and students tightly conform to standards and test preparation in order to make AYP have to *camouflage* the ways they go about schooling. This *camouflage* occurs in a variety of ways, but ultimately changes (temporary or permanent) are modeled after ideal schools and “model” programs of “best practice” as determined by the hegemonic power of NCLB. State and federal funding for a failing school may be conditional upon school leaders’ agreement to adhere to “best practices” which may or may not be suitable for their particular school culture, but “work” in a model school. Despite suitability, conformity to a model school may be what is required in order for a school community to be considered successful and *claim* AYP. Under NCLB, a failing school becomes a successful school once it can claim AYP and thus mimic success of the hegemonic norm.

In postcolonialism, conformity to a model or ideal school is like the pressure for conformity American immigrants experienced when they claimed a new, successful American culture, which would become superior to their homeland culture:

> There was no line in the sea which said, this is new, this is frontier, the boundary of endeavor, and henceforth everything can only be mimicry. But there was such a moment for every individual American, and that moment was both surrender and claim, both possession and dispossession. The issue is the claim.”

(Walcott, 2005, p. 260)
When individual leaders possess a claim on their school’s AYP as a measure of success within the culture of schooling, they unconsciously or consciously surrender to that *mimicry of success* established by NCLB. If a school leader’s job, salary, and status in a school community depend upon AYP, then surrender is most likely. Unifying school culture into one accepted definition of success—the making of AYP—is an example of how mimicry is required “as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122).

*Mimicry and menace.* One of Bhabha’s (1994) central themes of mimicry is that of menace, “The success of colonial appropriation depends on proliferation of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure, so that mimicry is at once resemblance and menace” (p. 123). The colonized, reformed subject is never fully complete and never allowed to become on the same superior level with the colonizer; the colonized may “resemble,” but only partially. The menacing power of the colonized is that they see the foolishness of the colonizer and may at any time resist the colonizer openly or subtly. The “menace” is a constant threat from the colonized because the colonized could choose not to mimic. A group of teachers, for example who choose not to mimic the pedagogies imposed on their practice are a menace to a school leader acting as a colonizer. This very study could be considered a menace to policymakers in its terms of critique and questioning.

*Double vision.* The colonized themselves are aware of their mimic and menace in the form of a double vision, “The menace of mimicry is its *double* vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority” (Bhabha,
Colonized teachers, for example, have a choice to respond to measures of accountability by adopting or resisting all or some practices. They have a double vision toward the colonization of their teaching practice because they still hold an autonomous power over their classroom once they begin their teaching day. In a yearlong case study at a school and district undergoing strict “educational accountability [that] threatened to punish educators through a sophisticated network of surveillance” (Webb, 2005), the researcher found that teachers “acquired preferences for teaching practices they disliked and maintained these preferences [even] in the absence of direct monitoring” (p. 204). At the time of Webb’s study the teachers were continuing to mimic, but they did have the power to change their preferences, especially in the absence of direct monitoring. This is a reminder of the oppressive power of colonization because teachers continued to implement teaching practices they disliked even when a principal or fellow teacher was not watching them. From a school leader’s perspective, these teachers could constantly pose a menace when not under surveillance because they could be teaching in a way not approved of by administrators, hence the need for tighter and tighter control in schools and districts where administrators view teachers as a menace.

**Resemblance.** Mimicry as resemblance is a useful analogy to understand schools attempting to resemble the success of the hegemonic power by making AYP. One speculative goal of policymakers behind NCLB is to privatize education. If this speculation is true, than the menace of mimicry becomes very useful in terms of the love and hate ambivalence toward schooling and the menace that public schools could actually be superior or on par with private schools. “The ambivalence of colonial authority
repeatedly turns from mimicry—a difference that is almost nothing but not quite—to menace—a difference that is almost total but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 131). If there is the presumption that public schools cannot accomplish the mission of educating America’s youth, and we must turn to the private sector, than the menace is present, elusive, and effective. Mimicry of public schools as “almost the same, but not quite” the same as private schools (or schools where privilege is manifested in forms similar to private schools) is an issue during this era of reform. As schools are increasingly classified as “failing,” families of private schools who often also have SES privilege, continue that privilege whereas the Other families are supposedly given a choice to transfer to a more successful school to become successful like the privileged families.

The menace of mimicry occurs when the colonized sees “traces of himself in the colonizer: as sameness slides into otherness” (Childs et al., 1997, p. 130). School leaders who colonize for NCLB may see themselves with a double vision of mimic and menace, a sameness that slides into otherness, and leads not to a camouflage or a strategy of mimicry, but to a syncretization of hybrid practices and renewed professional identity.

**Hybridity.** I now return to the concept of hybridity as it relates to the colonization of school communities and leaders under NCLB policy and reform.

“Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power” (Bhabha, 2001, p. 82) where power shifts between the colonizer and the colonized because the colonial discourse is “never wholly in control of the colonizer” (Childs et al., 1997, p. 136). Hybridity results in power for both the colonizer and colonized, and this is what makes school leaders such essential players in NCLB reform. School leaders with strong, professional identities
allow themselves not to simply *mimic* the success required under NCLB but to *interpret* that success for themselves and their school. In postcolonialism, “Every concept the colonizer brings to the colonized will itself be reborn, renewed, reinterpreted in the light of the Other’s culture” (Childs et al., p. 136). A position of hybridity could result in a principal who is at the same time colonized under NCLB and colonizing for NCLB. This duality could exist as a means to gain power and would need to be negotiated and reconciled in the professional work and identity of an effective leader.

Thus the successful school and the successful leader under NCLB may result in a school that makes AYP and a school community that defines its success in other terms more attuned to their specific school culture and values. A hybrid effect brought on by the colonization of NCLB is thus a possibility for schools and school leaders, an effect *beyond* mimicry, but resulting *because* of mimicry. The school leader is on the one hand still colonized under NCLB, but on the other hand a colonizer of the staff, students, curriculum, and school priorities and values. This colonization of the leader’s school requires her mimicry and then hybridity, leaving the colonized-colonizer leader a player to be understood and studied in the reform movement.

Hybridity leaves *both* the colonized and the colonizers unlike they were before colonization. I think of hybridity as forever changing both subjects, never to return to their former state of being. Their destinies are intertwined, their stories woven together. A *cultural hybridization* could also result from NCLB policy, where cultural norms and beliefs are hybrids resulting from the mandates of the lawmaker and the practice of the school maker. Cultural hybridization of NCLB results in schools looking more
homogenous, more unified as to their definition of AYP “success,” leaders clear about their task to achieve that success, and a school culture that is deeply connected to a policy of reform. Postcolonial theory informs us that not all of pre-NCLB school culture will be lost or forgotten. Cultural hybridization will be a result where, “This part culture, this *partial* culture, [which is] the contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures—at once the impossibility of culture’s containedness and the boundary between. It is indeed something like culture’s ‘in-between’—bafflingly both alike and different” (Bhabha, 1996, p. 54). This alikeness *and* difference will be explored in this study of leaders’ identity in an era of NCLB, and it is at the heart of the syncretic space defining professional identity.

**Hegemony.** Hegemony refers to the domination and authority of one group over another. In modern Western colonialism, hegemony is established, “not only politically, militarily, and economically, but also culturally and ideologically” (Prasad, 2003, p. 5). It is the domination of one authority over another, whether a national authority or a ruling elite. *Cultural hegemony* as explained by Prasad is the processes and practices within colonization, which dominate the norms and ideals of a people. Taking liberty to apply the multiple areas of hegemonic subjugation to potential ramifications of NCLB, I propose, with regard to hegemony, that NCLB is likened to Western colonialism in four key ways.

First, Western colonization stole wealth, resources, and tribute from colonized people just as NCLB establishes a system that controls resources within “failing” schools in most need of monetary and other support. Resources in the form of specific program
funding and allocating monies and materials are examples of this control. In a study of elementary schools in two districts in southwest Washington state, researchers found one administrator contemplating a refusal of Title 1 funding in order to escape federal sanctions and NCLB requirements even though money was needed (Mabry, 2006).

Second, Western colonization used threats and acts of force and brutality to secure colonial hegemony, just as NCLB uses threats and fear in the form of punishing sanctions to gain state, school district, principal, and teacher compliance. The fear of not meeting standards and achievement on the high stakes testing “regime” according to Day (2002) sends this threat from the State, “The message is clear: improve or be taken over or closed down” (p. 678).

Third, Western colonization established itself as the benevolent, superior culture justified by thoughts of manifest destiny to impart cultural values and norms onto a colonial people, just as NCLB establishes the national government as the supreme educational authority through mandated reforms which blend local, state, and national control. Fourth, Western colonization created racial and cultural stereotypes of “otherness” where Whiteness was the standard and any other race was never quite “White” enough, just as NCLB dangerously labels subgroups (subgroups) of non-White, special education, and lower socio-economic students thereby perpetuating stereotypes of these groups of learners as low-achievers as established by one standardized test score.

These parallels are serious and useful for looking at what is happening in some schools as a result of NCLB, but it is the cultural hegemony that NCLB instills which potentially creates the most durable and dangerous impact on schools. Cultural hegemony
combines the influence and domination of cultural forms and ideas onto a society (Said, 1985). In this study, society is the wider educational community of schooling and the concept of cultural hegemony can be applied in several revealing ways. By cultural hegemony, I mean all of school culture including the culture of schooling such as curriculum and also the culture of the families, students, and teachers that compose the “culture” of a school.

Under NCLB, a generation of children is being educated to pass a standardized test as a measure of successful or failed school performance. It is commonly accepted that many tests given to schoolchildren have cultural biases, and the state standardized Euro-centric tests created by dominant White culture are no exception. Although there is variance as to how much a particular school or teacher emphasizes the measurement of test performance, the message of AYP clearly indicates that schools must conform to the content covered on the state test or students and their school could “fail.”

An obvious example of cultural hegemony related to standardized testing is that reading, writing, math, and most recently science are content-tested areas, but not social science, the arts, physical education, and foreign language. These “other” content areas are outside of the currently acceptable “cultural norm” of schooling as established by policymakers and consequently devalued under NCLB policy. Policy makers have used their power to validate traditional core content areas at the expense of those content areas (such as those listed previously) that are not valued (Day, 2002). Not surprisingly, social science--a content area that encourages students to learn how to critique our government for creating inequities such as those in NCLB--is one content area not validated by high
stakes testing. One study found little time spent teaching this non-tested subject area in New York City middle schools: “…social studies [is] a subject that itself has been ‘left behind’ in the emphasis on literacy, numeracy, and to some degree, science” (Crocco & Costigan, 2007).

Scripted curriculum and pedagogy is another form of cultural hegemony where the dominant culture requires certain ideas be taught in certain ways. Ideas like E. D. Hirsch’s texts promote cultural literacy where students are taught from books like What every Second Grader Needs to Know where content revolves primarily around White-European culture. One teacher was observed using this text to support his classroom teaching in Sloan’s (2000) study. The teacher summed up why Hirsch’s text is commonly used as a means to teach cultural literacy: “It helps them (the kids) do better on [standardized] tests…Because many of these kids are not from here or didn’t grow up here, they don’t know any of this stuff” (p. 132). Learning about the country one is growing up in is important, but not if that cultural literacy is the only content “testable.” What is on the test reveals what is important to those in authority.

In New York City, some teachers are becoming angry as a result of the domination imposed upon them by accountability measures. One teacher remarked, “I do not appreciate being transformed into an automaton” (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). Types of scripted, hegemonic uniformity in pedagogy include a correct physical room arrangement, standards and rules for bulletin, Blackboard, and wall space use, and use of student journals and portfolios (Crocco & Costigan). These are harsh examples of
hegemony, where a school culture is dominated to all look and feel the same, irrespective of differing populations of teachers and students.

A counterargument to these negative aspects of cultural hegemony would be that “…accountability has helped, in some cases, forced, teachers to deliver more focused, higher-quality, more equitable instruction” (Sloan, 2006, p. 119). Teachers who draw on scripted curriculum and test-based accountability may view policy as “essential guides” and resources for improving the overall quality of instruction and equitability of their practice (Sloan). This impact on practice may be especially true for teachers working in primarily low-income, minority urban schools, where, according to one study of urban Texas schools, teaching quality was relatively poor prior to accountability systems of explicit curriculum and other measures of control being set into place (Skrla, Scheurich, & Johnson, 2000). NCLB reform in the Washington state study (Mabry & Margolis, 2006) revealed that, “Reform not only broadened focus to include previously neglected students but also involved changes to curriculum, pedagogy, and roles” (p.11) that were primarily viewed as positive changes by administrators, but not entirely approved of by most teachers. This disconnect in the way the hegemonic rule is felt by varying levels of school personnel is one reason why school leaders are in the dual position of colonized-colonizer. These brief examples show some positive results of tighter accountability measures, although the changes in practice arguably are a result of hegemony and colonization.

**Representation.** Representation is an idea that comes from Said’s 1978 text *Orientalism* where the imperial power decides how the colonized people and their ideas
are represented in the dominant country and also back to the colonized land. Representation is a tactic of the colonizer to control the perceptions their people have of the Others and the way Others begin to see themselves. Thus, the “cultural discourse and exchange within a culture” about another culture (i.e. England’s discourse about the Orient) “is not ‘truth’ but representations” (p. 21) of that truth.

The hegemonic rule of NCLB and the reported testing that results from it, tells United States citizens how to rate their school district’s ability to educate. I argue that a standardized test score cannot measure the “truth” about the success or failure of a school, but that the test score is merely a comfortable, knowable representation put forth by the dominant power of NCLB. Surely there are better ways, specific to children in their school and cultural contexts, to measure success. What school leaders choose to do with that representation of themselves and their school community may or may not have an impact on their professional identity or calling as educators; however, the cultural domination of NCLB undoubtedly has a profound affect on how many school leaders view themselves as successes or failures. With the local media, state report cards, and school districts shouting “success” when adequate yearly progress is made, the affect on leaders is almost inevitable. The story of American educational culture is no longer told by the local school community or the individual classroom, the story is now nationally interpreted and represented by the hegemonic power of NCLB.

**Diaspora.** Migration of people from their homeland—diaspora—is one way to mark colonial and post-colonial time periods. Diasporic populations can move *from* the colony *to* the imperial land as in the case of African slaves violently removed from their
homeland to America. Diasporic populations might also move or be removed from the colony to another location or brought back to their homeland voluntarily or by force. There are historic occurrences of diaspora worldwide, and a relevancy for postcolonialism involves issues of identity when the Other comes “home” (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha writes, “The Western metropole must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as indigenous or native narrative internal to its national identity” (p. 6, italics in the original). The influence of imperial and colonial culture upon each other’s identities is dynamic and complex. The relationship of diaspora and identity to NCLB is complicated and distressing. NCLB creates small pockets of diasporic populations of students and teachers, pockets that are likely to grow larger as requirements for AYP tighten.

**Teacher diaspora.** “Reconstitution” is one strategy proposed/imposed to improve circumstances for a failing school, and leads to the replacement of teachers and administrators who have worked at a school (some for many years) by new staff supposedly more committed to the achievement of students. This type of replacement creates diasporic populations of teachers who are removed from their homeland school. “Reconstitution” might also mean a full take-over of the school’s administration by the state or by an assigned private agency, essentially taking power over the decision making at the school-level and removing that school’s identity and integrity. I am not sure if educators leave the profession as a result of reconstitution and diaspora, but it would certainly discourage the spirit of those who work and love so strongly in schools.

Attrition of teachers is an issue impacting schools as a result of accountability measures
of NCLB (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). Fourth grade teachers in the Washington state study (Mabry & Margolis, 2006), whose students had to pass the state achievement test, had a “surprisingly high” attrition rate during the two years of the study due to testing pressures.

**Student diaspora.** Of potentially more concern than teacher and administrator diaspora is student diaspora. NCLB legislation allows and encourages students who attend a failing school to transfer to another public or in some cases private school after a certain number of repeated “failed” years. Also, data can be used as a rationale for eventual school closure all together (Burch, 2007). No data permits me to judge the removal of specific populations of students as a negative or positive for individuals or school communities, but I do suggest that students removed from failing home schools and transferred to successful schools encounter issues of identity and Otherness. Diaspora could be a positive result of NCLB as heterogeneity in schools is increased and the possibility for circumstances calling for broadened perspectives and an “empathetic imagination” (Johnson, 2001) is encountered. When students from a failing school migrate to successful schools, those successful school populations of students, teachers, and families must learn to be more tolerant and more inclusive—especially if the diasporic population is of another race or socio-economic level.

What will happen to all of the “failing” schools and the populations of students and teachers at the failing schools in the long run? A New York City public social studies school teacher commented:

The rumors I’ve heard are that a lot of good teachers are leaving in direct response to standardized testing, especially in schools that serve lower-income
kids where it’s not just sort of a given that they’re going to pass these [standardized] tests. And my kids are going to suffer; they’re already starting to drop out more. It just makes me so angry and so frustrated. (Crocco & Costigan, 2007, p. 531)

Loss of cultural identity—or worse an ashamed feeling about one’s own culture—is a unwelcome possibility for teachers and families enticed by NCLB to leave their home school and/or neighborhood in pursuit of a “superior” school context. Diaspora can result in a “valid and active sense of self” being “eroded by dislocation” (Ashcroft et al., Eds. 2002). When a failing school closes or is taken over by the government, that school’s culture is either eradicated because the school no longer exists, or the culture is reformed by a hegemonic authority, foreign to the original school populace.

**Translation.** Translation is a concept in postcolonial study that looks at a historically “one-way process, with texts being translated into European languages for the purpose of European consumption, rather than as part of a reciprocal process of exchange” (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999, p. 5). Translation was used as a means to facilitate colonization because translated texts were dependent on the discretion of the dominant culture’s selectivity and superior cultural norms. Translation perpetuates these “superior” norms and is at the “heart of the colonial encounter” (Bassnett & Trivedi).

A colony itself can be looked at as a translation or copy of the colonizer, “For Europe was regarded as the great Original, the starting point, and the colonies were therefore copies, or ‘translations’ of Europe, which they were supposed to duplicate” (Bassnett, & Trivedi, 1999, p. 4). Within this metaphor, I think of the colony as the copy-colony or a close duplicate regarded as less than the great Original, for the colony is merely a “translation” of something and someone else.
The colony as a close duplicate applies to NCLB if I envision NCLB to be the great Original (such as England), complete with model, high achieving schools and populations of students that all districts (i.e. colonies) across the nation should emulate. Or in the case of Western rule, “civilized” ways of living the “uncivilized” natives should emulate and desire to achieve. Any failing school community should simply copy or duplicate the complex processes occurring at one of these model schools in order to achieve success with its own population. While some of the strategies for success may be of value from a model, successful school as defined by AYP, postcolonial theory can be used to question how individual schools and school populations can retain their own culture while incorporating model school ideas intended to “improve” them. The question is, “How might [colonies] find a way to assert themselves and their own culture, to reject the appellative of ‘copy’ or ‘translation’ without at the same time rejecting everything that might be of value that came from Europe [NCLB]?” (Bassnet & Trivedi, 1999, p. 4).

The translation metaphor, which establishes the colony as a “copy” of the original power, relates to school leaders’ identity because school leaders have a “superior” norm to achieve under NCLB. Leaders whose schools are not successfully making AYP and are therefore not successful schools as defined by NCLB, must achieve a superior norm by copying a model- school leader whose school makes AYP, and who may or may not have values and experiences congruent to the copy-school leader’s workplace. Asking school leaders to reflect on their professional identity as affected by the push to copy school leaders at the most successful schools, is a way translation in
postcolonial theory helps me understand the copy-colonies of NCLB reform, where all schools that copy the superior norms of the great Original are deemed “successful.”

In the first section of the literature review, I explained many of the major components of postcolonial theory and drew analogies to NCLB reform as fitting within them shown in Figure 2.

![Figure 2. Tenets of postcolonial theory.](image)

The concepts of power and voice, mimicry, hybridity, diaspora, translation, and so forth all form a construct for a metaphor of colonization, occurring in schools as a result of NCLB. In the next section of the review, I examine the literature that pertains to identity theory as a basis for relating this metaphor to the work and role of school leaders who carry out the colonization under NCLB while at the same time experience being colonized by the policy.
Understanding Identity

There are many ways to view and define theories of identity. In both the postcolonial literature and identity literature, references to Freud, Lacan, and Derrida are made and elaborated upon and/or critiqued. A commonly known premise of psychologists Freud and Lacan’s view of identity development is that it occurs in distinct stages, with an emphasis on the unconscious self. Foucault sees identities as “primarily surface phenomena” that are maintained through discourses where categories such as race, sexual orientation, and gender emerge (Taubman, 1993). While Derrida suggests that identity is unstable and temporary; only existing in context of words, language, and text (Taubman). I did not pursue further literature on Freud, Lacan, or Derrida because I want to frame this study with a less psychological stage-oriented theory of identity and a more situated theory that can help explain leaders’ professional identity.

The notion that identities can change and grow over the course of a lifetime is aligned to my personal educational philosophy and theoretical viewpoint. Developing identity as a “life story” that is perpetually reconstructed as it is told (Linde, 1993) connects a leader’s work over the span of her career to the act of shaping and defining her professional identity.

To understand identity as linked with the profession of the school leader, I first turn to the work of Peter Taubman who asserts that individuals have identities that are nonsynchronous, “separate but interactive” (Taubman, 1993). By understanding interactive identities, I gain knowledge of the workplace and profession of school leaders as components for developing a definition of professional identity. Taubman explains
three interactive identities as metaphorically existing in three *registers*: (a) the *fictional* register, (b) the *communal* register, and (c) the *autobiographical* register.

In the fictional register, the identity is “alienating and oppressive” because it is largely formed by constructs of language imposed on individuals. The register is influenced by the work of Lacan; and it is composed of a silent, but real unconscious subject overridden by an oppressive, imaginary Other object. Though in this register, the unconscious attempts to “utter the unutterable,” (p. 288), this register is *fictional* because it “imprisons the subject in an armored and illusionary ego” (p. 291) and is as a result, constantly oppressive. This fictional register could be likened to the silencing effect of colonization.

In the communal register, the identity-in-motion is “activated and given meaning by and through the group” (p. 288). Instead of the identity formed as a result of language, the identity is formed as a result of action and interaction with a group and group members. This register resembles Wenger’s (1998) idea of communities of practice, where the group serves as a means for continued social construction of identity. Taubman (1993) explains, “By an identity-in-motion I mean an identity which produces meaning and is both inseparable from the person who participates in the identity and also exists as a sense which a group of people share about themselves” (p. 294). The self is recognized through the group—the communal—just as the professional identity of a leader is understood through her school community.

The autobiographical register “captures” one’s experience as a means toward self-knowledge through “a dialectic [which] exists between narrative and actual experience”
(Taubman, 1993, p. 296). It is here in the private register, where individuals are able to transform their identities through an understanding of their own ethical standards and responsibilities as revealed to the self. The registers “cannot be collapsed onto one another” (p. 303) and, “must be kept always in dialectical tension with one another so that identity itself can be investigated and used as a means for exploring and illuminating our experience” (p. 303). The registers in essence “touch” one another, but are never “commensurable” because of the tension. To form an understanding of professional identity through these registers would require an individual to both recognize (fictional register) and interpret her identity as a school leader (autobiographical register). This interpretation of a leader’s actual experience must then be “mobilized.” Once mobilized, the professional identity-in-motion is understood through the relationship the leader has with her school community (communal register).

Instead of exploring many identity theories that do not suit the particular focus of my study, I learned through Taubman’s work that to examine professional identity, I naturally needed to exclude many theories of identity formation. Theories that solely concentrate on developing a person’s identity as related to a category such as race or gender and studies that focus on individuals’ self image, related to how people think about themselves or how others think about them relate to, but are not broad enough to include the social elements I was looking for to define a leader’s professional identity. Instead, I sought a theory of identity formation related to shared experiences, specifically those shared between leaders and their school communities in the communal register. This “shared experience” as a means for constructing identity is connected to a
postcolonial shared experience of colonizers and colonized peoples; the connectivity of identity and postcolonial theories build the framework for understanding school leaders in an era of NCLB.

Although Taubman’s registers help me to define a theory of identity related to shared experiences, a more holistic definition is articulated by Wenger (1998). What then is identity according to Wenger?

An identity, then, is a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other. As we encounter our effects on the world and develop our relations with others, these layers build upon each other to produce our identity as a very complex interweaving of participative experience and reificative projections. Bringing the two together through the negotiation of meaning, we construct who we are. In the same way that meaning exists in its negotiation, identity exists-not as an object in and of itself- but in the constant work of negotiating the self. It is in this cascading interplay of participation and reification that our experience of life becomes one of identity, and indeed of human existence and consciousness. (p. 151)

Where as Taubman keeps his registers in tension with one another, Wenger interweaves aspects of identity more freely through the negotiation of meaning. I think of Taubman’s registers as three separate drawers of clothing all housed in the same dresser. Sometimes the clothes “touch,” especially when coordinating outfits for different occasions, but the registers remain separate. I think of Wenger’s dresser as one big drawer with all of the outfits stacked and interwoven together. The clothes are not one big merged, messy pile; instead the folded clothes are piled in concert with one another, and an outfit is coordinated for an occasion without the tension of pulling out and looking through the separate drawers or registers.

Through the constant negotiating of the self as related to social experience and participation, Wenger (1998) argues that a person’s identity becomes a nexus of
*multimembership* where the various aspects of ourselves neither merge into one unified identity nor remain as separate “trajectories” dependent on the community of practice in which we are engaged. Rather, the multiple aspects of our identity are “at the same time, one and multiple” (p. 159). In this way, the school leader seeks a syncretic space where her one *and* multiple identities as colonizer and colonized are at the same time reconciled and disparate.

Individuals exist as participants in “communities of practice,” which are *social* communities that allow for learning and construction of meaning based on social participation (Wenger, 1998). Through social formations of identities, participation “is both a kind of action and a form of belonging. Such participation shapes not only what we do, but also who we are and how we interpret what we do” (p. 4). I used this theory of social formation of identities because it emphasizes the inseparable link between individuals to their communities of practice, which for leaders means their school community.

Therefore, identity is found within a community of practice. There is no separate identity outside of the community; rather the identity is formed and defined in that community and other communities of practice. The emphasis on unified identities (the *nexus of multimembership*) supports my notion of seeking a syncretic space for educational leaders’ considering their roles as colonizers and colonized under NCLB.

As leaders examine their own professional identity, as affected by NCLB, they can better explain how they negotiate the meaning and impact of this reform in their workplace. “Who we understand ourselves to be will have consequences for how we
experience and understand the world” (Moya, 2000, p. 8). An individual’s identity is built upon the meanings she negotiates through her “membership in social communities.” In this way, “The concept of identity serves as a pivot between the social and the individual, so that each can be talked about in terms of the other” (Wenger, 1998, p.145).

Professional identity therefore, is not a separate feature of leaders functioning in school communities. Rather, professional identity is shaped within the context of school communities--as communities of practice. There is a “mutual constitution between individuals and collectivities” (Wenger, 1998, p. 146), which allows a leader to have her unique identity and have that identity formed and re-formed through interactions with her school community. This interconnection is important to underscore, because it constitutes a basis for a professional identity. The leader and the school community engage in practice together, so a leader must understand her own professional identity as part of her school community. “Communities of practice provide the context and conditions for teachers [and principals] to develop an activist identity. They facilitate values of respect, reciprocity and collaboration. Communities of practice and an activist identity are coextensive; each nourishes and supports the other (Sachs, 2001, p. 158).

It is important not to dichotomize the individual and the social community when approaching identity. Rather, tensions and conflicts must be discussed as they arise as part of the interactions among individuals and their community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Refuting the assumption that there is “an inherent divergence between the individual and the social” (p.147) confirms that conflict occurs between the individual and the social, but that conflict is not constant. Instead there are moments and events
where the individual and the social community “enhance” each other. This enhancement relates to the discourse on school leaders’ identity as affected by NCLB because there are both conflicts and enhancements occurring as a result of the reform. It is these enhancements that harmonize the leaders’ syncretic space as both colonizer and colonized.

**Teachers’ Professional Identity**

Discovering a commonly accepted definition for professional identity depends on researchers’ ideas of the general concept of identity formation and the continuous debate over “the nature” of teacher professionalism (Sachs, 2001). This study takes the position that “the nature” of teaching is and always has been professional; however, as government control increases it admittedly “may be in the best interests of government for teaching not to be seen as a profession as it gives greater opportunity for regulative control” (Sachs). Teachers’ beliefs about how to “be a good teacher” are “inseparable from their notions of professional identity” (Lasky, 2005). Teachers define themselves both by their past and current identities and their beliefs about what kind of teacher they aspire to be in context of political, social, institutional, and personal contexts (Day et al., 2006).

In one review of literature on the topic of teacher professional identity, four essential features were identified: (a) professional identity is on-going and influenced by experiences, (b) professional identity is both personal and contextual, (c) professional identity consists of smaller sub-identities related to context and relationships that
“harmonize,” and (d) professional identity is actively used to learn more about who one is as teacher (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Webb, Vulliamy, Hämäläinen, Sarja, Kimonen, & Nevalainen, 2004). The experiences teachers have at school have an impact on teachers’ professional identity (Nias, 1989) as, “Teachers’ identities are closely bound with their professional and personal values and aspirations” (Day, 2002, p. 683). Teaching norms and values as well as school context and school culture largely influence the ways teachers perceive their professional identity (Beijaard et al., 2000).

Some of these experiences include the interaction between teachers and pupils and ability to command a subject area. Specifically, Beijaard et al. (2000) found three factors that influenced teacher identity: (a) teachers as subject matter experts who understand their content area, (b) teachers as pedagogical experts that deal with moral and ethical guidance of students’ thinking, and (c) teachers as didactical experts where frameworks of “how” to teach both theoretically and in practice are understood. In summary, “Teachers derive their professional identity from (mostly combinations of) the ways they see themselves as subject matter experts, pedagogical experts, and didactical experts” (Beijaard et al., p. 751).

Research varies as to the extent teachers’ professional identity changes. Some research concludes that the professional identity of school teachers changes over the course of their career, based on influencing factors of school context and personal teaching experience (Beijaard et al., 2000). These changes in teachers’ perceptions of their self-image as a professional are important to understand because identity “strongly influences” both judgment and behavior (Nias, 1989). However, in a Canadian study of
four Ontario secondary teachers undergoing reform mandates, the “…new mandates were establishing new norms, expectations, and tools for the profession. Yet, these teachers did not change their fundamental sense of professional identity or sense of purpose” (Lasky, 2005).

Identity Linked to Emotion and Perception

The emotional dimension of identity has been underdeveloped in much school reform research even though it is known that teachers commonly experience and manage “strong emotions” (Day et al., 2006; O'Connor, 2008; Reio, 2005). Emotional responses to lived experiences of school reform could help define professional identity for, “It is through our subjective emotional world that we develop our personal constructs and meanings of our outer realities and make sense of our relationships and eventually our place in the wider world” (Day, 2002, p. 685).

Attending to teachers’ emotions during a time of professional identity reconstruction as a result of school reform can provide insight into how reform efforts change the teaching experience, work, and practice.

Reforms have an impact upon teachers’ identities and because these are both cognitive and emotional, create reactions, which are both rational and non rational. Thus, the ways and extent to which reform is received, adopted, adapted, and sustained or not sustained will be influenced by the extent to which they challenge existing identities. (Day, 2002, p. 683)

Teachers’ emotional response to reform varies depending on the extent to which teachers feel a sense of power in the reform process (Schmidt & Datnow, 2005). In a 4-year case study of schools undergoing reform mandates in California and Florida during 1999-
2003, researchers found that the closer the impact of reform got to the classroom level, the greater the emotional response on the part of teachers (Schmidt & Datnow). This finding prompted researchers to suggest that school leaders invest in resources which empower teachers to implement reform efforts at the classroom level and understand the reasons behind the reform (Schmidt).

In a single case study of a Dutch secondary teacher, van Veen et al. (2005) explored examples where the teacher’s emotions of happiness and enthusiasm, and anxiety and anger, resulted from both the opportunities presented in the national reform and the lack of government financial support presented in the reform. Simply put, “Our identities are ways of making sense of our experiences” (Mohanty, 1993, p. 43) and our experiences are understood by emotion. Without emotion, individuals are stuck in Taubman’s fictional register. Instead, “Emotions enable and encourage specific interpretations or evaluations of the world…” (Mohanty, p. 37) which is more aligned with the autobiographical register. Asking questions about a leader’s experience in this era of NCLB undoubtedly yields emotional interpretations of the policy and its impact. Indeed, my personal emotional interpretation of NCLB was the impetus for my interest in this topic.

A framework for identity that includes emotion was central to my understanding of the professional, because in essence there is no professional identity that exists outside of the emotional connection between a leader and her school community or community of practice. Without emotion, the relationship and meaning developed between the individual leader and her school is moot. It is because of the relationship that, “…our
emotions provide evidence of the extent to which even our deepest personal experiences are socially constructed, mediated by visions and values that are “political” in nature, that refer outward to the world beyond the individual” (Mohanty, 1993, p. 34).

**School Reform as Affecting Educators’ Professional Identity**

Reform strategies and educational policies by and large ignore the importance of teachers’ professional identity as related to the implementation and success of the specific reform movement (van Veen et al., 2005). Understanding teachers’ professional identity during reform movements has implications for school leaders and at the same time leaves a gap in literature relating to school leaders’ professional identity. Recent policy changes and reforms world-wide, “…have left many teachers themselves feeling confused about their professional identity” (Day, Elliot, & Kingston, 2005). Several of these reforms have been researched, again in terms of teacher identity, and are shared next.

**Global School Reform Movements**

Because studies focusing on school teacher professional identity during a time of educational reform provided a basis for informing my study of school leader professional identity during NCLB reform mandates, and because I used a postcolonial lens that encompassed ideas from colonized and colonizers in many places and times, examining school reforms in different nations is appropriate for supporting the idea of NCLB as a colonizing reform, not unlike other school reforms. School reform efforts are occurring globally “in the form of national curricula, national tests, criteria for measuring the
quality of schools and the publication of these on the Internet in order to raise standards and promote more parental choice” (Day, 2002, p. 678). The influence of these reforms is only beginning to be studied in relation to teachers’ professional identity. I have found no study specifically devoted to principals’ professional identity in relation to large-scale school reform.

In this section of the literature review, I relay findings and further questions posed by both research and discourse in a global view of the colonization that are potentially occurring as a result of school reform. I chose to focus on studies that relate directly to large-scale reform and educator identity, excluding studies that do not emphasize professional identity.

In England, schools that fail under their centrally imposed reform initiative are “named and shamed,” resulting in more pressure on teachers who work particularly in “challenging socio-economic contexts” (Day, 2002, p. 680). Limiting teachers’ autonomy through decentralization of classroom curriculum and assessment, and limiting leaders’ autonomy though decentralization of management of budgets and staffing decisions “…have had the effect of restricting the conditions under which teachers work, putting into place a system which rewards those who successfully comply with government directives and who reach government targets and punishes those who do not” (Day, p. 678).

Not all reform impact is negative however. In a study of educational reform movements in England and Finland (Webb et al., 2004), where English reform measures were centralized and based on teacher compliance and Finnish reform measures were
decentralized and based on teacher and school autonomy, both reforms yielded a similar outcome on teacher professionalism. Researchers found that reform changes that enhanced professionalism were changes that teachers considered to benefit the children they worked with. Reduced teacher professionalism resulted from changes teachers felt were harmful to children. This research of teachers supporting reform that benefits students is corroborated in a study of two Chinese cities undergoing large-scale reform.

Teachers’ professionalism was studied in response to reform initiatives set forth in Shanghai and Hong Kong, China beginning in the 1990s that placed emphasis on the quality of education (Lai & Lo, 2007). Data interpreted from in-depth interviews with teachers from both metropolises led researchers to identify different interpretations of teacher professionalism in each city. In “Hong Kong teachers perceived that a professional teacher should possess professional knowledge, employ appropriate teaching methods to deal with students with different needs, and help students to develop their value systems,” and this perception had “no direct relationship with the policy rhetoric.” (Lai & Lo, p. 63). In contrast, Shanghai “teachers’ perceptions on teacher professionalism were quite unified with the state rhetoric,” but “teacher professionalism in the two societies focused more on issues of responsibility rather than authority and autonomy” (p. 66).

These interpretations of teacher professionalism are a means to understanding professional identity in response to Chinese education reform mandates, and not surprisingly, teachers in Hong Kong responded to the reform by “only adopting policies which they felt were beneficial for students’ learning, while Shanghai teachers tended to
be more conformist” (Lai & Lo, 2007, p. 64) to the mandates and stated policy. Though the researchers do not make a further conclusion from their study, it appears that the political systems in the cities may be inherently colonizing and having an impact on professionalism. Whereas in Hong Kong under a more democratic system, a stronger sense of professional identity leads to a more confident understanding and adoption of what makes sense in school reform, in Shanghai, under a communist system, less understanding of professional identity and more complete adoption occurs. These differences could be likened to the political systems that exist within particular school communities and states. In school communities where educators have voice and professional flexibility, they can, as teachers in Hong Kong did, adopt what makes sense from the reform. In school communities that are less democratic in sharing power, educators may have less flexibility to make sense of a reform, blindly adopting it all as best they can.

In Australia, significant educational reforms, implemented as a result of government policy, have raised professional identity issues for teachers (Sachs, 2001; Wenger, 1998). At the heart of the issues are two competing but not oppositional discourses which Sachs concludes lead to different claims about professional identity. The discourses surround concepts of managerial professionalism and democratic professionalism where managerial professionalism leads to an entrepreneurial identity, modeled after the market and shaped by influences such as accountability and efficiency, and democratic professionalism leads to an activist identity which leads to collaborative cultures rooted in equity and social justice (Sachs).
This activist identity seems to a part of what researchers found in England’s longitudinal Primary Assessment, Curriculum and Experience (PACE) study that looked at long-term impact of the Education Reform Act of 1988. In this study, researchers found that collaboration among teachers that was genuine and democratically constructed could produce benefits for both teachers and their students (McNess, 2003).

As waves of school reform mandates continue to pound the shores of this country and the minds of our educators and students, there are significant consequences that researchers are beginning to and/or have already identified. An example of these consequences is discussed in a New York City School study of accountability measures. In this study researchers focused on the impact of scripted lessons and mandated curriculum as a result of the high-stakes testing imposed upon teachers. Qualitative data indicated critical issues impacting teacher attrition including a “narrowing of curriculum and pedagogy,” a “thwarting” of personal and professional identity, an “undermining of creativity and autonomy,” and a diminished “ability to forge positive relationships with students” (Crocco & Costigan, 2007). In Figure 3, major ideas within identity theory used for the purposes of understanding the professional identity of school leaders for this study are shared.
Conclusion

Based on my review of postcolonial, identity, and professional identity in context of school reform, the literature demonstrates that the strength of an effective school reform movement may hinge on policies that sensitively address and consider implications on teachers’ professional identity and therefore principals too. Reforms that ignore and destroy teacher professional identity risk long-term detriments not only to teachers as professionals, but also to students’ ability to learn from their teachers. Policymakers must seriously listen to the growing body of literature developing around the impact of school reform on teacher identity, including emotions and resiliency. Policymakers should listen now, before imposing another round of national reform aimed at leaving no child (or teacher or school leader) behind. The postcolonial framework and metaphor of colonization through NCLB, coupled with the literature on identity formation and supporting studies of the impact of school reform on professional identity, all build a model for my study in which postcolonial and identity theory help me
understand the professional identity of school leaders as situated in a time of school reform.
Chapter 3
Research Methodology

Review of Purpose and Question

The purpose of this study was to explore the professional identity of school leaders as shaped and defined as a result of the mandates and constraints of No Child Left Behind policy reform. In the central research question, I looked at how school leaders’ perspectives of the rewards, benefits, pressures, and tensions faced in schools and districts have an impact on their professional identity. Through subsequent research questions in the study, I sought to understand how school leaders responded to the constraints and pressures of No Child Left Behind as negotiated by their professional identity and also how school leaders’ understood their professional identity. I also investigated how educators responded to the rewards, benefits, constraints, and pressures caused by school districts’ response to NCLB policy reform.

Overview of Methodology

This was a qualitative research study with data collection in the form of semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Content rich information is a hallmark of qualitative data (Bogdin & Biklin, 2003) and this richness was sought out through a unique analysis of data as applicable or not applicable to the postcolonial theoretical framework described in the literature review and also by identity theory. When defining features of qualitative research, Bogdin and Biklin explain that most qualitative studies
have some degree of naturalistic context, use descriptive data, are concerned with process, use inductive data analysis, and have researchers who seek “meaning.”

Bogdin and Biklin’s features were emphasized in my qualitative study of school leaders’ negotiating their professional identity in an era of NCLB. I was naturalistic not to the depth of steeping myself in the school setting, but in using myself as the key research instrument by which to understand interview data of individual principals’ school communities of practice. I collected descriptive data in the form of semi-structured interviews and focus groups and attended to the negotiated process of defining professional identity in times of school reform. By inductively analyzing data, I developed ideas as they emerged, grounded in the words and understandings of participants. I sought to understand meaning by capturing the perspectives of school leaders living out their professional identity and calling at this specific point in time and sharing that meaning from an alternative perspective through metaphor.

Denzin and Lincoln (Eds., 1998) recommend that qualitative researchers select a research strategy or method that fits the types of data to be collected; “illuminates” a reality from a particular perspective (which can then be applied); and links the question and method chosen so the results will be useful. The strategy of semi-structured interviews and focus groups matched the type of data I wished to collect and the particular perspective of postcolonialism especially “illuminated” the work of school leaders’ professional identity as associated with a specific community of practice and affected by the era of NCLB.
Personal Standpoint

As part of a qualitative study, authors are encouraged to explain their background and biases that potentially influence data (Creswell, 2003). In my literature review, I constructed a framework from which I analyzed data that both pertained and did not pertain to the postcolonial lens of NCLB reform. I selected postcolonial theory initially because it was interesting and quite challenging to me as a learner. Prior to graduate studies, I had not used nor heard of the theory. However, I had an immediate draw to learn more about the theory once it was introduced, as I valued the ways postcolonialism deconstructs power and voice, especially for marginalized individuals, groups, and ideas. As a teacher who has struggled with professional identity in multiple school contexts and also within a variety of school-level, district-level, and national-reforms, I have a diverse set of experiences that informed my research on school leaders. I did not bracket or set aside those experiences in this study, but rather used them as a backdrop from which to gain insight into the experiences of school leaders.

The postcolonial lens itself is a critique, but the outcome of a critique does not necessitate only negativity. I was open to representing a range of benefits and challenges in NCLB, when presented by the data. My personal standpoint was integral to this study because the heart of the study was to explore who a leader is professionally in an era of NCLB. As a future school leader, I contemplated what my responses to policy reform would be given this context of circumstances and my teaching and learning experiences. Some of the questions I struggled with when presenting the findings were informed by the work of Weis & Fine (2000, p. 33) who discuss reflexivity and representations in
writing. These authors ask, “Should I write about what people say or recognize that sometimes they cannot remember or choose not to remember? What are my political reflexivities that need to come into my findings? How far should I go in theorizing the words of the participants? To what extent has my analysis (and writing) offered an alternative to common sense or the dominant discourse?”

To disclose my thinking about these important questions, I feel that through my choice of a postcolonial framework, I assume that sometimes my interviewees may not remember the onset of the policy or what school-life was like pre-NCLB which is an effect of colonization (Dirlik, 1994). Because of this fuzzy remembering, my memories and experiences are important to use as a backdrop to challenge or look deeper into an interviewee’s story. I think I have been fairly open about my political stance regarding NCLB policy because I positioned the policy as a colonizer based on my own educational experiences with the reform. Though I personally agree with some of the shifts caused by the policy in the short run, I believe colonization in the long run will have a detrimental effect on its subjects—in this case school communities, particularly “failing” school communities—and I think ultimately NCLB will represent a policy era from which educators will need to regain our independence. The reader may make the case that I have gone quite far in “theorizing the words of the participants.” By applying the metaphor of colonization however, I hoped that framing the policy and its impact using postcolonialism, caused an “alternative to common sense” and pushed back against the dominant discourse.
One last thought on my personal standpoint: This research process is the culmination of my work as a doctoral student. My ideas, methods, and presentation have been influenced by the texts and discussions led by my professors. Each of these informs how I think about leadership from a theoretical perspective. I am fairly “new” as a researcher and was eager to engage the theories and learning I acquired as a measure of my readiness to think critically as a doctoral candidate. I wanted to do my best work, and have that work supported, modified, and challenged by a group of scholars that I both admire and care for. Because of this, I had a personal interest in presenting these ideas authentically, creatively, and with trustworthiness. These goals shaped my thinking throughout the research process and influenced all aspects of my writing, data collection, and analysis.

Research Methods

Instrumentation is the entire process researchers use in preparing to collect data and “involves not only the selection or design of the instruments, but also the procedures and conditions under which the instruments will be administered” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 113). The following section, explains the research methods used to support my use of qualitative inquiry.

Participant selection. I selected principals from 14 elementary and middle schools within the state of Illinois for this research study, six of who participated in two follow-up focus groups. Patton (2002) explains “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (p. 244); however, he and other researchers emphasize that sample
size is associated with what researchers want to discover, how they plan to use the research, and the resources at hand. Purposive sampling allows researchers to use their judgment to select the optimum sample to generate data (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). I wanted to interview enough principals to allow for a varied perspective on both professional identity and the impact of NCLB in different school contexts and districts, and the 14 participants provided ample data from which to work. Because I wanted to use detailed description in my data, I wanted to select participants who were willing to provide time for an in-depth interview as well as participate in a focus group if invited. My judgment of how to use the postcolonial lens led me to exclude principals with seven or fewer years in the field (i.e. prior to the authorization of NCLB). All principals had to be currently be working in Illinois elementary or middle schools to ensure some degree of consistency in state requirements and interpretations of NCLB.

**Sampling technique.** I utilized a “snowball sampling” technique to acquire research participants. The snowball technique allows researchers to ask a person known to them to identify another person who would meet the requirements of the study and possibly agree to be a member of the study’s sample (Creswell, 2005). To begin, I asked persons well known to me to pass along an e-mail invitation to principals they knew who had been in their role as school leaders for eight or more years and who they felt would allow time for an in-depth interview. This e-mail can be found in Appendix A. Principal participants could have been at multiple schools over those eight plus years, but must have been *the* school leader and not an assistant principal or in another administrative role. Snowball sampling had the advantage of recruiting willing participants, but the
disadvantage of my not knowing ahead of time, which individuals would be in my sample (Creswell, 2005). After the e-mail invitation to participate had been distributed, I waited to hear back from participants who were willing to be interviewed. Once participants contacted me, I followed up with a phone call to answer any specific questions and to establish a secure interview place and time of their choosing.

I was surprised by the number of principals identified by persons well known to me as not meeting the required eight year’s experience qualification. There seemed to be many new principals leading schools throughout the state. In the end, I felt fortunate to interview primarily veteran principals, with years of experience well beyond the eight years minimum from a variety of school contexts. Table 1 offers information about the 14 participants and their school contexts. I replaced all participants’ names with pseudonyms to provide anonymity; however, the rest of the information in the table is accurate in accordance with the Interactive Illinois Report Card site (http://iirc.niu.edu) that lists details about the schools and school districts of the participants.

**Data collection.** Interviewing styles and methods vary depending on the type of research conducted as well as the researcher’s background and style. Basic types of qualitative interviewing for research or evaluation include the informal conversational interview, the interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview (Patton, 2002). Although these types vary in questioning format and structure, they all elicit open-ended participant responses and are not restricted to choices provided by the interviewer. Interviewing is a popular procedure for data collection in qualitative
Table 1

Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal</th>
<th># Years in Profession</th>
<th>School Type</th>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Hispanic</th>
<th>% Asian</th>
<th>% Multi-Ethnic</th>
<th>% low income</th>
<th>% Limited English Proficiency</th>
<th>AYP 2009</th>
<th>AYP 2008</th>
<th>AYP 2007</th>
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<th>AYP 2005</th>
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<td>8.9</td>
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<td>15.7</td>
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<td>2.5</td>
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<td>31.6</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>4.4</td>
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<td>49.4</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
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methodology (Patton); its purpose is to allow a researcher to “enter another person’s perspective” (p. 341).

Pre-set interview questions allow the researcher to control the conversation and simplify data analysis because responses can be easily compared (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). I had several pre-set questions for interviews and focus groups (Appendix B) but then probed accordingly to uncover richer detail, “The skilled interviewer is adept in the use of probes—directed cues for more or extended information” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 271). Good interviews produce data filled with words that reveal the participants’ perspective through details and examples (Bogdan & Biklin, 2003). The data I acquired were full of words and meaning, and the participants all shared unique perspectives based on their unique school communities. I collected the data in the form of semi-structured interviews that were digitally recorded and transcribed by myself, the researcher.

At each interview meeting, I first obtained consent from the interviewee to participate in the study (Creswell, 2005) and explained how anonymity and confidentiality would be part of my writing. See Appendix C for a detailed interview consent form copy. I reiterated the purpose of the study and explained that I would ask open-ended questions to gain an understanding of the principal’s professional identity in an era of NCLB. I briefly explained colonization as a metaphor, but did not go into detail, as I did not want to overwhelm participants with my theoretical perspective. The questions asked were written as initial prompts on an Interview Protocol sheet. I recorded the interview, taking brief notes to serve as talking points for follow-up questions. As
much as possible, the interviews were a conversation between the participant and myself. Some of the interview questions I asked include:

1. Tell me about your career in education?

2. Given that you’ve been a principal for ___ years, how has NCLB policy affected the ways you think about your professional identity/role? How has NCLB changed your practice?

3. What advice would you offer a new school principal in your district who feels the pressure to make AYP at her school?

4. What benefits/rewards have you experienced as a result of NCLB?

After completing and transcribing the 14 interviews, I e-mailed participants to clarify questions I had and asked principals to let me know if they had anything to add to the transcript or clarify in their remarks. Then I chose two different focus groups from different parts of the state. Principals told me they would be more willing to participate in a focus group with leaders they knew and trusted, and for that reason, I attended to geographic location. The first focus group was composed of suburban school district Principals Sandy, Raab, and Dollinger. The second focus group was composed of principals from two closely located small, urban school districts and included Principals Altenhoffen, Holmes, and Messerly. “Focus groups are a form of group interview that capitali[ze] on communication between research participants in order to generate data” (Kitzinger, 1995). Focus groups are a useful strategy as a supplementary follow up to individual interviews, where interviews are the primary source of data collection, and focus groups continue to add to that data (Morgan, 1997). In a focus group, the researcher often takes the role of moderator, supplying topics to promote group interaction from which to gain “insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a
group” (p. 2). I found this to be true. As the moderator, I asked guiding questions (see Appendix D) to help principals see some of their common and/or uncommon challenges and rewards as leaders in a time of NCLB. Participants also asked each other questions about the ways they lead schools.

An ideal size for a focus group is between four to eight people with sessions lasting anywhere from an hour to a day (Kitzinger, 1995). Each focus group in my study had three participants and lasted about an hour. Kitzinger also recommends the setting be comfortable with light refreshments, participants seated in the round, and an emphasis on interaction rather than questions and answers between researcher and participants. He says participants should converse with each other, drawing on each other’s experiences and stories to elaborate on different viewpoints. I conducted my focus group (groups) at a secure location most geographically convenient to participants where we sat in the round and enjoyed refreshments. There was a more relaxed feeling on my part because I had previously met the principals, and in each focus group, principals laughed and seemed to share openly with one another as colleagues.

Since I had previously recorded and transcribed the interview data, and began noticing emerging themes, I was able to ask focus group members more detailed questions from the interview data, and even “test” the metaphor of colonization from their perspective in small ways. Overall, both the individual and focus group data combined provided ample data for analysis and reflection, and I was grateful to all of the participants for their time and openness.
Analysis

In qualitative studies, data analysis should be on-going and reflective (Creswell, 2003). Spending time with the data first through transcribing initial interviews and then through focus groups kept the process of analysis on-going for me. Qualitative data analysis involves describing and coding information to develop themes (Creswell, 2005). Coded data should address topics that researchers expect to find but also handle “surprises” in the data (Bogdan and Biklin, 2003; Creswell, 2003). Creswell (2005) encourages researchers to include and explore data that are counterintuitive. With these ideas in mind, I took the transcribed data and uploaded them into the well-known data-coding program NVivo in order to code and develop themes and findings. NVivo allowed me to sort and keep track of the pages and pages of transcripts, and also jump among participants and settings. Coding is a form of analysis that uses “codes” as tags or labels for assigning meaning to the descriptive information compiled in a study (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Coding is done by the researcher, not the computer program; the program did allow me to organize and track all of the data and bring up findings and supports more readily than by pencil and paper. Prior to the research, I proposed a preliminary set of postcolonial codes including: hegemony, diaspora, translation, power/voice, othering, mimicry, stereotype, ambivalence, and mimicry and also my major research questions which served as a starting place for coding (Miles & Huberman) and the analysis provided in chapter four and five.

I analyzed the data on two levels. First through open coding to the specific research questions in the study. As open coding began to shape into two main themes, the
software (as a tool for organization), facilitated my choice to develop these themes as findings. I was surprised because I did not plan these themes ahead of time, instead they emerged from the data. Coding to the specific research questions gave me direction and guidance for this first level of analysis.

The second level of coding analysis had the tenets of postcolonial theory in mind as a starting place for postcolonial coding. Many examples and thoughts from principals fit more than one code and level of analysis, and NVivo was very helpful for allowing me to think complexly about how data worked in contrast or fit together. The themes and analysis are presented in chapters four and five.

**Standards of validation.** Due to the qualitative nature of my research, generalizability and reliability were deemphasized and play a minor role (Creswell, 2003). However, validity in the form of trustworthiness was a major concern. Validity is concerned with “the defensibility of the inferences researchers make from the data collected through the use of an instrument” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, p. 113) I employed several accepted strategies to achieve validity. Qualities that serve to provide trustworthiness criteria related to conducting research with qualitative data include: confirmability, dependability, credibility, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These four concepts, according to Lincoln & Guba, provide a framework for establishing: (a) confirmability where findings are shaped by the participants and myself as researcher maintains a degree of neutrality, (b) dependability where findings would be consistent and able to repeated, given the same interview data, (c) credibility where there is a
measure of confidence in the “truth” of the findings, and (d) transferability where data are applicable to other studies and contexts, not just my own.

Some ways in which I established trustworthiness are discussed in the following paragraphs. Most of these ideas start from Lincoln & Guba’s (1985) text. To achieve credibility, I used a strategy of peer debriefing which, “is a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling analytical sessions, and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer's mind" (p. 308). I have several doctoral colleagues who I meet with regularly and are familiar with my study, but not so familiar that they have the same closeness to the study as I do. These colleagues willingly served as peer debriefers (as I do with them). I utilized the strategy of member checking to build credibility with my data when after each interview, I “played back” the major points the interviewer made by giving a verbal summary of my understandings of their thoughts and inviting the participant to approve or disapprove of the ideas I took from their interview. After I transcribed the data, I sent participants a copy of their interview or focus group transcript and asked if they had anything more to add in an attempt to keep data current and accurate. Several principals provided more details around questions and sent the transcript back to me.

One challenge to researchers is to, “provide nondogmatic answers to the questions we pose” (Creswell, 2007, p. 206). This challenge was especially true for me as I built my study around the postcolonial framework. One way I began to meet this challenge was to bring back some of my understandings from the interview data to the focus groups. In these focus groups, I was able to dialogue with participants about my findings.
and beginning interpretations of those findings; I was able to “test” out the postcolonial metaphor more overtly in a few instances. Some researchers might call this an attempt to validate my findings, but I utilized focus groups as a means to confirm or understand the “credibility” of my findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It was revealing that the participants had not thought explicitly about the reform and process surrounding NCLB in terms of power and voice, and they did not have to have familiarity with the postcolonial theory in order to think about their own power. This “muted” side of their thoughts, expressed by one sentiment, “I don’t know” supported a case for colonization. Though principals provided wording that expressed ideas of power and voice, they did not articulate their thinking in terms of postcolonial theory even when I attempted to introduce the theory in brief terms.

Although my study was not ethnography, I used data to tell small parts of participants’ professional stories. To build a measure of transferability in this data, I used thick description of the interview data, a commonly understood strategy of describing phenomena in rich detail. Thick description allowed me to invite the reader into a “shared experience” with the data (Creswell, 2003). Dependability of my data was challenged and strengthened by my dissertation defense committee, which though not a true form of external audit, nevertheless provided an assessment and discussion of the research. The biases, values, and interests I bring into my role as the researcher, if exposed and discussed, provide reflexivity in my ability to confirm the data I write about. As a researcher, “the personal-self becomes inseparable from the researcher-self” (Creswell, 2003, p. 182) as exemplified by the questions I ask or do not think to ask interviewees.
Also the ways I construct understandings around data as related to my own experiences as an educator bring about reflexivity.

In summary, I endeavored to establish trustworthiness as presented by Lincoln & Guba (1985) in my data, by using strategies of peer debriefing and member checking to build credibility, employ thick description to gain transferability, draw on my dissertation committee as a form of external audit to attain a measure of dependability, and acknowledge issues of reflexivity as a means to gain confirmability.

**Significance**

NCLB policy has made changes in the ways we conduct schooling in the United States. These changes must be discussed and understood as a way to think critically about their usefulness to our democratic society and citizenship. Principals and teachers are essential players in carrying out reform agendas and mandates, and their sense of professional identity dominates their ability to be successful in their workplaces. This study has significance because it contributes to scholarly research and literature in the field, and has the potential to improve practice and policy.

**Contributing to research and literature.** The important body of research around teacher professional identity is expanding, particularly in countries like England. In contrast, research concerning the professional identity of leaders during times of reform is lacking. Although each education reform has the potential to change identity, and reforms are proposed quite frequently, it is important to understand some of the enduring commonalities that encompass professional identity. This study offers a
perspective on school leaders’ professional identity during times of school reform, a contribution that I hope will build interest in the field of both leadership and policy.  

**Improving practice and policy.** Although there is not much “new” about the interviewing or focus group technique I used, the postcolonial theoretical framework is an innovative and important way to reconceptualize the impact of reform on schools and school communities. Developing a theoretical framework that adds to the practical work researchers can build on, is a significant outcome of this study. 

In the literature review, several studies discussed the need for policy makers to listen to the voice of teachers concerning their professional identity in light of reform. Though this study did not directly focus on teachers, it advocates for the voices of all members of the school community as told from the perspective of school leaders. School leaders direct so much of what happens at the school and classroom level, and they must be given time to reflect on their professional work and calling in schools as challenged and supported by state and federal reform.

**Conclusion**

The methodology and significance of the research in this study were somewhat dependant upon the usefulness of the postcolonial metaphor to NCLB reform for the second level of analysis. I used this metaphor to determine where data affirm or disagree with it and also where the metaphor is a hindrance or help for critiquing reform policy and its impact on schools. Discussing the professional identity and work of school leaders during an era of reform is important for understanding how reform efforts affects school
communities and the lives of all students. These ideas are developed in the next two findings chapters.
Chapter 4

Findings Part 1

The next two chapters include findings from the principal interviews and focus groups using two levels of analysis. In the first findings chapter, I present the data as coded openly into two large themes addressing the major research questions of the study. For these themes I used professional identity in an era of school reform as a guiding framework. In the second findings chapter, data are analyzed and coded with the postcolonial framework and the metaphor of colonization in mind. Both chapters work in tandem to provide answers to my research questions and overall purpose. Fourteen elementary and middle school principal interviews and two focus groups offered a conversational context to explore the impact of NCLB and challenge the metaphor of colonization. The majority of the data are presented in the form of phrases or longer passages and a few summarizing tables. The data and my interpretations raise questions for further study and investigation.

In this study, I sought to explore the professional identity of school leaders as shaped under the mandates and constraints of the federal No Child Left Behind Act. I explored school leaders’ perspectives of the rewards, benefits, pressures, and tensions faced in schools and districts as a result of NCLB, and how these perspectives have an impact on the professional identity of school principals in this time of school reform.

My central research question was: How do school leaders respond to the constraints and pressures of NCLB as negotiated by their professional identity? Two subsequent questions followed: (a) How do school leaders’ understand their professional
identity? (b) How do educators respond to the rewards, benefits, constraints, and pressures as their school districts respond to NCLB policy reform?

In the following first findings chapter I present the data from principals under two major themes: change and success. Even though themes of colonization emerge as I talk about these (For example, principals talked about success in terms of “getting teachers on board” which has overtones of colonization.), in this first findings chapter I listened to the principals’ own words and tried not to bring in the lens of colonization. Principals responded to numerous changes in their work as leaders in the NCLB era; the theme of change seeped through each interview and focus group in multifaceted ways. Success has become integral to the work of leaders and school districts because of the need to make the benchmark for adequate yearly progress under NCLB. Success is a significant theme because principals have a public benchmark to achieve and must respond to district pressures and rewards propagated by NCLB. Principals share opinions of what success means to their professional work and identity in districts and schools in the past, present, and imagined future.

**Change**

All of the principals interviewed, whether from higher performing or lower performing schools, rural or urban settings, middle schools or elementary campuses, agreed that NCLB has markedly changed their work with teachers and students in their school community of practice. Some of the changes were viewed as significantly beneficial, some significantly constraining; some changes were more neutral but
nevertheless altered the way educators work in schools. Some of the changes have been gradual and were seen as both increasing and decreasing principal and teacher professionalism. The benefits, pressures, and constraints caused by NCLB reform have been the impetus for starts and restarts at the classroom, school, district, and state levels. Participants identified four of the most significant changes to the professional work and identity of themselves as principals as a result of NCLB: (a) use of data, (b) classroom instruction, (c) Response to Intervention (RTI), and (d) staffing changes.

Change in use of data. NCLB has changed the identity of what a principal’s role entails in terms of using data with teachers. Principal Harbough from a higher performing, suburban elementary school said:

> You have to put it [data] into words that teachers understand. I think that is an important role of a principal--to get to the conceptual--what the numbers are telling you conceptually. Are we improving? Are we not improving? What tells us that? I think that is a big role of an administrator.

Principal Kohl from an urban middle school remarked, “I never thought I would become a data person, but I am like data nuts.” He revealed the transformation of his professional identity from a leader who did not frequently use data to a leader who now uses data all the time. Principals were clear commenting that the data most valuable for creating instructional change do not come from Illinois State Achievement Test (ISAT) results. Instead, more frequent, formative local assessments and school level assessments were typically discussed as more important tools for measuring progress and data analysis. Principal Scarpino, leads at a high performing suburban middle school and stresses:

> We use lots of other assessment tools, trying to measure growth that way, and celebrate student growth based on true growth! The ISAT, AYP, the way we
prepare for that is a necessary evil I think, but at the same time, I think it has some impact that has helped us re-look and re-visit the way we teach kids.

Suburban elementary school, Principal Sandy perceived his job as being the provider of data:

It is me as the leader providing them [teachers] with data that they need to work with, and that is really important that I provide them with data. I give them lots and lots of data through SAT-10 and ISAT. Drill down data.

Principal Kinkead, from a high-achieving rural elementary school, felt that data was, “100 percent in my court. Teachers have a little bit, but if I don't talk about data, they won't talk about data.” Principal Kinkead implied a small riff in the way he as the school leader and his teachers use data as apart of their role and responsibility. He implied that his school community needs to talk about data, but without his initiative (and I would hope support), conversations around data would not occur. The difference in a response to data use from the principal and his teachers indicates that the affect of the reform experience is felt differently at the classroom and administration level. Small, urban elementary Principal Holmes has concerns with the emphasis on data and the momentum she sees toward more testing in her building:

We go so far diagnostic that we look at the data and forget the spirit of education in a larger sense. People may not want to do that prescriptive, too routinized response. You have to have some creativity; you work with children.

Principal Holmes puts out a caution with the idea of “routinized” responses as needing balancing with creativity. This caution is part of her professional identity and work as a principal as she considers the changes caused by use of data and pressures as a result of those data.
To more succinctly describe the changes in ways principals now use data as an integral part of their professional identity during this era, Table 2 shows how principals convey both positive and negative perceptions in the way data have an impact on their work in schools. No principals were on the fence concerning their opinion about the changes data are causing, although there are discrepancies among principal perceptions. For example, one principal feels positive about data driven instruction and conversation at her school while another feels positive that data do not entirely drive what happens at his school.
Table 2

Changes as a Result of Increased Data Use

+ Capacity-building with technology is increasing
+ Able to have frequent progress monitoring
+ Instructional decisions can be based on individual students strengths and weaknesses
+ IIRC allows educators to look at interventions (RTI) for specific program descriptors
+ Teachers can access data themselves
+ Using data as evidence for progress
+ Showing teachers the data is evidence that causes them to change (leverage point)
+ Data has helped us
+ Change from IGAP to ISAT helped school formulate goals
+ Attention to ISAT data for subgroups
+ Data tracking system has evolved
+ Data is now disaggregated
+ Instruction and conversations are data driven
+ Data does not entirely drive what we do

- People just see numbers, not kids (ISAT data)
- ISAT data is not one of the useful data points
- District technology has not supported the influx of data
- Principal is still primary distributor of data
- Principals still do too much data charting “by hand”
- You have to be careful you don’t give teachers too much data or they will “shut down”
- Data tells you what is “wrong” but that doesn’t mean educators still know what to “do” about that
- ISAT data compares different groups of kids year to year; not a valid comparison
- ISAT data compares different forms of the test altered year to year; this is not a valid comparison

+positive, -negative

Prior to ISAT and AYP, principals say data were underused because test results from the IGAP (Illinois Goal Assessment Program) test (which predates the ISAT) did not in reality give them much information with which to work. Since the development of the Interactive Illinois Report Card (IIRC) Internet site, and for some principals improved access to more refined district technology, principals have generally grown more sophisticated and fond of using data as a means to inform practice. Principals said they
looked forward to building capacity around data that can be pinpointed to understand student strengths or weaknesses as part of their professional leadership role. Principals ask, what can teachers do about those strengths and weaknesses, and what professional conversations can they, as instructional leaders, help guide? The new capacity of guiding conversations with staff based on data gives principals as instructional leaders a basis for strengthening their professional identity and is viewed by some principals as a beneficial consequence of the policy. As principals take on a more data driven professional identity within their school contexts, they use data as leverage to make changes in teachers’ instructional practices to positively influence student learning. Principals functioning as data driven leaders have the accompanying caution not to overwhelm teachers with data or to lose sight of their service to students, not numbers.

**Change in classroom instruction.** Principals have gone through adjustment phases in response to NCLB reform, and by and large, resonate with what Principal Sandy said, “NCLB changed the way we instruct in the classroom.” Principals have implemented changes at their school and district level in reaction to the policy. A popular change mentioned by several principals has been assigned time frames for instruction mandated by their districts and carried out at the school level. New time frames for instruction are laid out by superintendents, for example, to ensure adequate instruction such as a 90-minute literacy block at the elementary schools or having science everyday instead of switching on and off with social studies. Principals commented that having district assigned time frames curtailed the “unnecessary” time teachers spent on “pet”
units. They also explained the complexity of scheduling mandated time blocks that infringe on the arts, PE, library, computer time, recess, and/or free play (in kindergarten).

Some principals lamented the changes NCLB has caused to instructional priorities in the classroom. One of the most significant changes across the board has been an instructional and pedagogical focus on AYP content areas math and reading. Principal Sandy spoke for the fellow elementary principals in his suburban district focus group when he said we are, “hyper focused on math and reading, hyper focused. Those are the priorities and everybody agrees those are the priorities.” He says this change is a direct result of the policy and what “counts” for meeting the benchmark for AYP.

Urban, middle school Principal Kohl pounded his fist on his desk when he complained:

Social studies went away as soon as AYP came because it [ISAT] was an exam for reading. We always had solid science and social studies numbers across the district, they were good with IGAP, but then the ISAT test focused on reading and math.

Principals explained the IGAP was not as aligned to state standards, and was a test that was taken without ties to federal funding and policy. IGAP is unlike ISAT which is more aligned to state standards and is the standardized test Illinois elementary and middle school students take to meet the benchmark for AYP. Principal Kohl was not alone in his feelings about the lack of attention to areas like science and social studies. Principals spend time in passionate discussions with specialist teachers who, at times, feel undervalued by current educational priorities. A physical education teacher had “enough” when he exclaimed to Principal Sandy, “How are kids going to read if they have a heart attack?” Principal Sandy said that if NCLB went away tomorrow he thinks his staff
would go back to struggling with what the instructional priorities and focus should be at their school, and he included himself in that struggle. The tension over instructional priorities at the classroom level is indicative of a struggle in professional identity and values. What is important and unimportant to teach, according to the ISAT and to NCLB, may be different from what educators at the school believe to be important to teach.

Principals repeatedly discussed their districts’ mandated curriculum adoptions and swift changes if test scores dropped, reminding me of the Chicago Public School principal story in the introductory chapter. When test scores dipped down in reading at a higher performing suburban elementary school, Principal Harbough shared the impact on classroom reading instruction:

Within our district, we've had a fair amount of autonomy with how we presented our instruction as long as it was standards driven and results driven. Now we have a new reading series, and the expectation will be that all of the grade levels will use the new reading series in a fairly prescribed manner.

Principal Harbough explained the empathy he had for his staff and described the reading program change as a “double edged sword” which took away “creativity of some teachers,” but “much more effectively aligns what kids are getting across the district.” Now when students transfer to his school from another district school, he hopes they will be ready to learn from within the grade level they make the transfer.

Many districts have changed financial support they offer to schools for reading instruction, beyond the Title 1 money provided from the state. Because of this, Title 1 schools are no longer the only schools that receive finances for reading support. Principals are helping central office administrators understand that literacy support is important in every school, especially if students are, as small-urban middle school
Principal Messerly commented, “going to achieve at a level that helps that school continue to make adequate yearly progress.” Being an advocate for changes needed at the district level to support classroom instruction continues to be an expanding part of principals’ professional identity in their middle manager role. They know what their school needs in order to meet the benchmark for AYP, and they have to advocate for those needs, often in terms of financial support, at the district level.

Principal Holmes talked about how at the onset of AYP, a perpetually failing school in her district received lots of financial support in terms of hiring reading specialists, while her school (which also had struggling readers) was not considered for financial help. Even though she had the same finite number of students struggling with reading as the “failing” school, that number did not make up “enough” of a percentage of her total population to have a “subgroup” and therefore did not threaten her school’s likelihood of not making AYP. This changed as the subgroup numbers dropped and the benchmark for AYP rose; however, Principal Holmes remembers feeling “jealous” at the onset of the policy and admitted thinking, “It wouldn’t be all that bad not to make AYP!” because her district would then provide the resources she needed to make improvements for struggling readers at her school too.

NCLB has caused principals to mediate classroom curricular and instructional changes with their teaching staffs and parent groups. They said this comes in subtle forms like “nudging” or forcefully “deciding for them” in terms of stating (as urban, elementary school Principal Kinkead did in one staff meeting), “This is a district-wide initiative; you don’t have a choice.” A few principals were hesitant to say NCLB had made too many
changes to their classroom instruction. Principal Ehlinger from a high performing suburban elementary school, rationalized:

I really don't think that what we have done with children has changed a lot. Good teachers are good teachers; good teaching is good teaching. I think the piece that has change is how we document it, and how we can explain it to others.

Principal Ehlinger is a veteran principal with a veteran staff, who considered her relationship with her teachers to be “very strong.” She had a high sense of teacher efficacy and seemed to believe that the classroom instructional practices they have had at her school have always been a result of good teachers. In contrast, other principals talked about teachers not being able to “just close their doors and teach whatever they wanted,” or helping teachers realize, “the rules of the game have changed” concerning practices in classroom instruction. As suburban, elementary school Principal Raab put it, in this time of change, “If you haven't aggravated somebody, you're probably not doing a very good job.” Principals had different ways of talking about teachers and the value of their work, and the reform seemed to bring out those differences. Changes like using data as a leverage point to cause teachers to reexamine practice could be used by a school leader to build up teacher efficacy and professionalism or blame the work of teachers and tear professionalism down.

Principals’ professional identity as leaders making changes in classroom instruction and mediating those changes with district mandates and budgets, places them in a middle manager role—almost a go-between the district and school. This middle manager role expands as the pressure to meet the benchmark for adequate yearly progress increases and district resources run low. Even though Principal Sandy leads in a
somewhat affluent suburban school district, he said the district budget is “terrible, just terrible.” He has tried to use money to hire more support teachers and more specialists, but he does not receive adequate district support. When asked why, he said “because we have such great scores.” He said the message from the board is, “You figure it out or you’re going to be in trouble,” and that “Our board, our central office doesn’t admit yet that we have these underlying issues, behavior issues and at-risk kids.” Principal Sandy said changes he makes to classroom instruction “make you [the school community] very reliant on your own little skills.” His sense of professional identity and view of efficacy is compromised by a school board and central office denying his students-in-need and his teachers-in-need the services that he thinks they should be able to provide him in a white-collar community.

**Response to intervention.** Response to Intervention (RTI) is a mandate from the state, which requires classroom teachers to utilize measurable interventions at the classroom level in order to work with struggling students. RTI is not a special education initiative, but rather a whole-school initiative to work with individual students. Principals are tremendously positive about RTI. Principal Raab said, “RTI really puts the emphasis on how do you know what you are doing in your classroom is making a difference?” My first focus group of suburban principals felt that RTI was generating the most positive changes they had seen in all of their years as school leaders. Principal Dollinger, a member of this focus group, said:

I am a special education teacher, that is what I was trained what to do. If I have a kid who is not succeeding, I know I may never find the “right way” to reach that kid, but I have always looked at it as my problem. “I am not there yet,” as opposed to, “The kid is not there yet.” I think RTI supports that completely. When I first
started hearing that about RTI I thought, this is the kind of mindset we need. It just rings true. So, I think RTI is another way to sustain those high expectations for teachers. There is no other way to do it; you have to do it this way. This is the way we are going to get this kid from here to here. Not the old mindset of, “Here is another kid, and he doesn't have the skills he needs to be in second grade so I am not going to be able to do anything with him.”

Principals said they are helping teachers understand how to use “interventions” rather than “accommodations” and that assessment data provide the evidence to directly inform necessary interventions. This intensifies their role as instructional leaders who facilitate the acquisition of skills necessary for teachers to intervene at the classroom level.

Principal Harbough from a suburban, elementary school, explained that he works with teachers to, “get [them] more sophisticated with these kinds of processes [RTI] and it is more accountability [for them as a school].” Some principals said they were helping teachers adjust to RTI, not as a program but as a means to think about learning. Mr. Raab said his teachers were, in a sense, “waiting” for something like an RTI program to be “handed to them,” so he knew he needed to be actively educating and leading the implementation of RTI as an initiative, not a program, at his school.

Principals were in agreement that without NCLB, the accountability of RTI would not be present. Rural elementary Principal Ponto explained that RTI gives him leverage with his staff to create a “sense of urgency,” concerning a student who “needs to get from one level to another by the end of the year.” Mr. Raab said that RTI, “changes teachers’ focus—it is a whole look in the mirror.” He agrees that RTI puts emphasis on what the teacher can do to help a student and consequently what he as the school leader can do to help that process. Principals concur that through RTI, their professional identity as leaders grows as they guide and challenge conversations with staff about strategies and
process by which all students can learn. RTI has helped bring staffs together as communities of practice, with a focus on making measurable improvements for all children. RTI is supportive and Principal Dollinger says conversations have shifted from talking about “why a child is not doing his work” to “how are we going to get here (goal).” Principal Sandy said, “it [RTI] is just part of our language now.” He says the conversational changes with teachers in his school are “amazing.” Principals overwhelmingly felt that their work through RTI increased their professional identity as school leaders who could really make a difference, and that the conversations around interventions brought a unity of focus to their school communities.

**Staffing changes.** Many principals discussed the kinds of staffing changes caused by NCLB reform. From “counseling teachers out of the profession” or into a different teaching job, to adapting their style and leadership to a new central office staff or a new teaching staff, principals have had to adjust to staffing changes which they attribute to tighter accountability. In several districts, principals remained in their school, but had to work with new superintendents as their board hired new leaders to make changes in the system. When one urban district repeatedly failed to make AYP, a new superintendent was recruited. Mr. Kohl said he and other principals felt the pressure to immediately align themselves, “The new superintendent comes in here with new expectations, and it [the priority] is figuring out what the new superintendent's agenda is and what is important on his radar.” A former superintendent from a neighboring urban district secured his current position in Principal Wennekamp’s urban district where he began initiating ideas for the special education population and inclusion. Principal
Wennekamp remembers responding to the superintendent’s call and telling his staff, “If our boss says we are doing inclusion, we are doing inclusion. We are not going to debate whether we are going to do it or not; we are going to debate how we are going to do it.” This again is an example of that middle-manager role that principals are placed in.

Principal Wennekamp knows he has to have an inclusive school as mandated by his district superintendent; it is then up to his leadership in his school community to implement inclusion in a way that complies with the district and makes sense for his school.

In the second small-urban district focus group, principals referred to their positions as leaders as being part of a “revolving door” or “the shuffle” based on their ability to make or not make the benchmark for AYP. Principal Holmes said, “We've had quite a bit of turnover here since the time that I've been here.” Principal turnover was not the only turnover issue districts’ like Principal Holmes’s face in response to NCLB; teacher turnover has been a reality as well. At the onset of the policy, high performing elementary school Principal Harbough remembers teacher turnover caused in response to NCLB:

The one or two teachers, who I think were really negative influences within the building, chose to move on. They realized that it wasn't going well. And a couple decided to move on, and a lot decided to change.

Principal Messerly explained that a “good match” between a principal and staff, “will sustain you through all kinds of federal rules and changes, whether you're making or not making AYP.” And, “If it's not a good match, typically the leader will leave or the teachers will start to drift off in a fairly dysfunctional way.” Principals shared their belief
that they set the attitude and tone for their buildings and that part of their job is to maintain a positive, safe school climate in heightened times of pressure. They recognize the need for celebrating teacher and student achievement no matter what the ISAT results, and are committed to listening to teachers. Principal Messerly said, “You listen, you hear their frustration, you acknowledge it, then you go back to okay, I appreciate your frustration and understand what you’re feeling, but the reality is right now I need you to work with me to do XYZ.” Principal Holmes shared her need to support teachers more in this era of uncertainty, “I have a sense of holding teachers' hands more because they're scared too. They are feeling threatened--its been in the news quite recently again that they may change the pay rate if your students aren't making it.”

Principals understand that part of their professional identity comes from their need to “stay ahead of the curve,” to be “proactive rather than reactive,” and (depending on the need of the situation) take on a softer role of facilitator or harder role of director. Principal Sowers made a major career flip in the type of district and school she now leads when she moved from a low income, underperforming urban school district to an affluent suburban district. In her former school, staff turnover was common and she felt pressure to quickly push teachers, even let them go and hire new staff as a means for making dramatic instructional changes. In her current setting, Principal Sowers says she must move carefully because teachers are tenured and students are achieving AYP. She summarized, “I think I can actually lead here, although I would say it is not as fulfilling as my last job. You are not as much of the hero as you are when you work with a needier group.” Principals talked about their dedication and commitment to the profession, to
students and staff, and to their role as leaders in schools. Principal Holmes who has been a principal for over 20 years summed up her work in this era for herself, students, and teachers:

If we don't do this job to the best of our ability--and you want to say it's morphing--but [it may not be]. Who are you going to trust the principalship to? Don't you want to stay with these kids and your colleagues and all? And don't you want to help them experience that positive part of being a teacher--and yeah there are some parts of this job that none of us like--but you can get through that.

She talked about the pressures a central office administrator put on her to “write up” and report remediation plans immediately for struggling teachers in her former district. This principal said she stood up for her teachers because sometimes they needed more time. She cautioned against getting rid of teachers too quickly and said she mentored many teachers over the years that have turned out to be wonderful educators. In summary, principals’ identity has been affected in terms of staffing changes as they respond to adjustments at the central office level, and manage teacher turnover at their school level. Principals, like Holmes and Sowers had different approaches to “letting teachers go,” perhaps the result of the different pressures they experienced to achieve the benchmark for AYP on the ISAT.

**Summary to change as a finding.** Principals said there has been change and continuity in their role and identity as a leader. Some of the constants Principal Harbough lists include, “recess, problem solving with a kid, knowing families, that is all essential. If you’re not doing that, you are missing the best part of what being a principal is about.” Changes created by NCLB have made the principal less of an expert, and more of a professional that has to enlist the help of other instructional leaders on their staff.
Suburban elementary Principal Sandy says, “You know, it used to be that the principal knew it all. But, it used to be that there was a lot less that you needed to know.” Overall, principals shared the importance of building relationships with all members of the school community of practice and attending to the social as well as academic needs of staff members and students. They focused on finding supports for classroom teachers, and acting with renewed intensity as instructional leaders when it comes to the changes required of them under the policy and pressures of NCLB. Principals’ sense of identity has been strengthened by changes such as using data to guide conversations, but also weakened such as in their ability to advocate for necessary school funding or support from their central office.

**Success**

A second finding from the principal interviews and focus group data was a theme of success in a time of NCLB. Though principals understand that AYP is the public measure schools are under to perform successfully, there is disagreement about how much AYP truly measures and whether it is a sufficient indicator to claim a school is “successful.” Principals have negotiated their identity as leaders in response to their districts’ need to make AYP along with their schools’ need. Depending on pressure from the district administration, the school board, and the greater community, principals have constructed a sense of “success” or “failure” both outside and inside of the scope of adequate yearly progress. The theme of “success” emerged from the interviews and continued in the focus groups. I came to understand principals had more to say than
simply making or not making AYP. I asked them how they knew their school was successful, if AYP was the only measure of success that mattered, and so forth. Their reactions to these questions ran the spectrum from heightened animation to determinism to defeat. Principal Ehlinger said the question of how do you know your school is successful “really made her think.” She was “surprised” at her struggle to come up with an explanation for how she knows her school is successful, indicating a need to have time to think about success in terms other than AYP.

**Past and present realities of success.** A majority of the principals interviewed had been school leaders for more than two decades. These principals have had many years to think about what it takes to be successful in their professional work and in their school. Principal Sandy who self-identified as a “data geek” said he always used data to try to get kids to become more successful in terms of meeting standards, “What I have always done for 22 years is try to identify our students who are most at risk for not meeting the standards. I have always done that, always done it.” He is still doing that today as a way to gauge his improvement and success as a leader and in the school community at large.

Principals expressed ideas about how they want schools to be measured and articulate that success is more than making the benchmark for AYP. Of her school’s success, small-urban middle school Principal Messerly said:

At some point people have to come and see what's going on--a parent or central office personnel. Come and sit in my classrooms, watch my hallways, it's a pretty positive learning environment. But the reality is, 80 percent AYP? That's just almost not realistic.
When asked if making AYP at his high performing suburban elementary school was a measure of his success, Principal Raab responded, “Of course not. Of course not, high-stakes testing is absolutely a ridiculous measure. It is one small thing.” High performing suburban elementary Principal Ehlinger told me, “I don't think we look at AYP to decide if we are successful or not. That is something we ‘have’ to do. I gotta tell you I'm always excited when I see it and that we did it! No argument!” Principals said they were “judged” by their ISAT scores, but that is not necessarily what makes them successful or even what is a valid measure of their students’ learning.

Principal Scarpino leads in one of the highest performing districts in the state. He stated, “Well, we are a high performing school district, so my kids score 95 percent meets or exceeds [on the ISAT test] to begin with.” He stated matter-of-factly that plenty of students at his middle school routinely score 100 percent on the ISAT. I interviewed Mr. Scarpino on the day his school received an award from the state for being 1 out of 24 middle schools to be recognized for “Academic Excellence” (a school’s aggregate scores remain over 90 percent for three consecutive years). He did not want to make a “big deal” about the award, although the state of Illinois was making a big deal about it. That morning, the state superintendent had visited the district to honor 9 out of 12 schools in the district with the “Academic Excellence” award. When I asked if he felt proud, he replied, “Honestly, no. It is something that would have happened regardless.” Mr. Scarpino said his measure of success comes in the form of formative assessments, which offer him more frequent feedback for his teachers and students. He is also highly
committed to the emotional needs of his students, which is also true of the other principals’ interviewed.

I asked the second focus group of principals to tell me more about awards like the “Academic Excellence” award, “Are awards a reward?” I questioned. The group said that teachers feel passed over when their school community works hard, makes AYP, but never gets an “award.” At her urban middle school, Principal Messerly said she was not eligible for the Spotlight School Award, for example, because her initial ISAT scores for her African-American students were “too high.” When other middle schools in the district were receiving the Spotlight Award from the state, her teachers felt their work at her middle school was overlooked. Though Principal Messerly says she is not “really hooked [on] whether or not I get a plaque to hang on my wall,” she and the other principals in the focus group admitted that getting an award was something their school community and district would celebrate.

**AYP.** The benchmark of adequate yearly progress set by NCLB and determined by the state test is a great source of stress for many school communities. Though his school has always met the benchmark for AYP, rural elementary Principal Kinkead said:

I think for a long time, and for some of us still, it is very difficult and we stress over the test. But we are getting better at saying if we are doing what we need to do, the tests will play out. We are working on that--we are not there yet.

My second focus group of principals leading in small-urban districts shared stories about what it is like to get back their school ISAT scores and mark the year as a “success” or “failure.” During their account of this significant moment in their work life, they were both humorous and serious. Principal Messerly talked about the process of
getting her scores back, but not having access to the AYP page from the state “yet,” so scores are initially calculated by hand:

It's an incredibly tense several days or weeks—whatever—trying to roll out, count, count, and recount. It looks good here—African American looks good, low SES, not special ed. So you go back and make sure everybody is marked correctly. It's a very labor-intensive process.

The recounting of the scores often means deciding which special education student scores in particular to send back to readers who may or may not raise their rubric score from a “2” to a “3.” Here is the dialogue from this focus group with respect to rescoring:

Principal Messerly: So I'm looking at these 3 or 4 names and I'm like, I'm banking on Terray, and Dezerae, and Jevante. I'm like, "Great, my career is banking on these people!"

Principals Holmes and Altenhoffen: (laughs in agreement)

Principal Messerly: Where has my life gone? And that's where we've gotten. I'm banking on this kid to somehow pull it through for us!

Principal Altenhoffen: Come on Terray, I know you can do it!

Principal Messerly: So then you go and spend like 40-50 bucks per kid to have it rescored, praying that somebody will reread that essay and give them a 2 instead of a 3 so you can get bumped up.

Principals Holmes and Altenhoffen: (laughs, nods)

Principal Altenhoffen: It's crazy.

AYP for this group of principals is a serious matter. Their districts’ view AYP as a defining measure of success for them. Principal Holmes shared, “Everybody feels good if your school makes it. Making AYP is a huge sigh of relief for a year.” Principal Altenhoffen said, “You live for the moment,” and “You live year to year.” The group said there is intense pressure from the superintendent and board to make AYP. However,
these principals do not completely accept the idea that AYP should be the defining measure of success for their schools. Middle school Principal Messerly reasoned, “Eventually we won’t make AYP and that doesn’t make us a bad place to come to school or a bad school.” These principals, and others, share their definitions of success in Table 3. They, like other school leaders, define themselves as a “good” or “bad” school beyond the terms of NCLB. They demonstrate the resiliency educators have in these times of frustration.

When principals talked about sharing ISAT results with their teaching staff, they recognized the significance of that moment. Principal Altenhoffen cautioned, “As a principal, you really have to recognize the positives, you really have to be careful how you couch your data in looking at it. You want to celebrate the successes you made.” Successes include: (a) celebrating individual students who make big gains in their scoring percentages; (b) subgroups of students who may have not “made it” (AYP), but who as a whole increased their scores dramatically; or (c) overall content area gains as a school that everyone worked hard to achieve.

Part of defining success occurs, as Principal Sandy put it, “outside of the test.” Principals and teachers are interested in discovering if students are making progress, and they state the ISAT is only one way to measure progress. Principals often noted ISAT was not the best way to measure progress. “A child is so much more than just one day of testing,” summarizes Principal Ehlinger’s view of the test and the data collected. Urban elementary Principal Wennekamp says, “When you talk about No Child Left Behind, there is more that goes on in a school then just those damn test scores!” The following
Table 3 summarizes some of the ways principals know they are a successful at their school. In the next table (Table 4) principals tell what is “not successful” in terms of testing and AYP.

Table 3

*How do you Know you are Successful at Your School?*

- Positive school reputation
- Most sought out building in the district
- Parents are happy and complementary
- Low teacher turn-over
- Teachers feel supported by principal and parents
- Positive school culture
- Discipline, sense of order, kids acting respectfully
- Kids making progress
- Students have a “good experience” at the school
- Focus on supporting kids
- Attending to students social-emotional needs
- Kids connecting with teachers
- Kids seeing teachers as their “heroes”
- Promoting creative writing despite the kind of writing needed to pass ISAT

Table 4

*What is not Successful About the ISAT and/or AYP?*

- Measuring ELL students on the same test as English speaking students
- Measuring special education on a test that does not reflect the life skills they need to work on
- Students crying during the ISAT
- Losing sight of fact that we have kids with emotional needs, not just academic
- Students deterred to read and write creatively
- Teachers too focused on the test
- Priority *only* on reading and math
- Low benchmarks of AYP for higher performing schools
- AYP is unfair, larger, more diverse school populations have to work harder to make AYP (finite numbers of students could be the same at schools that do or do not make AYP based on overall school size)
These two tables share thoughts and reflections, often not prompted by my question: “How do you know your school is successful?” but rather shared as a frustration regarding the ability to achieve AYP. Success was on these school leaders’ minds and has become inextricably part of their professional identity. Schools are publicly declared successful or branded as failing. On the Illinois Interactive Report Card site and on the State School Report Cards, AYP status is emphasized by capital letters or red-colored font. Persevering in his need to be successful was difficult for urban, elementary Principal Wennekamp who pours his heart and soul into his work with low-income students. Though he knows he is making a difference for his students, his State School Report Card says in capital letters that he leads a failing school, with failing students. During his interview he grew momentarily quiet, as if defeated, for the few seconds he let himself wholly accept NCLB’s narrow definition of success. However, he quickly picked up the conversation and shared ways his professional identity is connected to the difference he makes with students. Differences for example such as sending backpacks of food home on weekends with students and holding “Back to School Nights” with prizes ranging from free winter coats and calculators to new dictionaries and school supplies. This is a principal that takes time before school, during the lunch hour, and after school to personally work with small groups of students using computer program-led interventions to increase their skills in reading and math content areas.

Computer-led interventions are one way principals describe how they prepare students and staff for the ISAT. ISAT preparation can become a consuming, intricate process. Some principals say they prepare beginning on the first day of school; others
make an ISAT “push.” Some principals downplay the test, noting too much “psych” is not healthy for their students, yet they still engage in test preparation “hoopla” such as assemblies or awards for attendance. Do principals compromise their professional identity to remain “successful” in their schools and districts? Do they respond to the district and state rewards and pressures to make AYP under NCLB reform? Principal Altenhoffen’s small-urban elementary school has made AYP five consecutive years. However, prior to those five years, when he did not make AYP for two straight years, he admits, “It's amazing what you do when you haven't made it for a couple of years. It's like, okay, maybe this stuff will work!” The “stuff” to which he refers is combined in Table 5 with other remarks principals shared specifically around ISAT preparation.

Table 5

Principal ISAT Prep Strategies

• Whole school pep-up assemblies
• Practice tests, computer prep programs
• Altering the order of curriculum taught, so tested skills are learned by test date
• Sending home letters to families encouraging good sleep, healthy breakfast, etc.
• Computer test prep programs
• Motivational videos
• Cheers
• Chewing mint gum during the test
• ISAT “buddy” class with younger grades
• Motivational songs
• Dances (the “Brain Dance” to warm up your body and get your brain thinking)
• Visits from the principal
• Prizes for good attendance both during the test week and during the school year
• Huge celebrations at the end of the testing week
• Downplaying prep (“kids at our school don’t need a carrot”)
• School has kids that will pass the test—so no prep needed
• Kids are “pleasers” they want to do well and will do well on test
The test-focused modifications aim to help ensure adequate yearly progress. This has been a significant development for some schools and principals caused by NCLB reform. Although principals did not measure their school community success based on the standardized achievement test (IGAP) pre-NCLB, since the imposition of the policy and AYP, many have adjusted their approach to instruction and preparation by modifying school priorities to those that are more test-focused. This forced change has deeply touched the professional identity as leaders within their school community of practice. Their success as leaders is on the line because of the benchmark for AYP, and this creates pressure on their school community. Although Mr. Ponto’s rural elementary school has always made adequate yearly progress, he reminds me during our interview, “We have to look at AYP; we have to really focus on the scores. The test scores are the almighty director of everything that we do.” This principal reifies the test scores as the “almighty director” and both sarcastically and realistically identifies his work as “directed” by a force other than himself—an “almighty” force that does not seem to be benevolent in this principal’s eyes, but causes him to question his identity as a leader and his purpose and vision for his school.

Summary to success as a finding. Current NCLB policy expects schools to have 100 percent of students meeting or exceeding the benchmark on the ISAT test by 2014. Principals, in one breath, say this is statistically impossible, silly, and unrealistic but in the next breath say they will keep pushing and moving forward. They say their sole focus is not the test, but they then contradict themselves by needing to comb through data, ask for a rescore, and layer on the test preparation and test related “hoopla.” This
contradiction exists because it is a contradiction in their professional identity around defining success. Principals view their ability to make adequate yearly progress as a small, but “almighty” measure of their school and districts’ success. Determining what makes their school successful means going outside the test and into a school’s culture and climate. Yet, without adequate yearly progress, the outside “stuff” (well-behaved students, happy parents, safe climate, etc.) does not “matter” in the public eye or to NCLB policy. What “matters” poses a conflict for their professional identity. They have to be true to what “matters” to themselves to feel success in their school community of practice, but what “matters” to themselves is not congruent with what is measured on the ISAT under NCLB. The way district personnel and school boards’ pressure principals to make AYP and maintain success in the public eye has altered the way leaders view themselves and their community of practice as “successful.” Though leaders clearly shared ways their school community of practice was successful beyond scores on the ISAT, success seemed to always make its way back to those “damn test scores.”

**Summary to change and success.** In this chapter I shared findings of the impact NCLB has on the professional identity of principals in terms of changes in use of data, classroom instruction, staffing, and Response to Intervention. I also discussed findings related to principals’ definition and explanation of what makes a successful principal and school in an era of NCLB, and how school leaders know they are successful. Clearly NCLB has benefits, challenges, rewards, and tensions that affect school leaders’ professional identity. Benefits and rewards of the policy include changes like having a more data driven professional identity that allows principals to guide their school
communities of practice toward greater understandings of meeting the learning needs of all students. Some of the challenges and tensions include changes like having to worry about finding the financial support for students or being narrowly labeled by a test score as a successful or failing school.
Chapter 5
Findings Part 2

Postcolonial Theory Framework

Postcolonial theory functions to illuminate my findings. I chose this theory, I proposed ways the theory might be used metaphorically, and now I share in this second findings chapter the data as coded to various tenets of postcolonial theory. I related data to various aspects of the theory when they made sense, with more or less detail, depending on the power of the interview quote(s) or example(s). As in the previous chapter, some data are summarized in tables, and some data are shared in longer passages and phrases.

This postcolonial findings chapter is organized according to some of the most significant postcolonial tenets explored in this study: remembering, power and voice, hybridity, othering, mimicry, diaspora, and translation. Concepts such as othering and hegemony are incorporated into many of the tenets, and though coded separately initially, these concepts are not separated out in this findings chapter. The challenge of what data to present and what to “summarize” in this chapter opens the opportunity for future writing and thinking about the value of this theoretical framework and metaphor. I choose to include data that pertained directly to my research questions concerning how NCLB has had an impact on the professional identity of leaders. Examples of power, voice, mimicry, and so forth that leaders did not relate to NCLB reform or tightened accountability as a result of the reform were not used in this study. A more general study
of the identity of school principals as viewed by the metaphor of colonization could have included these data; however, for this study, I included ideas from principals about their school leaders’ identity situated in an era of NCLB.

During the interviews, focus groups, and transcriptions, I found postcolonial theory jumping out as principals shared issues around reform and accountability. An important finding was how the metaphor “worked” from my viewpoint, but NCLB was not viewed overtly as “colonization” when proposed to principals the few times I was able to challenge the metaphor in one interview and the focus groups. This is an interesting, though only minimally developed finding of the study, and I discuss more about this later in the chapter. I write this chapter with the full disclosure that this metaphor of colonization is just that—a metaphor which I find valuable for understanding NCLB and my personal work in schools as a teacher, future school principal, and present college instructor of future teachers in this time of reform. Because these findings involve my interpretation of how postcolonial theory works or does not work within the metaphor as described in the review of literature, I share these findings and my interpretation through the lens of postcolonialism. I do “insert myself” into this chapter’s findings more than the last chapter, because it is my interpretation of the data as understood through my proposed metaphor of colonization.

**Remembering pre-NCLB and at the Onset of Colonization**

“Remembering” presented a potential problem for accurate postcolonial data gathering. What did principals remember (wholly and partially) about before and at the
beginning of NCLB reform? During colonization, there is a forgetting, an amnesia effect of the way things were which is masked by the way things are. This lack of remembering is a result of colonization and evidence that the colonizing authority has begun to take hold. Would principals remember what was it like to lead at the onset of NCLB? What kinds of initial conversations did they have about the new accountability standards, about being strictly held to standards, about looking at the hard data of test scores and being measured in the public eye by those scores? Could principals recall staff and district meeting discussions, and if so, what was it about those conversations that began to reshape their professional identity?

Many principals admitted it was difficult for them to mentally separate some of the accountability measures their districts were implementing due to concurrent pressures with curriculum alignment, a focus on standards, community pressures, and requirements of NCLB. Some principals spoke emphatically about pressures related to NCLB but others spoke more generally in terms of increasing accountability. When principals did speak of NCLB, they often referred to the policy in terms of “making AYP” or “the test.” I offer some of the principals’ most vivid rememberings from their interview conversations as evidence that they are still close to the onset of colonization in some ways. Later in this chapter and the concluding chapter, I speculate how much principals have begun to forget about their work pre-NCLB as well.

At the onset of NCLB reform, Principal Ehlinger’s suburban district superintendent made job security related to AYP:
I remember one superintendent saying I will let you go one year, but if your tests don't go up two years in a row, you will be looking for someplace else to work. We were all scared to death. We made ourselves nuts!

From another part of the state, Principal Holmes who transferred from one small-urban district to another said, “For me, it [making AYP] is not as career based in my current district as it was for me at my old. The intensity of ‘We've got to make ISAT’ is there, but not as great [as it was in the former district].” Principals acknowledged the relief of making AYP for job security both in the past and future. Principal Messerly said, “If you make it, then you can kind of sit back and for me it's like ‘Phew!,’ because if we don't make it next year, then I still have another year before I get dinked [fired or moved to another school]!”

Principal Messerly recalled telling her middle school staff about their first ISAT scores under NCLB where African-American students at the school scored only 19 percent meeting and exceeding the benchmark on the reading portion of the test compared to 80 percent of the White students. I asked what her staff's understanding of that low percentage score meant, and if that meaning had changed at all overtime.

We said it's cultural; they [African-American students] don't get any family support. At the beginning it was like well we can't do anything, we are only the teachers. We are not the parent. So we really had to have a whole mind shift--well you are not the parent but you can provide parenting type things to these kids. These things that I am throwing out were just huge mind shifts for everybody, including myself.

Identifying herself and staff as a type of family support for students is a change in her professional identity propelled by NCLB; offering students’ supports that were not purely “academic” became an integral part of her work. Prior to NCLB, it seems there was some deficit thinking about the African-American students in her school community of
practice. Now that she reports a “huge mindshift” is taking place as a result of the policy, it could be evidence that this thinking has been challenged and is changing. A similar shift occurred at another middle school in an urban community in the state. Principal Kohl said sorting out how to help his “neediest kids” eventually became part of his work related to student achievement, “I was holding fast to the point that we are not the parents, we should not have to take that role on, we can only do so much.” Now he understands, “We do have to provide parenting type things here, provide kids with breakfast, school uniforms, and we adopted PBIS (behavior program) three years ago, so it was a big mind shift for a lot of people.” It is not clear that the mindshift these principals are talking about has quelled the deficit thinking about “needy” students; however, deficit thinking regarding students is being addressed and challenged as school communities of practice work with “needy” students to help them achieve adequate yearly progress on the ISAT. It is clear that principals take on the leadership role of educating their school community as to “parenting type things” and expand their professional identity as leaders who do more than academic work for students and families.

Suburban Principal Ehlinger struggled to recall the test the state used before ISAT when I asked, “So with IGAP did you ever look at those kinds of scores by race?” She said, “I can not think [remember]. I’m sure we must have looked beyond the aggregate and tried to disaggregate, but I don’t know if we had access to the level of desegregation that we do with ISAT.” Her struggle is indicative of the difficulty of “remembering” in a time of colonialism. Prior to NCLB, Principal Ehlinger is sure she “must have”
disaggregated the data—I think she means she is sure she looked at individual students test scores who were struggling—but she does not clearly remember doing this because she is convinced that disaggregated data is something NCLB has done for schools and NCLB forced principals to pay more attention to struggling students and subgroups. I explored this remembering question again with the small-urban focus group of principals when they discussed one positive of NCLB is that it caused them to attend to subgroups of students.

Me: I want to go back to something you said before. Before you had to make AYP, are you saying you didn't look at kids in subgroups?

Principal Altenhoffen: Before NCLB, when it was IGAP, you actually didn't get the subgroup data back in data format. You'd have to go through and highlight kids, so it was really difficult to disaggregate the data. It wasn't that easy. Plus it wasn't particularly useful data.

Me: So are we paying attention to our subgroups as a whole because of NCLB?

All principals: Yes, (nod), mm-hmm.

Principal Holmes: When I was principal in the mid-90s I asked to see the subgroup data that the curriculum director at that time had, it but only for the district people. She would not release it. She'd paraphrase it. She was formally not allowed to release that because it could be seen as discriminatory. You're isolating kids, and saying these kids aren't performing as well.

Principal Messerly: Now we have them [students in subgroups] up on a wall! [a data wall, typically placed in the principal’s workspace]

Principal Holmes: Now we have them [students in subgroup] up on cards!

This focus group’s exchange, coupled with Principal Ehlinger’s struggle to remember if she looked at individual students scores pre-NCLB (i.e. looked at individual students) is an example of why remembering is an important postcolonial concept. Do principals really believe that they did not look at subgroup student data and, as a result, attend to
subgroups of students’ learning *prior* to NCLB? Were school communities leaving students behind before the policy was enacted? The data was not *called* subgroup data, but does this mean principals think they remember actually leaving children behind? I am not so sure. Rural, elementary school Principal Ponto said:

> What I don't like is President Bush acting like *before* NCLB we didn't care. That implication I resent, I mean I strongly resent. The notion that before this federal law came into place we viewed--it's almost like he thought we were looking at well those kids are going to fail, the heck with them, we don't care, and these kids are going to be okay, so I'll be buddies with them and we'll make sure they're okay. That was never the case, and I would say nationally that was never the case. Well, if that was the case NCLB sure isn't going to make us care! That's not what makes you care--federal legislation!

Some principals were confused about their prior work with struggling students pre-NCLB. This confusion makes a case for the metaphor of colonization, and is important because principals’ professional identity as leaders who *care* about all of their students was called into question in their mind. Yes, there have been “mindshifts,” but is that due to the policy or the result of a more sensitive, inclusive school community of practice, led by a professional leader who wants all students to learn regardless of a test score?

Clearly principals’ role as instructional leaders has changed because of NCLB. Getting teachers “on board” with standards and adopted curriculum changes has became increasingly crucial to the curriculum alignment movement as well as pressuring the need to “teach to the test” (ISAT) with staff. Rural school Principal Ponto remembers:

> There used to be a time, though that I don't think the test and the standards matched up, and that really bothered me and the staff because we were teaching to the standards, but the test wasn't measuring the standards. So, I think there was a time there when we actually *had* to teach to the test. We knew what was on the tests. But that has changed now in the last few years--the test is aligned to the standards--so I have gone to the other side of the fence on that. I would agree that
we did teach to the test, but I don't think we do that anymore. We teach to the standards because now they are measured by the test.

I was curious whether principals thought NCLB had substantially changed their dedication or commitment to working with whole school and subgroup populations of students in order for them to all make AYP. Could they think back to their work as *always* being mindful of getting all students to achieve on the ISAT (or IGAP), or was that not a priority? Principal Sandy said “getting as close to 100 percent on the test” has “always been the goal” for his students. Some principals echoed this kind of a response, claiming they were typically attuned to the test scores and the results even though there was no formal policy forcing them to do so. Some principals said the tests were not very useful and the data they provided did not “count.” Principal Kohl remembers:

The tests that we all live and die by existed; but they didn't exist as we know them today. They were just a test to take. Now it seems so strange because we didn't look at that data, we didn't really care about that data. Maybe some people did, but I remember as an assistant principal at a middle school even in the late 90s, it was just a test. It was something we had to do to satisfy the state--okay we’ll take it.

The tests provided data, but as Principal Altenhoffen put it, not the “breadth and depth of data analysis” that principals have access to today:

It was IGAP. So we had the data, it was there, but it wasn’t something that we spent a lot of energy on. Common sense said there were kids that were doing well and some that needed more support. So we worked from the common sense mindset.

Principals routinely recalled that their access to data, on the Interactive Illinois Report Card (IIRC) site, changed their professional work as instructional leaders because now they are able to help teachers with instructional practices using the data for subgroups as well as all students. Urban elementary Principal Wennekamp said:
Before NCLB, when it was IGAP, you actually didn't get the subgroup data back in data format. You'd have to go through and highlight kids, so it was really difficult to disaggregate the data. It wasn't that easy. Plus it wasn't particularly useful data.

Each principal interviewed agreed that, as a whole, schools with subgroups are paying closer attention to the learning of all students as a result of NCLB policy. Even those schools without subgroups say they are looking at individual student data more closely. It appears that some principals just needed a little time to think about their purpose of schooling pre-NCLB. They have always “cared” and have always looked at data, but because those data have become more useful and they have access to them, they can now take their school community of practice to a new level of responsibility and accountability for each learner. Principals are excited about their professional identity being strengthened by the notion that they can care help students in more comprehensive, meaningful ways because of more useful data.

**Power and Voice**

The impact of NCLB reform, with respect to power and voice, elicited divergent reactions from principals depending on the nature of the question and conversation. Table 6 (below), summarizes phrases and sentences principals used to convey the power of the policy and its impact on their work as leaders in an era of NCLB. In a second set of data in Table 7, principals share ways they gained power or voice as a result of the policy. To begin, here is a strong opinion statement about NCLB from rural elementary school Principal Ponto’s experience:
I think 20 years from now people are going to come to the realization that nothing has harmed public education more in the history of our country than NCLB. I think that long term pressuring, punishing a school district because their kids don't make AYP is ludicrous. You don't punish them, you bring in resources. You help them.

This principal had no qualms about voicing his beliefs about the policy and its long-term results for education. Table 6 summarizes some of the beliefs about the power and impact of NCLB as voiced by the other principals.

Table 6

*Power and Impact of NCLB*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Harmfulness of NCLB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• NCLB doesn't care.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• It's punitive. It's not helpful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A school shouldn't be punished for not doing well, they should be helped--and that will <em>never</em> happen under NCLB.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The negative structure of almost being criminal in some ways about how your buildings get treated if they don't make AYP has to be adjusted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Are they going to sink entire districts or schools or states?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• NCLB is discriminatory toward bigger schools and schools with subgroups.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The intent of NCLB is fine---it's the implementation that's incorrect, that has issues.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• ELL students crying, Special Education students have meaningless assessment.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lack of Principal Voice Around the Hegemonic Priorities of NCLB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It's not whether you agree or not; it's a matter of that's what the mandate is.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Well it wasn't my choice. If I agree or disagree, this is the federal law, so you have to.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They call the play and we carry the ball. We execute it. We can't call an audible! It's not whether you agree or disagree.</td>
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Pressure of AYP and ISAT Testing

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<tr>
<td>• Everybody is under such pressure to do it (make AYP), that they'll do whatever it takes to get it done. I think you need to eliminate that.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• As a result of testing, students are learning to be afraid of being wrong.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Students pay attention to format, not content (in writing specifically).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• It's just too stressful, kids crying on the ISAT day, we've all had that.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• That stupid test I don't think makes people more accountable.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion about whether or not the ISAT as an assessment even matters has been put on the backburner because we're all so scared not to make it (AYP).</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• NCLB says I lead a failing school.</td>
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Some principals may have gained a sense of power and voice as they figure out “how to play the game” and the “rules” of NCLB and AYP, but clearly not all. As one principal said, “you can’t call an audible.” This principal and others do not feel their voice is important to the hegemonic priorities of NCLB, but this does not mean their work is unimportant. Even though there is a sense of powerlessness and defeat when leading a failing school, there is resiliency and hope shared in the previous chapter of making progress measured by principals’ own sense of success.

When principals voice what is most beneficial about NCLB, they agree that paying attention to subgroups and attending to the learning of individual students are positive features of the policy. More ideas are found in Table 7 below.

Table 7

*Gains in Power and Voice for Principals and Schools*

- Ability to implement positive changes in the school because of district initiatives; because of priorities on literacy and math.
- Access to subgroup data and usefulness of subgroup data has a positive impact on learning through RTI, programming decisions, and classroom instruction.
- For some teachers, less autonomy has been good because principals are better able to monitor the content and pedagogy of those classrooms.
- Teacher professionalism still present, but is tighter and more focused.
- Setting high standards have been a good thing—standards just need to be measured in a way that makes sense such as a growth model.
- Accountability is no longer a “bad word.”
- IIRC and other tools are around now; they allow and force us to look deeper at program descriptors and curricular connections.
- We are focused as a staff; we are talking about the same things all of the time.

High performing school principals tended to have much less to say about the pressures of making AYP; it appears power and voice have a different impact within their school community of practice. They are, in a sense, insulated right now, almost immune
to this widespread “failure.” In lower performing schools the community goes into “triage mode” right before ISAT testing according to small-urban middle school Principal Messerly. Or, as urban elementary Principal Wennekamp puts it: “double dosing kids” in reading and math. The pressure to make the benchmark for AYP is not as profound at higher performing schools. These schools also tend to be high socio-economic status, fairly homogeneous schools. For example, in Principal Sower’s suburban elementary school, she noted, “There is no one running around worried. It isn't even discussed [that we would make AYP].” When asked if suburban Principal Dollinger has to be hands-on with his teachers at his high performing school, he responds, “I don't think I am... I don't think I need to be. What I am used to from teachers here is teachers seeing a problem and just taking it and running with it.” When asked what this principal would do at a low-performing school he responded, “I am not a micromanager, but I think if it was my building or my district, I would be fairly hands-on that first year until I was convinced that they were going the right direction.” Ostensibly, the “right” direction means making AYP.

Of concern to me is the voice that NCLB has perpetuated in schools and communities with the most resources and the most power (and consequently taken away from those historically with the least resources and power). Principal Raab commented, “When you have your top of the top districts that are not making AYP the silliness of that 100 percent is going to come through.” Other principals say once the highest performing districts do not make AYP, lawmakers will have to make a change. Principal Harbough, leading at a higher performing suburban elementary school, said, “I think politically over
the next few years, as the more affluent communities such as ours, the more accomplished communities, do not make it [AYP], then we’ll see.” At the “Academic Excellence” awarded middle school referred to in the last chapter, Principal Scarpino said his teachers never talk about making AYP and never worry about it. This is in stark contrast to the work of principals leading in “failing” schools and districts where discussions and worries about AYP are a constant. Colonization tends to have an impact on those without power and voice first—the more affluent and “respected” members of Indian society, for example, were given positions of limited power when England colonized India. These were the more “civilized” Others, not as “civilized” as the colonists, but they could speak English, could persuade their countrymen, and had resources and wealth despite the colonial invasion. NCLB allows high-performing, typically high socio-economic status, fairly homogeneous schools and districts to continue to flourish and hold power and voice under its rule.

When I asked the first focus group of suburban principals if they were aware of the power they had in higher performing schools, they acknowledged that they were “lucky” to be in their current positions, and were somewhat aware of the pressures they would be under if serving in lower achieving schools in their district. Principal Harbough said, “We're waiting out the fear [of not making AYP]. I'm not afraid of not making 100 percent because it's stupid. When we get to that point it's going to be so obvious to every person [that the policy is flawed].” Though principals in underachieving schools had optimism and a pride in the gains being made, they did not voice a feeling of “unluckiness” in their situations nor a belief that the policy was stupid. They loved their
work and their choice to lead in challenging schools. They did not have the bold voice to say the policy was stupid. On their behalf, I will “inscribe myself onto the space” of their story. This is my voice from the notebook I kept while coding. This is an entry written after coding the comments principals shared above, related to the historic power of affluent schools in this era:

So...we have to wait for the districts with power to be affected by NCLB? We have to wait for them to be the ones to do something, or for lawmakers to recognize the flaws of NCLB once the "golden" schools can't make it? These are the schools that the lawmakers typically come from, or people like them come from. Because then of course the system must be flawed—whereas before it was just those poor schools who could not make it and are flawed. There was and is something wrong with those schools (and those kids and families). But (in an imagined future), now that the "successful" schools can't make it, there must be something wrong with the policy? Once those with power change NCLB that is all fine and dandy for the “successful” schools that remained relatively untouched the whole time. Their identity didn't suffer--if anything it was strengthened from the confirmed notion that they are and always were the measure of achievement and success, that they have it all together because their kids, their teachers, their district, their community never were "failing" like those OTHER places. This is so detrimental in the long run. We are creating some really sad schools, with sad kids. It isn't until the privileged kids and communities start to "fail" that the policy changes? This is not just.

What I meant by detrimental in the long run is that the lasting affects of colonization are going to be felt for a long time in the lower-achieving schools. These school communities of practice have been labeled and sanctioned as “failing.” They are not homogeneous; they do not typically have access to a wealth of resources. Is this policy really meant to help them learn to leave no child behind?

Principals have power when they take what is beneficial from NCLB and make it their own. Then they began to actually get ahead of the policy’s current constraints. However, principals did not see themselves as having power in this regard, a sign of
colonization even in the higher performing districts who had the “flexibility” to get ahead of the policy and take from it what was most beneficial. This happened in two ways. First, when principals began to switch from a mindset of making AYP to a mindset of Response To Intervention (RTI) and looking at individual students, they felt that this was a more logical and fairer process to hold all schools accountable for all students. Higher performing, suburban elementary principal Dollinger said:

> Focus on individual student progress is where we’re at, now we're not looking at comparing schools--who's doing what, well this school is meeting/exceeding—whatever! Even the high performing schools are looking at individual students who are not making AYP [with RTI].

An entire school being held accountable for each students’ individual growth in the form of a growth model is congruent with the values principals discussed and one perceived eventuality of NCLB. Principals like Dollinger and his focus group colleagues are, in a sense, “ahead” of the policy because they implement and understand what is truly important. They have, in my viewpoint, remained powerful because they have the flexibility of resources, time, and lack of pressure to do so. This ability to retain what is most significant about NCLB (looking at individual students, specifically subgroup students) and make a means for it to sensibly happen is part of the syncretic space in principals’ identity.

The second way principals did not see themselves as having power concerning their opinion about the “statistical impossibility” of 100 percent AYP. For example, in the second focus group, Principal Altenhoffen said, of the high schools in the small-urban district in which he works, “It’s gotten to a point where it's almost meaningless” to meet the high benchmark set for AYP. When I asked, “Does that give you any power as
principals?” he genuinely responded, “I don't know about that.” This not knowing, or not having thought about power, supports the hypothesis that principals may indeed be colonized under NCLB. They do not see their power or lack of power in their position as a menace or as mocking a law that they believe will not be realistic in the long run. They remain committed to the mandate of trying to reach 100 percent AYP while acknowledging its futility. When I asked the small, urban focus group principals, “Are people backing down, thinking the AYP standard is going to eventually change?” Middle school Principal Messerly said emphatically, “I don't think anybody is backing down from anything! I must have missed the memo on that!”

One way educators could use their power and voice in 2010, is to share what they think about NCLB at “One Voice” conferences being held around the country. These conferences are part of Washington’s education initiative as NCLB policy is rewritten and ultimately reauthorized. The conferences are called “One Voice” a phrase that implies all educators would be invited to participate, to stand together with one voice. It strikes me as odd that my practitioner colleagues have not gotten e-mail notices of “One Voice” conferences. Many of them were completely unaware of the conferences, while my academic colleagues and myself have received notices and invitations. This makes me question whose voices are being solicited and how they will be used at these conferences? Will those with traditional voice and power be the only ones heard, or will there be outreach to those without a traditional voice? I explore this question again later in this chapter, but before doing so, I step back and look at the impact policy makers have
Power and Voice of Hegemonic Lawmakers Versus Schoolmakers

NCLB is likely to become reauthorized (re-funded) in President Barack Obama’s time in office. Principals had much to say when asked what they thought about NCLB in general and changes they would recommend. Though their feedback was sometimes positive with regard to the intent of the existing policy, no one was appreciative of the boundary colonizing lawmakers crossed when they enacted NCLB and reached far into the schoolmakers’ realm. Speaking of the federal government, Principal Ponto remarked pessimistically:

Once they [federal government] get their fingers in something, they're never going to let go. It wasn't that many years ago when I can remember there was no US department of education, when was it, the 80s? Education and welfare were all one--there was no secretary of education. If they're going to have their fingers in it, which they are, then they're going to have to put their money where their mouth is, which they don't.

Principals are dismayed with the lack of monetary support and lack of wisdom at being excluded from the NCLB policy decision. Principal Ehlinger commented:

I think somebody along the line was stupid, to not ask the people who are doing the work, “What do you think?” And maybe they did, and I don't know that, but my perception is that there weren't a lot of educators who were part of that conversation.

Some principals were downright angry about the policy creation process. Principal Holmes spoke of politicians that have created a policy for educators and said, “I resent it! I resent it!” Principals felt there was much more to understand about their work in
schools than test score outcomes. Principal Messerly said, “I tell the lawmaker, come to my school this week and watch all that we try to do. Then you explain to me how this is justice for a young person in the US schools.” Of her ELL French speaking Congo students for example, this principal said, “They want them to take the reading test in English? I’m like fine, Mr. Legislator, you take the test in French and we’ll see how well you do. My little girl was sitting there crying! She’s in sixth grade, and I’m like, this is insane!” This principal and others follow the mandates of the law, but have serious issues with the creation of the policy and some of its results. Table 8 includes more comments expressed by principals concerning the power of lawmakers:

Table 8

Hegemonic Power of Lawmakers

- “They (politicians) need to stay out of it or be supportive.”
- “Legislators have no clue what they are doing!”
- “Legislators have no clue about what we are doing!”
- Two principals questioned who was “at the table” during policy formation. If there were educators, were there practitioners or university folks because the two “have very different understandings and beliefs about how education works in the real world.”

These comments support the finding in the eyes of principals that lawmakers acted as powerful, hegemonic authorities when they created NCLB. Educators—including practitioners—must be included in policy decisions regarding their field of expertise as a step toward shared power, not hegemonic power, between the lawmaker and the schoolmaker.

Principals concede and are excited about how NCLB policy has caused them to look at the growth of individual students in new ways. However, the test as the standardized measure of success for all subgroups and children is not generally supported
and is an example of an area of expertise where lawmakers need to listen to schoolmakers. Of special education students in particular, rural elementary Principal Kinkead said:

If they [lawmakers] would realize that there are reasons why kids have IEP’s [Individual Education Plans]? I don’t care who it is, not every kid can meet or exceed that test. It doesn’t mean that every kid can’t achieve and every kid can’t do better year after year after year.

Principals say that a growth model would especially “honor the growth” special education students make and would be a better approach than pressuring them with senseless alternative assessments that do not emphasize life skills. Principal Holmes shared a story of one student for whom the test did not honor growth:

We had a girl who had a stroke and she had to take the alternative assessment test. We had to teach her to hold and make marks with a pencil--it took us a long time and all she did was make marks and the state counted it as her taking the test because we had to make those percentages. It was one of the most inane activities I'd ever been involved in at the time. What's the value to the people--how much more time could we be spending teaching her real world things? She couldn’t even have identified the word pencil—we put it in her hand.

As to the re-writing and reauthorization of NCLB, principals express a preference for the growth model. Suburban elementary Principal Raab said:

There should be a growth model that makes sense for individual kids. It shouldn't be based upon one test in a two-week time frame out of 175 days of the school year. If anybody thinks that is the way to go it is crazy.

Principals explain that when it comes to testing, “There is no way its a one size fits all. Its not the way we teach.” Table 9 shares what “schoolmakers” voice as alternatives to measuring AYP by only the ISAT test.
Table 9

*Schoolmakers Proposed Ideas for Measuring AYP*

| • Using differentiated assessments                                      |
| • Using more global questions, less specific                           |
| • Using the same kind of state assessment but different categories for students—ISAT, AYP, growth model kids |
| • Using formative assessments (quarterly, more than once a year at least) |
| • Using an individual assessment model based on the school where the school “has a say” |
| • Testing students’ cognitive ability and comparing that to what they are doing in the school |
| • Using a combination of standardized test, work samples, authentic assessments |

These schoolmakers have much to voice if lawmakers should choose to listen. Right now, only schoolmakers with power in the current system, because they maintain adequate yearly progress, can begin placing their energy on alternative measurements. School leaders are looking for a realistic measurement of achievement through a growth model. They do not mind high standards, but want a measurement that makes sense. Principals are hopeful that they, as schoolmakers and practitioners, will be included in the reauthorization conversation. It seems that lawmakers and schoolmakers have begun an interdependent story defining achievement and expectations in schools. This kind of interdependency occurs in colonization and is a means for sharing power. The hegemonic colonizer (lawmakers) needs the colonized schoolmaker to carry out the work of the policy. Shared power is also an important notion of neocolonialism where once a hegemonic power physically removes itself from the colonial space, the power is still present in culture and economic ties. I speculate this will be true for lawmakers and schoolmakers who will be limited through shared cultural and economic
interdependencies. Specific recommendations for the reauthorization of NCLB in light of this interdependency are presented in the concluding chapter.

Hybridity

In colonialism, power and voice are gained through Bhabha’s concept of hybridity, which is a tenet that forms the basis for my understanding of a syncretic space where school leaders operate as colonized-colonizers. “Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power” (Bhabha, 2001, p. 82) and it occurs as a result of shared power between the colonizer and colonized, where both are changed as a result of each other. The syncretic space is that part of the school leaders’ identity where a fusion of beliefs and actions occur as a result of this shared power. The next section on hybridity is deeply connected to the previous discussion on voice and power and is written in the hope that it will not be read separately from those ideas.

Principals mediate NCLB reform at the school and district levels. They play a middle manager role in districts, and carry out districts’ response to reform as well as their schools’ response. Principals have a position of power and responsibility as leaders of their schools. Their work influences the tone of school culture, priorities, and in this era, accountability practices. I found hybridity present in the professional identity of principals in three major ways. There was: (a) hybridity in principals’ understanding of being the filter for pressures caused by the policy, (b) hybridity in their belief system of the hegemonic priorities of schooling, and (c) hybridity in helping teachers discover a renewed professionalism.
Hybridity in being the filter for pressure. In the previous chapter, I discussed the ways principals cautiously share accountability data. They do so because they can as Principal Altenhoffen said, “get a lot more buy in and commit[ment] to the cause,” when they choose not to point a finger at their teachers for poor test scores. The ways principals talk and do not talk with their staff about what is happening big picture in the district, and the ways they set a tone for the school community, are two means of acting out hybridity as the filter for pressure. Suburban, elementary Principal Sandy shared:

I feel the pressure, but I am not going to tell people that. I am not going to promote that. You can't function in life when you have got that kind of pressure. Bottom line, we are doing a great job. We are fantastic here.

Some principals stated that part of their identity is to protect teachers who are easily threatened in their careers as professionals, “I try to shield them [teachers] from as much of that stuff that they don't need to hear,” said Principal Altenhoffen when speaking of district pressures he tries to avoid passing on to his staff. Deciding what to pass on or not, gives principals a position of power in their professional identity as leaders. They act as a middle manager between the districts’ response to policy and pressure and what they pass on to their teachers because of the hybridity they have as colonized-colonizers.

One way Principal Sandy responds to testing pressure is to only discusses the AYP tested areas of math and reading scores with his staff, though the students also test in science and writing:

It is reading and math; that is all I care about. I didn't even pass my writing scores on to my teachers. Don't worry about it! I know there is a reading connection with writing, I know reading and writing are connected, but our focus is reading and math, big-time, big-time.
Principal Sandy said he never talks with his staff about science, “Who cares?” he said. I did not press further to ask about social studies. He filters out the pressure of what is and what is not important for making the benchmark for AYP. Since only reading and math “count,” those are the scores he discusses. Principal Dollinger cautioned, “You have to be very sensitive to overwhelming your teachers,” an increasingly important part of principalship under NCLB. Being that filter for how much pressure is passed on to a teaching staff puts the principal in a position of power because of hybridity, where he or she may lead and control as the filter of pressure for his or her staff and school community.

Hybridity in adopting a belief system of the hegemonic priorities of schooling. A principal has to be, according to Principal Kinkead, “a good instructional leader and a good people leader” for his staff. In this role, principals have had to make shifts in how they act on their beliefs about what is important in schools during a time of increased accountability. With the exception of the “Academic Excellence” awarded high performing middle schools, principals discussed academic content priorities at their schools more than academics as tied to social-emotional priorities. This shift was a change in school priorities for some of them. For example, at Principal Ponto’s rural, elementary school he said there “used to be the value of teaching students reading to promote enjoyment of learning and love of books.” Instead, in response to the reading strategies and curriculum geared toward helping students pass the ISAT and make AYP in reading:
You see kids a lot less now just laying on the floor of their classroom with their feet up on something reading a really good book, and when it's lunchtime they don't want to go. You don't see that as much anymore-- as a matter of fact you see it all a lot less than we used to. You see a lot less of kids clutching books.

Instead students at his school read for Accelerated Reader (AR) program points and get tested on “pointless passages that require the lowest level of cognition possible” as Principal Ponto puts it. He does not agree with these changes, but they are incorporated into the ways he now leads at his school. Ultimately, he understands that reading now has to look and feel a certain way in order for his students to be successful on the ISAT. Since he wants success, he agrees to a priority on the AR program that his superintendent is fond of, as one way to achieve.

Principal Dollinger of a “successful” suburban school said, “If kids can’t read, sure we can have all these other programs, but if the kids can't read how much damage are we doing to that kid?” He sees reading as the number one priority, and believes that if NCLB went away, he “would not ever go away from what we are doing right now.” Prior to NCLB he believes reading was a priority, a “gateway skill,” but not the priority of schooling.

The culturally hegemonic priorities of math and reading under NCLB are undeniable. Here is an excerpt from Principal Sandy’s interview as a leader of what he describes as a “White-collar,” award winning, suburban elementary school:

I have never talked to my staff ever about science in a group meeting -- -- once in awhile we talk about it in grade level meetings, but we don't talk about science. Why would we waste our time with that? Because the public doesn't care about that--the public cares about reading and math (hits fist on desk to emphasize each word reading and math).
Me: But do you care about it?

Principal Sandy: Ahh, not as much as reading and math. No, that is my sole focus. When I get to test scores, the data, I am looking at those two. I don't have time for that [science]!

Principal Sandy was pragmatic and focused on his work as defined by the district, state, and federal policy. He expressed his love for his job and did not complain—he explained the truth as he saw it in this time. This principal’s conviction that the two content areas were his sole focus supports the postcolonial idea of representation, where the colonizing authority decides how the colonized are represented and the colonized begin to see themselves as that representation. This representation is hegemonic because it is determined by the colonizer and forced upon the colonized. Under NCLB, this principal has subjugated himself to the sole focus of test scores for reading and math, not science or anything else, and passed this subjugation on to his school community.

Principals shared ways they used their power as leaders to help move their teachers’ focus toward specific learning priorities, curricular changes, and development of more sophisticated interventions. Mr. Harbough says of his role as leader:

Part of it is you need to help find ways to bring them (teachers) in. That is where your role as a principal of knowing where the people you are working with are developmentally as adults and where they are in their lives.

The state and district do not have strong relationships with teachers like principals do. These relationships give the principal power to push, guide, and sometimes resist district initiatives with their staff. Principal Harbough, who was a year away from retirement at the time of the interview, shared that at his school “we kind of do things the Harbor Pointe School way.” He said, “When you have had that autonomy for so long and you’re
moving to a more directed thing [by the district and state], you don’t give it up as fast.” Suburban elementary Principal Ehlinger spoke of her ability to question the authority and direction in her district when she concluded decisions or issues do not make sense. She said she could do this because of her seniority and reputation and because she has, “been around a long time through several administrations in Washington and in her district.”

In a high performing middle school, Principal Scarpino talked about their “laser focus” on “social emotional standards” and their school’s priority of helping students deal with competitiveness and self-motivation. They spend a lot of time working on authentic assessment measures, teaching to concepts rather than topics and facts, and learning the difference between preparing for the ISAT test and other skills. Principal Scarpino, for example, was open with his students and teachers when it comes to learning how to write well:

We don't want forced writing. We want to teach our kids that there is a time and place for forced writing. The skill of doing it is one thing, but the other skill is recognizing when to use what type of writing [ISAT time versus other times].

This principal values that his students differentiate between the test as one writing situation and other academic and real-world applications for which writing is used; he justifies instructing his students in “forced” writing, but has the power to say that is not the only type of writing promoted at his school. Principal Harbough’s elementary school staff resisted a district initiative to use Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) as another means for documenting and analyzing data. He declared that his school already had a functioning behavior program, and that PBIS would be doing something “just to do it.” Principals display hybridity in their belief system about the hegemonic priorities of
schooling when they know on the one hand what is really important (i.e. love of books, hands-on science, and so forth), but on the other hand use their power to survive as a successful school under the new belief system priorities (i.e. focus on certain styles of writing, focus on science as part of reading).

**Hybridity in helping teachers discover a renewed professionalism.** For the most part, principals seem to view the work of their teachers as professionals and see a leadership role in helping them renew their professionalism in the context of NCLB. Many principals see Response to Intervention (RTI) as an opportunity to increase teacher and leader professionalism. Principal Kohl said his middle school teachers were always doing “interventions,” and then they went to an RTI conference. He said, “We were already doing it. We will call it RTI! We will call it whatever you want!” He argues that his teachers have always been professional; and his role is to help them learn to display that professionalism in terms of providing documentation and evidence of learning.

Principal Dollinger, from a suburban elementary school, said:

I just think there has been such a quick buy in to the RTI mentality. What better way to empower me as a teacher, because now we are saying *I am it!* You talk about professionalism and respect!

At her high-achieving elementary school, Principal Sowers did not think the teachers were living up to their professional potential, especially in teaching writing. When she was hired at the school, students were in the 93rd percentile for math and reading, but only 56 percent met expectations for writing. She said, “I think they stopped writing or something!” This semester, “The teachers voice to me that I make them do writing way too much. I think, really? Shouldn’t you be doing writing every day?” She says of herself,
“So I have the high expectations,” and she recognizes a difference in leverage with teachers between her former and current schools. In Principal Sower’s former school and district she had a reconstituted situation with almost all new, non-tenured teachers. In her new building though, “Teachers can do whatever they want with me because they are tenured. When they are not tenured, they better watch it a little bit more. You know what I mean?” Finding ways to move her staff toward her vision of a renewed professionalism will be slow going until they trust her, she confesses.

Regarding professionalism, principals said a tighter more prescribed curriculum may help some teachers become more professional about the expectations and results of their work, “The way instruction is delivered is becoming much more prescribed,” said Principal Harbough. Elementary Principal Sandy noted that his new, non-tenured teachers tend to like prescribed curriculum because it is part of their professional development training. Principal Harbough explained, “If you're presenting a program with fidelity, I think you become more prescriptive in saying, ‘This is the way you need to do things so we know this approach has been used correctly.’” Middle school Principal Scarpino said:

In some cases, the structure is necessary to make sure that kids are getting a guaranteed curriculum because there are many teachers who are doing—here are a few of my favorite things—teaching whatever they choose to teach. I have seen it, I have witnessed it, I have experienced it. That is the way I grew up. That is the kind of education that we got. You get dinosaurs five years in a row, so we really tried to focus on our guaranteed curriculum. We try to do it K-12 so we are trying to get rid of the inefficiencies, the wasted school-time instruction.

These principals see part of their professional identity as leading staff to become new professionals. In the NCLB era that often means veteran teachers must change. Principals need buy-in from their entire staff to make effective changes in professional instruction.
Buy-in is part of the colonized-colonizer role and is not “bad” per se, just a part of helping staff members make mindshifts and changes. When a principal seeks buy-in, she uses her position of power as a colonizer to help her staff see the direction they need to go in order to gain power in a colonized system. Principal Raab had the perspective of formerly leading one of his district’s struggling “Title1” schools. He currently leads a higher achieving elementary school in his suburban district. About his former school he says:

Perceptive staffs early on think, "If our fifth graders are not meeting the benchmark, that is not just the fifth and fourth-grade teachers responsibility, but the third, second, first, and kindergarten. It is like that here. The kindergarten teachers feel responsible for how the fifth grade students do [on the test]. I think if you have these kinds of feelings, you lessen feelings of unprofessionalism because you see yourself as part of a whole, not just, “I am only a kindergarten teacher.”

To promote professionalism, principals have helped teachers discover ways to get to “know the kids” through the data which has not been as intuitive as getting to know them on a social-emotional level. Principal Kohl said, “This getting to know the kids is still the priority--it is just opened up the knowing [of students] in a new way through the data.” Offering support to their teachers as renewed professionals is a goal of all the leaders interviewed. Principal Messerly summed up the feelings of the focus group of small-urban principals by saying, “The reality is, even if we're brokering it, they're [teachers] feeling teaching to be a very different job than it was 20 years ago.” Principals have a guiding role in these professional growth areas for their teachers and themselves. Thus principals have gained power when they sometimes ratify and sometimes resist reform mandates into their school practices. This hybridity results in schools being
different from what they were in the past. Principals shape a future based on new growth and understanding of a community of practice as well as renewed professionalism.

**Othering**

NCLB identifies subgroups of children not to be “left behind.” How much has the policy helped, hindered, or maintained the status quo of subgroups within school communities of practice and society in general? In one suburban district, I talked with Principal Dollinger who, like Principal Raab, was currently working at a more affluent, high achieving elementary school, after transferring from one of the most challenging, least affluent elementary school in town. Of AYP, Principal Dollinger said, “Society is okay with AYP as long as their kids make it and others don't. That's more [resources, prestige, advantages, etc.] for them.” He said that, “Parents target [meaning they want to attend] here [his current school] for a lack of subgroup. ‘These kids’ they don't want to be around ‘those kids.’ I hear it all the time.” He said that parents get concerned when “their kids” have to go on to a middle school with low SES and African-American students, and he says that this thinking is just “the way society is.” I pressed Principal Dollinger by briefly explaining the concept of “othering” to him. I then asked him to talk more about perceptions of subgroups. Was “othering” something he agreed with? He responded:

I remember vividly when all this started with No Child Left Behind and the subgroups started popping up. Subgroup [laughing, realizing]--that in itself is a connotation. When we say subgroups no one thinks White--no one thinks of White! When we say subgroups we think of Black, Hispanic, we think of Special Ed, low SES, ELL. Anyway, when that all came out I remember the thought of having to do something to kids. That goes down the road of othering people, right? We have to “do” something to “these” kids?
In another district, Principal Messerly shared her awareness of the importance of school assignments:

Because you as a district want to make AYP, you want to be very conscientious about the balance of programs and students in various schools. If you can avoid a 90 percent free and reduced school, if you can avoid a school that is high minority or special education, you want to distribute those services.

Principal Messerly said her district administration understands that too many ELL or special education or low SES students in one school makes a subgroup, and “we know it is more difficult to make AYP the more subgroups a school has.” Is “distributing kids” a form of othering? Principal Sandy explains that, “You have a school that has 90 percent of the students meeting standards but they're not making AYP because a subgroup didn't make the standard? The paradox there points to: we need to review this.” Can a school still be successful when a subgroup is not meeting standards? Under NCLB that school does not make AYP and that district does not make AYP. How does the community view that subgroup then? Principal Sandy also said, when a kid walks through the door, they belong to his school, no matter what his subgroup status is. Principals told me that with RTI their staff has shifted its focus to individual learning and growth as a priority over the ISAT score. These were however, principals of schools that were already making AYP.

Principal Messerly, whose middle school has not make AYP because of her special education subgroup’s reading score worries:

The fall-out [of not making AYP] looks different in some districts. In some districts there are threats where if principals don't make it, they don't get a raise or those kinds of things. And how sad the day would come where people don't want to work with diverse populations because they can't afford to. You would hate to see that ever come to be.
Principal Messerly recalls:

When NCLB kicked in, you didn’t want to penalize a school because they happen to be the host for ELL or the special education population. You know, you’ve got the schools that are sort of taking on all those programs and those programs have an impact. They’re also having a test score and an academic impact. Folks, regular curriculum students’ families, aren’t going to want their kid to go there because it’s a school that’s not performing well when in fact their hosting a lot of additional programs that would impact test scores.

Districts, principals, and even families seem to be well aware of who is an “Other” and who is a “regular” student. Urban, middle school Principal Kohl came right out and said, “There are sometimes when we think we will not get above that bar [AYP benchmark] because of the kids that we have. And we would blame it on the kids we have, and their parents.” Under NCLB the “Other” seems to “continually produce its’ slippage” and make “its” difference from the authority. Principal Kohl admitted his school community of practice might even blame the “Other” for school failure. This is the same school community that the principal thought was moving away from a mindset of deficit thinking toward struggling students. However, when put back into a pressure-filled situation of making the benchmark for AYP, the principal speculates that the school community would “Other” these same struggling children. Principals said of themselves and their teachers that they do their very best with every student they have, but they still know who their “Other” children are. Through the rise of RTI, NCLB policy may get away from the focus on subgroup “Othering” and concentrate on individual students so that “no student” (singular rather than group of students) is left behind.

**Stereotyping the other.** Stereotypes keep “the Other” known and predictable. Educators buy-into the stereotypical idea of themselves when their professionalism is
called into question. “If we want to be professionals--we have to be accountable just like other professionals are expected to be,” said suburban, elementary Principal Ehlinger of herself and her staff. She stereotypes what a professional is and that her teachers need to act in “that” way. Several principals joked about how curriculum alignment and standards helped more teachers away from their “pet” or superfluous units. A common sentiment was “butterflies were taught three grade levels in a row.” This was said with an undercurrent that the standards and vertical alignment were taking care of all of that nonsense teaching.

It appeared that principals almost stereotyped their teachers as not being equipped to communicate with each other about “tough” curriculum matters without the help of district or state standards and alignment. I questioned how much of that is true? I can think of many reasons why, to someone it might “look” like butterflies were casually being taught three consecutive years when, in reality, a group of teachers could be purposefully scaffolding major scientific concepts using the same insect to build depth of knowledge and transfer: Year 1) Define what is an insect, Year 2) Understand insects’ life cycle, and Year 3) Understand insects’ as connected to the environment (pollination, migration). Are we as a society certain that teachers and schools really “needed” all of this “help?” The need for a prescribed curriculum goes back to teacher stereotypes, and the idea that teachers are not professional enough to know what or how to teach. This has the metaphor of colonization’s manifest-destiny written all over it.

Principal Scarpino, the affluent, award-winning middle school leader explains how at his school, “teachers allow kids to choose their assessment--do you want to do
performance-based, paper and pencil, some artistic thing?” They build their curriculum all around the idea of transfer. “It’s all about transfer, if you can transfer knowledge to a different application then you understand the concept.” His students’ assessment questions look nothing like an ISAT question, but rather like a challenging high school essay prompt. His social studies example was: What was the impact of World War II on the economy in the United States and world? One stereotype Principal Scarpino seems to hold is that his teachers and his students are more capable of the complex thinking involved in planning for a curriculum based on concepts than “Other” children. Principal Scarpino said he could have these kinds of assessments in his school because of the resources they have and because they attract the best-of-the-best teachers. His implication is that Other schools or districts could not use these high quality assessments because they do not have the resources, including human resources like wealthy, fairly homogeneous students and the best teachers. When I asked him if the state could use these kinds of questions, he replied, “I don’t know…no.” When I pressed him and asked, “Why not?” He was curt and said, “I don’t have the answer to the assessment question.”

Principal Scarpino clearly had the answer to the assessment question at his school; however, he seemed to believe that those assessments would not work with “Other” children. This kind of stereotyping around achievement perpetuates the marginalization and oppression of the “Other.” All children need the opportunity and skills involved in global assessments and a curriculum that emphasizes concepts, essential questions, and transfer. This requires resources that those like Principal Scarpino has, but “Others” do not.
Mimicry

In postcolonial theory, mimicry serves as a point of power between the colonizer and colonized. A colonized subject mimics to gain power, but the colonizer always makes a distinction between itself and the colonized. The colonized constantly display their Otherness and never fully conform to that of the hegemonic authority. The authority establishes a system where the colonized can only resemble the colonizer, but never completely change.

The overriding illustration of mimicry in the interviews was in reference to the 2014 mandate that 100 percent of students must make AYP. As the principals have said, “this is statistically impossible.” So, if left alone, in 2014, our public school system will be “failing” under NCLB. What about private schools? They are not subject to required testing—so does that mean they are successful? Does that mean they will be viewed as successful and the public schools, teachers, and students will be viewed as failures? Principals have already figured out what is and is not useful, feasible, and rational about NCLB is clear: (a) schools are now paying attention to individual students’ growth and RTI, (b) schools are attuned to subgroups of children and interventions needed to help them learn, (c) schools are prepared to meet high expectations for instruction and be accountable for student learning. Through mimicry, they have begun to adopt and make these points of clarity their own.

Menace. Principals mimic the success of AYP in their schools whether they have been making it all along, have begun to make it, or are working to make AYP. Is this success “enough” for them? Principals resoundingly answered, “no,” but the strategies
they employ to make adequate yearly progress and to tool their curriculum to match the
skills students need on the test say “yes.” Principals expressed an astute outlook on their
definition of success as shared previously. This outlook encompassed much more than
just ISAT data. *They* know what is valuable in their school and to their students. This
knowledge gives them power over the authority and is an example of menace. Of his
higher achieving suburban, elementary school, Principal Harbough said:

> We have such a better handle on what the kids are about besides the ISAT. If you
> have assessments that go on every week! You have a test that kids take in March
> and you get the results in September, who cares? It doesn't matter. And if that kid
> meets or exceeds, you say, “That's awesome,” but lets say the kid still can't read.
> So it [ISAT] is not a tool that I think drives instruction very effectively. It is just
> one aspect. If you are doing your job at a school, it is just one indicator, but far
> from the most valuable indicator. Teachers’ experiences with kids, week-to-week
> assessment, *that* is what is valuable.

Of AYP, Principal Kohl explains:

> To be honest, I think if we were not making it I think it would be horrible, but
> since we are making it, I think it is a good thing! You know what I mean? I have
> always thought if you have something better that comes along, that is fine.

The menace of the principals to the creators of NCLB is that the ISAT is no longer a
viable measurement of success to them, even though it is still an important measure in the
public eye.

**Mockery.** When principals use words like “crazy,” “insane,” and “nuts,” to
describe aspects of the policy or the lawmakers themselves, they mock the policy from
their insider perspective. Principals’ mockery is not necessarily intended as such, this is
the metaphor *I* am applying to it. Here are a few examples of mockery.

When it comes to implementing the district initiative of scheduling as a way to
prioritize reading, Principal Raab did not seem too concerned when he shared:
Me: Since NCLB have your teachers had to balance their instruction time any differently?

Principal Raab: I can only tell you that the district has assigned time frames for instruction.

Me: Were these mandated?

Principal Raab: Yes, they [teachers] are to adhere to that and they have to turn in their schedules every year. Now whether or not they hold to that--I mean, you fluctuate your schedule based on your kids needs.

When asked if his teachers were “worried” about not making AYP, Principal Dollinger explained:

I don't know. I still maintain that right now the state doesn't have enough people to follow through with what the problems are. In five years, can you imagine? Everybody's going to be failing! So there's nobody to monitor this, so I don't lose a whole lot of sleep on it because I know where the state board's staff has gone. It has gone down [in numbers]. They've cut people-- they don't have people to monitor this and make any type of meaningful change. They never have, and I learned that a long time ago.

Principal Ponto says the ISAT test itself is flawed:

After the test starts, I'll suddenly get a notice that something’s been printed wrong, something is wrong. It could be any multitude of things; it happens every year. So again, if the folks [principal pounds his fist] who make the tests are held to the same accountability as the kids who are taking the test--come on there is a problem!

Suburban Principal Ehlinger confesses about her higher-achieving school, “My school has been fortunate, because my scores have always been high. Seventy percent would be kind of low for us.” The view that the bar is set too low for some schools and will eventually be set too high for nearly all schools is a form of mockery of the notion of adequate yearly progress and is evidence of mimicry.
Double vision. Double vision is a position of the colonized which “disrupts the authority” of the colonizer. Good educators know their work, and know what makes sense for learning. These educators are a menace and a threat because they are the authority—though NCLB has become the authority in namesake. One principal shared his thoughts specifically about the science portion of the ISAT test. Principal Ponto is a former science teacher, with a passion for Earth Science. He is an expert in hands-on learning and has a “double vision” of the ISAT as a test that does not measure students’ understanding, but rather the ability to memorize. His position as an expert science educator poses a “threat” and a “menace” to the authority of the policy and the usefulness of the standardized test at large. Principal Ponto’s comment below is loaded with voice, power, and double vision:

All the ISAT does is measure regurgitation of facts. It is the theory of regurgitory learning! All they [students] are doing is regurgitating facts; that is all the ISAT is. There is nothing on the ISAT test about why something is the way it is. There is a question on the fourth-grade science test [not a portion of the test measured for AYP] about tides. All they had to do is know that tides make the ocean level go up and down-- there is no discussion of what causes the tides to do that, why is it different in some areas, the whole earth-moon relationship is left out of it completely! All they have to know is the facts. What do you call the process where plants generate food? Photosynthesis. They [students] can have no understanding of photosynthesis whatsoever-- they can never have done any transpiration experiment on plants, anything. All they have to do is know the facts. There is a question on there about which planet Earth is from the moon and it is always like, first, second, third, fourth. Well, so what? What effect does that have on the planet? Why does that make this planet suitable for life?

We have outstanding science scores on the ISAT test--I will put our scores up and we'll have 98 percent of our fourth graders meet or exceed standards, and they are phenomenal. I'm not convinced that's a good thing, because what that tells me is that our kids are learning a lot of facts. But are they learning anything beyond the facts? Science is about understanding; it's not about facts. I don't care if you can name all the planets, and I don't care if you can name all colors of the spectrum. I don't care about any of that. Do they understand when they use a prism that light
is broken down into parts? Do they understand what that means? Can they explain after looking a prism, why the sky is blue? The ISAT has nothing to do with that. I don't know how you would have a state standardized test that measures that--I am not sure that it’s possible.

In this example of double vision, Principal Ponto has so much double vision that he can question whether his students’ high science test score is a good thing, but he does not have enough authority to stop the teaching of facts. His students need to know facts to do well on the ISAT science portion and meet standards. Though he continues to promote hands-on learning and experimentation in the sciences, his students still have to know the answers to multiple-choice questions.

**Translation.** Under NCLB, model “successful” schools are promoted through awards, AYP, and not being held under the stigma or constraint of sanctions. Model schools, or schools that are “successful,” have a variety of reasons for their success. Overall principals said school communities should do the best they can with what they have, but also referred to the IIRC Internet site as a way to compare their school to other “like” schools. This site allows principals to see how other schools with similar demographics are performing and to learn more about how they compare with other schools in the state that are meeting or struggling to meet AYP.

One question I asked principals was: What do you think about the notion of model schools? Some of their summarized responses are below (Table 10).
Table 10

Model Schools

- Having a “model school mentality” separates people in your district—“it’s a has and has not kind of thing we avoid.”
- Doing something for the sake of doing it rather than, “Does it make sense for kids at our school?”
- But you can compare all the school in Illinois and you can compare what people come and visit us see is, fifty percent of the students here 700 have free reduced lunch, Forty-eight point six are minority, the largest being African American at forty percent and growing Asian population. Twenty-one percent have an IEP so one out of five kids walking in my hallway has an individual education plan. And then when you look at our data and you see that six years ago 16.1 percent of African American kids met or exceeded math and last year 76 percent. Then you can look at the same for special ed. Then people go, “Woo, there is something special here that’s good and is making a difference.”
- Visitations are great; you get a lot of great ideas. We visit all the time, we have our teachers go out, come back, and report. Other schools visit us—that's great. But, you are not visiting to say who's better, you are visiting to collaborate, get ideas, and talk.
- One of our principals, was the leader in this (curriculum initiative). He had seen it and tried it in his building; then I took some of my teachers over to his building when they were doing it and they thought well we can do that. So it was just a matter of bringing it back, and selling it to the rest of the staff.
- I don't think we are doing anything that is rocket science; we are just trying to figure out what works in our school. It may not work in another school, but I do believe that the strategy of getting kids connected to school will help any kid.
- What we are doing, is right on track with what you were supposed to be doing. Sometimes you get in a school, and you are in your own little world and cocoon and not sure if what you are doing is making a difference. Then, when you go away to another school, you see... they are not doing it? They are still doing whole class round robin of reading? It makes you feel good about what you are doing.

Translating ideas and programs from model schools was an accepted and common strategy for principals, but was not a dominant method in their attempts to make adequate yearly progress. Although they had all accepted and translated the concept of making the benchmark of AYP as part of what makes a successful school under NCLB (as principal data showed in the previous chapter under the theme of success), they were not as
concerned with what was working at other schools as what was working in their own school community of practice.

**Resemblance.** Schools that routinely make AYP receive awards such as the “Spotlight School Award” for schools with a certain percentage of low-income students who make gains or the “Academic Excellence Award” for three consecutive years of scoring over 90 percent on the ISAT. Principals referred to Academic Excellence schools as “high performing” schools. Principals felt these schools were recognized by the state as top schools and viewed by the public as successful places of learning. In some ways high performing schools “resemble” private schools—where success by the public is assumed. Principal Ponto considered it unfair to require low SES, high minority, under-resourced urban schools to resemble and be measured in the same way, with the same outcomes, as his rural, homogenous, high SES population. As we conducted our interview, his district was in the process of building a new multi-million dollar school complex.

Why are my test scores being compared to an elementary school in East St. Louis? Why is that fair? Does that mean there are bad teachers in every school in East St. Louis? I bet they're the most wonderful, hard-working, dedicated people you could ever work with. Instead of being punished, they ought to be given a medal for coming in there every day through metal detectors and working there to help kids. Let's put some more resources in there. We seem to have a trillion dollars to bail out banks. Maybe we ought to be getting low functioning schools a lot more reading teachers and home interventionists and social workers, and whatever else they need!

Principal Ponto understood that his school and an urban school could not resemble one another considering the state and federal current funding structure. He recognized the unfairness of requiring and comparing an urban school to resemble his in terms of AYP.
Diaspora

Diaspora involves the removal of a people from their homeland and/or culture. Diaspora is often a result of war as a colonizing people push into the space of the colonized, such as the event of Native Americans in the United States. Migration of students from a failing home school to a school that is not failing is an option in NCLB. This option appears to be unworkable as AYP increases toward 100 percent, especially as noted by principals, at larger schools like high schools and urban schools. I would also include rural schools that are many miles apart. Principals discussed student movement and re-movement as well as teacher and leader movement and re-movement. Some of their statements are summarized in Table 11.

Table 11

Diaspora in Staffs and Students

Diaspora in Staffing: Teacher and Leader Re-movement

- If a principal doesn’t make AYP several years in a row in her former district, “It can be a job change for some people. It’s a reality.”
- As a principal coming into a failing school—“You might need to look at shaking up the staff somehow.”
- In one story, shared by Principal Messerly, her district administration wanted a reconstituted school that would have “a recommitment to serving this particular school, under this particular mindset, and basically everyone had to re-interview for their positions, and if you didn't get a job there, you were assigned a job somewhere else in the district if you were a tenured teacher. So if you happen to be an administrator where people are really struggling to get on board--your staff--to make AYP --this shift (reconstituting a failing school is) is a quick and easy way to get that to happen.”
- Teachers who cannot make the necessary changes are viewed as negative influences and “chose to move on.”
- After staff voted on an issue, the principal said, “If you don’t like this you can transfer.”

(continued)
Diaspora in Staffing: Teacher and Leader Re-movement

- Principal Messerly rationalizes with her small, urban middle school staff each spring, “There are easier places to teach than our school” and some staff inevitably leave.
- In one district they gave bonuses to retire veteran teachers and principals early, giving the district an opportunity to hire new staff under NCLB who were more highly qualified.

Student Diaspora

- Students getting pulled out of class for support services/interventions “may be stigmatized and miss what is in class” but also “they may get the help they need.”
- “If we go to a system where kids get to choose which school they go to, then those kids could end up at our school.”
- NCLB support fails when it does not give resources to the failing school but instead is “shipping our kids for tutoring services.”
- Principal Harbough from an affluent, suburban elementary school tells this story of an at-risk transfer student from Chicago Public Schools, “Her mom got her kid out of the city and brought her here. She was with us about a year, and she picked up four years in reading. She left here reading almost at grade level. I saw the other day the list from the middle school honor roll, and she was on that. We are missing kids, but so much of that is tied to opportunity. This young lady was able to come in with us, everybody else was reading 90 percent above grade level, so we were able to throw a lot of resources at her. She saw, ‘This is the way it is supposed to be.’ About half way through the year, she realized she had some talent. I think her mom realized it too… she got her out of a tough situation (Chicago Public Schools). Well it is impossible for thousands of people to come to us like that. That's where things need to happen in our urban centers, to help those kids. The pressures are huge and the amount of resources needed is huge, and I don't know if the American people have the tested fortitude to do it.”
- Principal Dollinger formerly led at a low performing school in the district and now works in a high performing school and says, “That's the problem-- some parents don't want to move out of their home school. I'd say 90 percent of them don't want to move out. When I was at my old school, my kids most in need absolutely loved their school. They would never go across town to this school because you are not going to break down that social class issue. They are not going to be comfortable in this setting, so you can give them all the choice you want, but they are not going to take it.”

Diaspora is one of the most tragic of postcolonial concepts because it involves Others loosing parts of their identity. When a principal complains that his students get “shipped”
for tutoring students as a sanction of NCLB, he is saying his school community of practice is not considered qualified to teach his students. This has a negative impact on his professional identity as an effective leader. When a principal is put in a position of power by his district to be able to say to his staff, “If you don’t like this you can transfer,” concerning curriculum adoptions in a time of increased accountability, he expresses that power in a frustrating reality. This frustration comes out in the comment because the principal knows for some of his teachers, who philosophically do not agree with the curriculum adoption or changes, transferring to another district is the only option for them to remain true to their calling. In my own experience as a teacher at a newly reconstituted school, it was devastating to see the children walk in the first day of classes and search unsuccessfully for the familiar faces of former teachers they loved so much. The teachers who were removed from the reconstituted school were equally devastated and out of place in new school communities, and I remember feeling bitterness from them toward our newly hired staff when we would meet as an entire district. I was able to get to know a few of the teachers who used to work at the school, and they had a longing and passion for the children and families who they had been removed from serving.

When one of the interviewed principals talked about the “love” a school community has for a school, it is no different than the love students and families have toward their own “failing” schools. This principal who talked about the very idea of students from his former, low socio-economic school using the option under NCLB to attend his current high socio-economic school as absurd. He said that social class issues would not be broken down, but I think he meant that the strong cultural values families
have at his former school would not necessarily be honored by the cultural values at his current school. He knows students will lose part of their identity by leaving their home-school setting where there is a rich heritage of community pride and comfort, a school attended by their parents, and in many cases grandparents. There is something amiss and discriminatory with the NCLB sanction where students from “failing” schools are always the ones told to move.

**Summary to Postcolonial Findings**

As a researcher, I am very familiar postcolonial theory and the metaphor I constructed around colonization. From the interviews, I see ways the theory helps frame and understand data. At times I wrote about my understandings of aspects of the theory as related to examples from data. Part of my purpose was to test and challenge the metaphor of colonization as related to NCLB. To close this section, I take the principles from postcolonial theory (as discussed in the chapter) and offer brief points to demonstrate how the metaphor might *not* work or apply.

For power and voice, I presented findings showing the hegemonic power of lawmakers to determine what should be prioritized in the school curriculum. I also discussed power and voice in school communities concerning AYP. Some might argue the era of NCLB and increasing accountability ends the time of hegemonic power residing in the *classroom* teacher. Giving the entire *country* a “say” in how schools operate is part of our federal system of governing. Schools previously autonomous are now held publicly accountable. Today schools have transparency within their
communities and states. Thus, one could argue, federal lawmakers were not colonizers; they needed to intervene in light of a slow, unaccountable failing education system. They acted on behalf of those without historic power. They intended to support the school system by improving it for all children. After all, requiring teachers to be highly qualified increases their potential for teaching and for students’ improvement. Requiring school districts to be accountable for the achievement of all students is what the work of schools should be in our “Land of Opportunity.”

The findings on hybridity showed how principals’ function as filters of pressure and as middle managers between the mandates and stresses at the school district and state levels and their own school community of practice. Some might argue, however, this is not hybridity, it is just a function of how school communities constantly morph and change in response to different educational waves and trends. Thus, one might argue, NCLB is not unprecedented when it comes to making changes. Educators inherently embrace the challenge of bettering their practice, learning how to work with each student, and forging ahead because of research-based programs.

In the findings on othering, I shared stories and data that show how subgroups of children are Othered under NCLB policy, how they have the potential to be blamed for failing schools. However, NCLB advocates might say because subgroups have been historically overlooked and mistreated in some parts of society and in some schools, the policy had to focus on subgroups. African-American, low SES, ELL, and special education students have been discriminated against in a one-size-fits-all education system where the achievement gap was/is horrendous. Subgroup students and families now have
this unfairness exposed as a result of NCLB and are able to hold teachers and schools accountable for teaching and learning. Finally, communities are forced to recognize subgroups as being a part of their school because they “count” as a part of a school’s adequate yearly progress.

Mimicry was presented in the data in several ways, through menace, mockery, double vision, resemblance, and translation. I shared multiple layers of mimicry, from principals learning how to navigate power and success in a colonized system, to using that power as a way to mock the system and rules within it. NCLB policymakers might argue that educators are not mimicking success, they are failing or achieving now that a clear benchmark has been established. They must be accountable for measurable success on a standardized test. There is nothing to “mimic,” there is just the reality of what is successful or unacceptable. Although the benchmark may be difficult for some districts to achieve, that does not mean educators should not give it their best try and figure out how to succeed. The reality that some schools will fail to make AYP increases the need for government support and intervention.

Diaspora was presented from data showing ways students and educators have experienced forced movement from their home schools or districts into other places of schooling or in the case of some educators, different career paths. One might read this section and think students do not lose their culture or norms when they leave their school; rather, they gain an opportunity to share being successful in an achieving school. Teachers who leave a school may move to a learning situation that is a better professional match for them and for their system of teaching. One might say, no student is forced to
move under NCLB, they have a choice. Teachers whose schools are reconstituted and forced to move had the choice to teach in a way that students could be successful and choose not to take the necessary steps.

These counterarguments to the data presented are, in my mind, both valid and expandable depending on one’s point of view. However, they are hypothetical and do not arise from the data. I include them in this findings section because they represent statements I did not find in the interviews. Data supporting these ideas could be explored with principals with more background on the postcolonial framework. In the concluding chapter, I continue to share ideas for further study.
Chapter 6
Discussion

In Chapter One, I shared my view that because NCLB reform has a significant impact on educators’ professional identity because of dramatic pedagogical and structural changes in schools (Day, 2007), school leaders’ perspectives of their professional identity and these changes needs to be studied and discussed. Gaining greater understanding of the professional identity of educators and ways they respond to school reform is an important growing body of research (Beijaard et al., 2000; Day, 2002). Investigation about principals’ professional identity in an era of NCLB and the impact reform has on schooling, contributes to a gap in the literature. Teacher identity in response to reform policy is beginning to be understood, but not school leader identity (Sloan, 2000).

In Chapter One, I presented the study’s purpose to explore: (a) the professional identity of school leaders as shaped under the mandates and constraints of No Child Left Behind; (b) school leaders’ perspectives of the rewards, benefits, pressures, and tensions faced in schools and districts as a result of NCLB; and (c) how these perspectives have an impact on leaders’ professional identity. The central research question asked how school leaders respond to the constraints and pressures of No Child Left Behind as negotiated by their professional identity and I also sought to understand how school leaders’ understand their professional identity and how educators respond to the rewards, benefits, constraints, and pressures of their school districts in a time of NCLB policy reform. In chapter one I shared my personal position, and the theoretical framework of
postcolonialism and professional identity in a time of school reform that guided my study.

In Chapter Two, I presented a review of literature drawing on both identity and postcolonial theories, and proposed a metaphor of colonization using some of the tenets of postcolonialism. I explained that the reason for sharing literature on identity was to lay a foundation for understanding the *professional* identity of school leaders as part of communities of practice in an era of NCLB. The basis for sharing the literature on postcolonial theory was to build a framework from which to use the metaphor of colonization. I shared how postcolonialism shapes the lives of most people in the world today and how the power and ideology of colonization has a lasting impact (Ashcroft et al., Eds., 2002). I proposed NCLB to be a reified object or thing with power over the work in school communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). In these communities of practice, school principals lead and develop a sense of professional identity critical to understanding the impact of school reform (Beijaard et al., 2000; Day et al., 2005).

In Chapter Three, I discussed the research methodology as qualitative. Using a semi structured interview format that was open-ended and conversational (Patton, 2002) and focus groups that allowed for further exploration of the interview data in a more interactive setting (Morgan, 1997) were my methods. I explained how I used a snowball sampling technique to recruit interview participants, beginning with people who were well-known to me as a means to pass along a participation invitation (Creswell, 2005). I described my data analysis as coded in two levels, first openly-coded to the main research questions in the study and second, coded to components of postcolonial theory. This
coding analysis was done using the well-known software program *NVivo* which enabled me to create and use labels for assigning meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to data.

In Chapters Four and Five, I shared findings from the data related to the study’s purpose and research questions. In Chapter Four, data were presented with identity theory in mind and as coded openly into two major themes: change and success. Chapter Five flipped the focus back to postcolonial theory and findings were shared in light of this framework. The metaphor was explored both from the data and my understanding of colonization taken from the data. In this final Chapter Six, I begin with an overview of my study and then offer my interpretations of the findings as related to the literature and theoretical framework. I conclude the chapter by making three policy recommendations, a brief proposal for extending the study and future research, and some personal study reflections.

**Discussion**

In response to the rewards, benefits, constraints and pressures of NCLB, principals’ professional identity has changed and continues to change as the impact of NCLB policy reform increases in scope and degree. I now discuss the changes principals identified during the interviews and focus groups incorporating the literature, theoretical framework, and my personal position as an educator and researcher.

**Impact of NCLB policy on the professional identity of school leaders.** The first part of the framework for the study used identity theory to understand the
professional identity of leaders in a time of NCLB reform. Here is the figure from chapter one, used to situate this summarizing professional identity discussion.

Figure 4. Tenets of identity theory.

The literature says, “Teachers’ perceptions of their own professional identity affect their efficacy and professional development as well as their ability and willingness to cope with educational change and to implement innovations in their own teaching practice” (Beijaard et al., 2000, p. 750). Since research says this is true for teachers, my study supports a parallel affect on school leaders. Coping with educational change has intensified greatly under NCLB. My findings show that the areas of greatest change in their work and professional identity as principals include use of data, classroom instruction, Response to Intervention, and staffing changes. All these changes, in some way, relate back to the reality of making the benchmark for AYP and getting beyond that data point to the real work of meeting the needs of individual students.

I found that the professional identity of leaders in an era of NCLB is data driven. This data driven identity puts them in a position of having been colonized by NCLB as
well as colonizing for NCLB within their communities of practice. Principals lead their school communities of practice through shared experiences under NCLB (Wenger, 1998). Success depends on their ability to manage and interpret data as evidence of student learning and achievement. This change in identity has not been “all-bad” or “all-good,” but has complexities and tensions (Sloan, 2006) that may inhibit or enhance professional conversations of teaching and learning.

Principals, as a part of communities of practice, shape experiences in schools and the interpretation of those experiences through the social relationship with others (Wenger, 1998). Success and/or failure has become an integral experience for most school communities concerning AYP. Leaders of schools meeting or not meeting the benchmark for AYP interpret success by negotiating their identity with the other participants in their school community of practice. The story one focus group shared of what it was like to get back ISAT scores and how other principals reveal those scores in a staff meeting or to the community, is an example of negotiating the meaning of an identity of success for individuals and the group.

Some principals provided examples of the “nexus of multimembership” where aspects of identity are at the same time tied to a community of practice and at the same time separate (Wenger, 1998). When principals take on the position of colonizers within schools as part of their syncretistic work, for example, to “nudge” a necessary curriculum change, counsel a teacher out of the profession, or mandate a focus on hegemonic priorities—they unify the syncretic space of their professional identity as defined by the community of practice.
The postcolonial framework. The second part of the framework in the study used the metaphor of colonization to provide a unique look at the data to interpret ideas of postcolonial theory as applied to leaders in a time of NCLB reform. Below is the figure from chapter one, used to situate this summarizing postcolonial discussion.

Figure 5. Tenets of postcolonial theory.

The notion of the “time” of colonization beginning prior to the physical occupation of a colony (Slemon, 1991) was supported when a principal said of the government, “Once they get their fingers in something, they're never going to let go.” This principal remembers the United States Department of Education in the 1980’s, the time when the federal government began inscribing its power over the field of education. NCLB originates with President Bush, that department, and from the U.S. Congress directly.

Postcolonial theory teaches that while power “may manifest itself in a show and application of force, it is equally likely to appear as the disinterested purveyor of cultural enlightenment and reform” (Gandhi, 1998, p. 14). I shared my notebook passage on
power previously as a “finding” rather than here as part of this discussion. Here is my interpretation of the principal interview data in terms of colonization as an exercise in cultural enlightenment. I learned that many principals, schools, parents, students, policymakers, professors…so many people seem to be buying it hook, line, and sinker: reading and math are the enlightened priorities of the lawmakers for the schoolmaker under NCLB. Really? Is this new to the work of schools? Haven’t schools always prioritized reading and math? Interviewed principals said they did not think, if NCLB went away, they would change their priority on reading. As Principal Sandy said, his staff would “go back to struggling” with priorities at his school.

I remember the 3 R’s, but have principals forgotten? A quick Internet search on the “3 Rs” dates the phrase back to the 1820s (http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/three_r’s). We have been hoodwinked if we think NCLB has been the “enlightener” of the priorities in schools. Educators can take back power to know they have had the fundamental priorities in place all the while. The way they are forced to carry out these priorities and the sole focus on them is a defining impact of the reform, which may or may not be able to be resisted. Principals say districts have responded to a primary focus on math and reading by mandating 90-minute literacy blocks and by integrating subjects like science into reading time. Principal Dollinger actually admitted, “In social studies you can kind of fudge a little,” meaning you are really not held accountable for that subject! Principal Sandy who said his school and district were “hyper focused on reading and math” meant it. Wasn’t it just a few decades ago that we were
more focused on science and math? Principal Raab said when he taught in the 80s “science was king” in his classroom.

I am reminded of the postcolonial notion that, “Knowledge is least like itself when it becomes institutionalized and starts to collaborate with the interests of the dominant or ruling elite” (Gandhi, 1998, p.75). Some district administrators and principals respond to the AYP focus on reading and math in restrictive pedagogical ways, through prescribed curriculum and dismissal of teachers’ thematic units. Some of this may be necessary, but are schools going too far when they restrict the professional judgment of educators? Principals whose communities of practice are moving beyond the constraints of NCLB to a focus on RTI, seek to get the professional work of schoolmakers centered back around “knowledge” that is useful and “knowledge” that matters for effective learning. Math and reading can be priorities in schools, but not the priorities. I think the “struggle” to define the priorities in schools is necessary and inevitable in professional learning communities. This “enlightenment” comes day-by-day and year-by-year and is dependent not on a hegemonic “ruling elite,” but on the professional work of the school community of practice.

Principals provided evidence that children in subgroups are “Othered” like “Orientals (who) were rarely seen or looked at: they were seen through, analysed not as citizens, or even people, but as problems to be solved or confined” (Said, 1997, p. 201). Principals talked about seeing numbers instead of children, about “our” kids as opposed to “those” kids, and about the problems of being a large diverse school. For them, these are not necessarily solved by NCLB or AYP. Principal Dollinger shared that parents
choose his school for its’ “lack” of a subgroup. He even began to think of how the term subgroup was a form of othering when he said, “When we say subgroup we don’t think White.” Students are referred to as “subgroup kids,” a prime example of Bhabha’s *metonomy of presence*.

If NCLB intended to make it so that children who belonged to a subgroup were not left behind, why did the policy employ subgroups to begin with? Is “White” not thought of as a subgroup because it is *assumed* that the White students, who are not ELLs and who are not low SES, will make AYP? (According to NCLB policy, White actually *is* a possible subgroup). In schools where AYP is not much of an issue, principals have moved beyond subgroup AYP data to individual student data. These principals have stopped the *subgroup othering* and are fusing their belief in high standards and accountability with meeting the learning needs and growth of each individual student. Instead of being “rarely seen or looked at,” students who are othered under NCLB may now be *closely* looked at, especially as a result of RTI. Principals were clear to note that RTI does not make the child “the problem,” but instead puts a professional responsibility on teachers to discover what it is about their practices that can improve learning for students.

There were not as many direct examples of diaspora in the data as I anticipated. It makes me wonder if the “choice” to move children from a failing to a successful school is really a choice. Although AYP data can be used as a rationale for eventual school closure all together (Burch, 2007), none of the principals mentioned closed schools, although a few mentioned reconstituted places of learning. Principals were fearful of the reality that
not making AYP could mean a job change for them, but not as concerned about teachers choosing to leave the profession as a result of the pressures of NCLB. It seemed that principals who had teachers “move on” had a sense that that movement tightened the commitment of their community of practice.

As principals offered alternatives to the AYP definition of success, they helped me understand why parents are/would be hesitant to transfer their students from a “failing” school. Principals explained how a positive school reputation and positive experiences for kids can and does linger on despite not making AYP. The sense of self which can be “eroded by dislocation” (Ashcroft et al., Eds., 2002) seemed to be strengthened by some principals when speaking of their community of practice that knows they are doing their best to meet the needs of kids everyday.

Under NCLB, eventually a failing school through mimicry will “continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122). If the policy is not modified by 2014, this slippage will reach almost every public school. The public school system will be “entirely knowable” as failing to meet the challenge of educating America’s youth. Though the typically homogenous and affluent, highest performing public schools and districts will mimic the longest, eventually, they too, will be exposed “as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 122, italics in the original). Now, a mere few years prior to 2014, large schools, urban schools, schools with a subgroup or subgroups, and many others struggle to meet AYP. Since private schools do not usually receive state funding or take the state standardized test, what will be the public opinion about “failing” public schooling compared to private
schooling in 2014? How long will schools be forced to mimic the success of AYP and more importantly, what is the long-term impact this narrow view of success has on school communities? Is privatizing education a hidden agenda of NCLB policy?

Postcolonial literature explains, “Every concept the colonizer brings to the colonized will itself be reborn, renewed, reinterpreted in the light of the Other’s culture” (Childs et al., 1997, p. 136). It seems hybridity is true of NCLB reform in some interview examples but not true in others. Though I did not, for the purposes of this study, overtly compare the experiences of school leaders in more or less affluent schools, higher or lower achieving districts, and so forth, I could not help but begin speculating if the more likely a school community of practice was to make AYP, the more flexibility it had in the ways it went about achieving AYP. Pursuing this notion could be valuable for future research and inquiry. For example, in the “Academic Award” winning middle school, Principal Scarpino admitted that his school does some non-traditional things with formative assessments and has an emphasis on social-emotional learning standards. This principal said his school is not worried about making AYP, and that for his students the benchmark set by AYP is very low. However, he did say that NCLB had focused his work and practice through use of data and attending to the learning of individual students. The essence of the policy to “leave no child behind” was in a way “reinterpreted” by this leader and the same can be true about all of the leaders who spoke about the importance of RTI.

Thus, it appears some leaders have already “renewed” the policy. When Principal Dollinger said a sarcastic “whatever” to the notion of comparing schools using AYP, he
went on to explain that the focus of his school’s success was shifting to making interventions for individual students. I think it is interesting how some principals have the flexibility to reinterpret and renew the terms of the policy and their success under the policy in their schools. They have been able to take from the policy what matters most—looking at subgroup data—and reinterpret it for their communities of practice. Bravo.

However, the hegemonic definition of success measured by AYP has not been quite as applicable for most schools. Some principals feel the intense pressure of staying employed, protecting their teachers, and directing what they “care” about in terms of curriculum to only reading and math (hegemonic cultural norms of NCLB). These principals carry the weight of knowing: as urban, elementary Principal Kinkead said, “NCLB says we are a failing school.” Will these principals be able to remain positive, be able to lead while holding on to the successes they have in terms of making progress but not adequate progress in terms of the ISAT? How will the hegemonic mandates directing curriculum and pedagogy have an impact on these communities of practice as they continue to “fail” under NCLB? What is the benefit for the students who are constantly labeled “left behind?”

**Seeking a Syncretic Space**

Each principal expressed ideas which eventually resisted, reconciled, and fused differing beliefs surrounding this policy and its impact. This fusion goes beyond hybridity that creates, “This part culture, this partial culture, [which is] the contaminated yet connective tissue between cultures—at once the impossibility of culture’s
containedness and the boundary between. It is indeed something like culture’s ‘in-between’—bafflingly both alike and different” (Bhabha, 1996, p. 54). This alikeness and difference saturates the syncretic space defining a leader’s professional identity and positions him or her as a colonized-colonizer. It is through both theories of the literature map that I understand the syncretic space. This is a space understood by the metaphor of colonization and reified within the school community of practice. Figure 6 presents the map completed with tenets of both theories used to interpret meaning from the data of school principals interviewed during an era of NCLB.

![Literature map including tenets of postcolonial and identity theories situating school leaders in an era of NCLB.](image)

*Figure 6.* Literature map including tenets of postcolonial and identity theories situating school leaders in an era of NCLB.

The school leaders I interviewed are deeply committed to their work; their professional identity as principals is inseparable from their community of practice. In some cases, principals continually referred to former school communities they *used* to be apart of, indicating their continuing connectedness and care for the people and work in those communities. Principals’ nexus of multimembership was so strong, they were still
emotionally tied to former school communities of practice which continued, along with their current school community to shape their professional identity.

A syncretic space where heterogeneity exists in terms of power and voice, othering, hybridity, diaspora, and mimicry speaks to the resiliency and intelligence of the leaders. Principal Messerly said of her two daughters who both attended “failing” schools as defined by NCLB:

My girls were talking about heroes, so my encouragement [as an educator] was my one daughter's heroes are her drama and music teacher at the high school, and my other daughter's hero is a teacher and a coach at her school. So I thought, at the end of the day, if the people they feel best about are the people in their school settings who are encouraging them, then somewhere we are still doing something right.

I was worried at the onset of this study that colonization had taken hold of our schools and was shaking educators’ belief in their ability to make a difference, to be a source for joy and curiosity, and to provide places of learning where all children feel valued and none feel left behind. I am now more worried having found that so much of this is true, given the data from a variety of schools across the state. I worry that the resiliency of some leaders is wearing thin, especially those serving in more diverse school settings. I worry that their “identity-in-motion” (Taubman, 1993) is stretching to define success in ways other than AYP, and I wonder how long that stretching can last before there is a snap which leaves whole school communities of practice and professional leaders broken apart and disconnected. The upcoming re-writing and reauthorization of NCLB must provide for these school communities of practice as well as others, and in turn benefit and support all schools and all children. Policy recommendations are listed in an upcoming section.
Summary

No Child Left Behind was the reified object or “point of focus” (Wenger, 1998) for my study, around which the negotiation of school leader professional identity was explored. My study contributes to a need to better understand the ways school leaders respond to district-level, state-level, and national-level accountability policies (Sloan, 2000). The data showed that NCLB has changed the work and professional identity of principals in terms of use of data, classroom instruction, Response to Intervention, and staffing changes. NCLB has defined success in terms of AYP and although principals have taken that definition as only one measurement of their work in their school community of practice, noting that a child is much more than one day of testing, “those damn test scores” are a major component of their school community’s success or failure.

The metaphor of colonization in the postcolonial framework helped to inform this study and explain the data in a unique and alternative way. I wanted to understand that “the strength of the effects of reform upon identity are mediated not only by the nature of the reform itself but also by teachers’ personal sense of vocationalism and the leadership, cultures, and pupil populations of the schools in which they work” (Day, 2002, p. 688) from the perspective of school leaders. This study began to expand the literature around school leaders professional identity in times of school reform, specifically NCLB reform.

Recommendations

Our public schools are economically dependent on state and federal funding, especially low-income schools that receive Title 1 money. Even if lawmakers could, as
Principal Ponto put it, “take their fingers out” of the work of schoolmakers, and even if schools were allowed to return to a position where they were not under the mandates of AYP as a measure of success or failure, schools could still be likened to a neocolonial country with elements of political, economic, and cultural control remaining (Prasad, 2003). If we accept the likelihood that schools and districts are going to be dependent on the federal government for funding, and that it is reasonable for the government to have a fair avenue for keeping schools accountable, then we need school practitioners and leaders, more school practitioners and leaders, a few more school practitioners and leaders, some researchers, and some policymakers “at the table” as NCLB is reauthorized. Here are three recommendations for consideration:

1. **Whoever is “at the table” needs to have a deep commitment for socially just policies that do not punish struggling schools.** Who will take on the responsibility for ensuring, during this and future policy meetings, that educators in our most struggling schools have a voice in school policy reformation? For example, there is no 2010 “One Voice” conference planned for Illinois—who will hear the voices and fund teachers to attend from Chicago Public Schools, Peoria, or East Saint Louis? Is it financially or logistically feasible to ask administrators and teachers in our poor districts to attend a 2010 “One Voice” conference considering the cost of travel and the need to find substitute teachers? The recommendation is that struggling urban places of learning need representation by people without any other political agenda than to once and for all level the playing field. Better yet, educators from our most struggling schools should be able to have a direct voice at the table. If education is going to continue to be a pathway for opportunity, a policy and its funding must be aligned to the neediest schools and districts who have been left behind by NCLB.

2. **Achievement should be conceived through a growth model with multi-year assessments that make sense for each individual student taking them.** Capacity around using data is increasing, according to principals interviewed. Building capacity around what assessments make sense for which students are now required. Principals said formative assessments provide meaningful data from which teachers can make informed instructional decisions. Formative assessments that go beyond a “regurgitation of facts” and ask students to
explain why and how they know what they know will be much more useful than our current ISAT test. Setting a high benchmark of growth for a school to achieve is reasonable, but only if all schools are accountable for that growth benchmark and no schools are “punished” for missing that mark. Measuring the growth of individual students propels accountability beyond subgroups to individual students within a school or subgroup. Currently, a school could have plenty of “failing” students who do not “count” as part of a subgroup and the rest of the school could be bringing up their scores. An individually assessed growth model would complement the direction RTI is taking and could be fairer to all students in all schools.

3. Recapturing a joy of learning, a value of all content areas and specialties, and a future where students as critical thinkers are taught to respectfully disrupt authority, transfer knowledge, and be prepared to lead in a global society should be priorities along with “math” and “reading.” This will not be “easy.” Prioritizing only math and reading? Much easier! The principal who admitted he and his staff would “struggle” to define their school priorities if NCLB went away paints a more complicated picture than the one that presently exists. Struggling with priorities is a natural part of our work in education and in life, as it should be. There needs to be room for conflict, for disagreement, and for debate without hegemonic authority. If a second grader is reading at a kindergarten level but conducting intricate scientific experiments out on the playground during recess, teachers should be able to adjust learning priorities for that student. Teachers and leaders should be held accountable as professionals with the responsibility for helping each child achieve in the best way they know how. Perhaps that second grader is one of those students who would benefit from “butterflies three years in a row.” Perhaps she needs intense after-school interventions at another school for tutoring or, better yet, an enrichment opportunity at her own home-school. Those professionals working for her, not a hegemonic policy that will only leave her behind, should determine whatever is needed.

As I listened to and analyzed the responses of the fourteen school leaders in this study, I have a more direct recommendation to the principals and schoolmakers in this era. This recommendation derives from the postcolonial perspective: Schoolmakers must become stronger resisters to what they deem harmful to their school communities of practice as a result of NCLB policy. Schoolmakers must push back against one dominant discourse of NCLB that says, “Schools (teachers and principals) are the problem and this policy,
particularly related to testing and accountability, is the solution.” School communities face challenges and have intelligent professionals who need local, state, and federal support to create and sustain long-lasting, equitable, creative resolutions (plural) to those challenges. Schoolmakers should be more vocal to their communities and to the media about the exposure NCLB has placed on subgroup students—both in detrimental and beneficial ways. Principals in this study said that NCLB has caused them to look at subgroup data and make teaching and learning a priority with minority students based on race, income, and ability. However, the policy has (perhaps inadvertently) intensified the stereotypes and blame that school communities place on subgroups as attested to by principals. Subgroup othering is a direct result of the policy and may be overcome by a growth model aimed at assessing every student rather than lumping students together. In this way, even low income or special education student at a school would be “counted” as a measure of accountability.

School success seems to be a moving target within whole schools and districts and for subgroups. What was considered “successful” as measured by the benchmark for AYP one year is considered “unsuccessful” another year. Surprisingly, the principal participants in this study did not discuss success as related to issues of high stakes testing in terms of the biases of standardized tests (Popham, 2005), nor did they discuss how measuring success on a standardized test has statistical issues that preclude the 100 percent goal of 2014. What exactly is the policy accomplishing if indeed 100 percent of students meet AYP on their state standardized test in 2014 anyway? Would this really indicate success for all schools and students? I say no. Educators need to remember that
they are the schoolmakers—they make schools. They must resist in an organized and transparent way that requires risk-taking and standing up to the hegemonic authority of policymakers. Community and state rallies, written petitions to congress, practitioners running for office, inviting press into the schools to demonstrate learning, etc. are ideas to begin exposing the public to both the colonizing affects of the policy as well as ideals for improvement and change.

Peaceful coexistence seems to be occurring in places where the policy has the least impact—higher performing, typically suburban schools in this study. Unfortunately, the data in this study do not support the luxury of coexistence in struggling schools. Although lower performing schools have a higher turnover in principal and teacher leadership, lower performing schools must ask even more of these courageous educators. Our lowest performing school communities must have educators who speak out on their behalf and who pursue connectedness with a wider educational community that can empathize and cease direct blame on “those students” or “those educators” as a first line of attack, but rather carefully assess, train, and develop the educators and students in failing school communities to support teaching and learning for future generations.

Once resistance by educators (as colonial subjects) begins mounting to disband the harmful practices and results of NCLB, policymakers (as colonizers) will look foolish if they do not heed the viewpoint and expertise of the schoolmaker.

Without going into detail, clues for whether or not policymakers under President Barak Obama’s term are becoming aware of educators’ viewpoints can be sought out by highlighting the current revisions of the NCLB act. Are policymakers sensitive to some
or all of the issues principals bring up in this study? A flourish of reporting and editorial writing involving proposed changes to NCLB have been published in the media. Overwhelmingly, the news articles I have read describe revisions to the law as proposals created by policymakers which will have little impact on high performing schools and regrettably no tangible impact on lower performing schools other than to continue to blame failure on “bad teachers.” As New York Times writer Sam Dillon (http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/14/education/14child.html) summarizes:

The administration would replace the law’s pass-fail school grading system with one that would measure individual students’ academic growth [growth model] and judge schools based not on test scores alone but also on indicators like pupil attendance, graduation rates and learning climate [factors the principals in this study also attribute to school success]. And while the proposal calls for more vigorous interventions in failing schools [in the form of sanctions and rewards], it would also reward top performers [why reward them if, like in the case of Principal Scarpino, the reward does not really matter] and lessen federal interference in tens of thousands of reasonably well-run schools in the middle.

This same article quotes Randi Weingarten, current president of the American Federation of Teachers as saying of the proposal, “From everything that we’ve seen, this blueprint places 100 percent of the responsibility on teachers and gives them zero percent of the authority.” Based on my reading of the current media on the federal reform of NCLB, the three recommendations listed at the beginning of this section are not being attended to, with the exception perhaps of the growth model, which would still be measured in part by a standardized test score.
Future Research

Following these interviewed principals throughout the rest of their career as leaders, or as eventual central office administration responding to the likely reauthorization of NCLB or its lasting effects, would offer a perspective of elongated time which this study was not designed to do. Research into professionalism reminds me that it is contextual and varies among different times (Lai & Lo, 2007). If I could have gone back in time, I would have liked to hear from these principals right at the onset of the policy reform (right at the onset of “colonization”), and then share their own words with them five years later, and five years later again. Challenging principals to reflect using their own interview statements, about the ways their professional identity changes in response to their district and state’s implementation of the policy mandates would provide leverage to challenge deep remembering.

Expanding this study to other states would allow researchers to do some comparing, and opening the study up to high school principals would certainly increase examples of AYP pressure. I would be interested in getting a focus group of principals together from districts and/or schools with similar demographic situations. Using the IIRC site in Illinois might allow this to be feasible, and if principals themselves use the site to compare their school to other schools, it would be a good tool to use as a researcher looking to bring principals from around the state together.

The focus group discussions worked well for me, and I believe there would be value in conducting this same type of study with teachers. Comparing the impact of the reform on the professional identity of teachers, with that of principals, could enhance or
diminish the notion of the principal as colonized-colonizer. Though the literature on teacher professional identity is developing (Sachs, 2001), adding to that body and at the same time comparing it to the underdeveloped literature on school leader professional identity, could be an important contribution to the field.

Thicker data could be gathered, using my interviews as a starting point. If researchers wished to “see” or “hear” if colonization was in action, they could attend district and school meetings, make classroom observations, and talk with members of the school community. Something I began to do in the focus groups and in one interview was to be a little more explicit about the metaphor of colonization. Conducting a second focus group meeting related to the postcolonial framework explicitly could really challenge the metaphor and create a critique. Even though I explained the metaphor briefly to some participants at the onset of the interview, I think I could have been more open about the way I was viewing some of their statements as related to the theory, if for instance, I had them read a summarizing page on colonization prior to the interview. I think I was hesitant to do this because I did not know how much they would be thinking about the theory when they answered questions, or if the theory would put them into an academic frame where they did not know if their answers were “fitting” the framework for the study. In retrospect, I could have tested my theory out with principals who had been exposed to this theory, but I am not sure feasible it would be to find out who or who was not experienced with the theory ahead of the interview.

This study indicated principals have key recommendations about NCLB policy reauthorization. It would be interesting to have data from whoever attends the 2010 “One
Voice” conferences and hear if the conference recommendations are congruent across the country and if the recommendations are taken to heart by the lawmakers.

I believe that the most important future research that could come out of this study is that which would delve deeply into the actual learning experiences and outcomes of students as a result of the policy mandates and pressures. For example, if students are not reading for pleasure or writing creatively or studying science in a hands-on fashion, how does this have an impact on their long-term learning? How could the learning experiences students undergo as a result of NCLB affect our nation’s future in a global society, and how will we create democratic, critical thinking citizens to lead our schools and country? I think the metaphor of colonization could be taken further with specific school communities for example, and the metaphor could be taught and tested with teachers, leaders, and even students. Hearing all of these voices as part of a comparative case study between a high performing and low performing school could be very rich.

Closing Reflections

It is my desire that we uphold the work of educators and their communities of practice, not as perfect or without need for improvement, but as the work of professionals with power and expertise to be the schoolmakers. We need drastic improvements in our nation’s schools, from degenerated buildings and violent environments to meaningful curriculum that inspire global thinking and future leaders. We need to stop wasting resources such as the new textbooks in the boxes on the hallway floor in the Chicago Public School, and make timely but wise decisions with a long-term plans and goals in
mind. I think we have gotten to a point where we do need federal, state, and local
government to join alongside our education system and make informed, viable, long-term
decisions that are socially just and highly ethical as informed by practitioners and
policymakers. It is not acceptable that subgroups under-perform on achievement tests.
We need governmental resources and policy to help improve our educational system
without blame and without compromising educator professionalism.

Through the interviews and focus groups I was given a small glimpse into the
significance our school leaders have within their school communities of practice,
especially regarding the learning and growth of individual students. As the data driven
professional identity of principals continues to form, will they be able to initiate changes
that make sense and that are targeted to support students needing specific interventions
and instructional strategies? It is very exciting to think principals can have an
increasingly important impact at the student level.

Of course, this cannot happen without sophisticated, highly qualified, and
committed teachers. A principal’s position of authority as a potential colonizer must not
be overlooked no matter what policy is being reauthorized. School leaders must
remember their identity is separate but tied into the nexus of multimembership within
their school community of practice. As their responsibilities and expertise develop, they
must continue to unify their beliefs and priorities with those of their school communities.
When those beliefs and priorities become a struggle and come into conflict, dialogue and
conversation must infuse their work until understanding is reached. In this way, voice and
power will be shared, and intelligent decisions made collaboratively. These same ideas
must also be brought to students in our schools who will someday participate as part of our nation’s democratic process in a global community, with responsibilities to the cultures and values and struggles of all people. Preparing schools to be places where children are the most valued assets and the priority takes real courage and resistance in times like these. I applaud the principals who shared their work with me during this challenging era and look forward to a future where no child is left behind.
References


Appendix A

Recruitment Email

Dear Person Well-Known to Me:

As you know, I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Illinois in the Education Organization Leadership program. I'm conducting a research study on the impact of the No Child Left Behind legislation on the professional identity and work of school principals who have been in their leadership role (at their current school and/or another) prior to and now during the implementation of NCLB (8+ years). If you know of any colleagues who might consider participating in my study, would you please pass along the following request and they can contact me?

Thanks,
Ali

--------------------------------------------
Please copy and paste the following, indicating that you received this e-mail from a fellow graduate student who is using a snowball technique to recruit research participants
------------------------------------------------------

Dear Principal:

Hello! I am a doctoral student in the Education Organization Leadership program at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. I have asked your colleague to pass along this e-mail to invite you to participate in my study on professional identity of school leaders in an era of No Child Left Behind. I am seeking elementary and/or middle school principals who have been in the principal role at their current school or another for 8+ years.

The purpose of my research study is to explore the professional identity of six to twelve elementary and/or middle school leaders as shaped and defined by the mandates and constraints of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy. Ample literature has been written regarding teacher identity, and some of this literature relates to teacher identity during times of school reform. However, not much literature has been written about school leader's professional identity and only a few studies have explored leaders' professional identity during times of reform.

My study aims to investigate school leaders' perspectives of the rewards, benefits, pressures, and tensions faced in their schools and districts as a result of NCLB and how these perspectives impact their sense of professional identity during an era of accountability. Your voluntary participation will involve a semi-structured interview to last approximately one hour, at a time and secure location most convenient for you. Following this interview you may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview and/or regional focus group study, also conducted at a time and secure location most convenient
for you. You may refuse to participate or may discontinue participation at any time during the project and this decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your status or future relationship with the University of Illinois. If you have an interest in participating in this study, please respond back to me at: alilewis@illinois.edu and I will follow up with a phone call to discuss an interview place and time.

Ali Lewis
Doctorate in Education Candidate
University of Illinois
Appendix B

Interview and Focus Group Questions

Interview Questions
Interview Questions, Alisha Lewis, IRB form:

1. Tell me about your career in education as a principal? (# of years as a principal)

2. Why are you a school principal?

3. Do you have students who are successful in your school?

4. Do you have students who are struggling in your school?

5. Given that you’ve been a principal for ___ years, how has NCLB policy affected the ways you think about your professional identity/role?

6. If you could make changes to the current policy or recommendations to our newly elected president, what would you change and/or recommend and why?

7. In what ways do you see your teachers and students being impacted by NCLB?

8. What advice would you offer a new school principal in your district who feels the pressure to make AYP at her school?

9. Do you have a subgroup/subgroups at your school? If yes—what kinds of strategies do you use with the group(s)? If no—what would change at your school if you did have a subgroup of students?

10. What benefits/rewards have you experienced as a result of NCLB?
Focus Group Questions
Focus Group Questions, Alisha Lewis, IRB form:

1. Since our first interview, you have had some time to think about some of the ideas you talked about. What kinds of ways is your job different as principal now as compared to pre-NCLB?

2. How have those differences impacted your ability and satisfaction with leading your school?

3. Talk about a time you experienced the greatest change in your accountability?

4. Talk about a time your teachers experienced the greatest change in their accountability?

5. What have been some of the most important changes you have seen in your school, district, or schools in general as a result of NCLB?

6. If you wanted to “go back” to the way something was pre-NCLB what would that be and why?

7. What are some of the ways you spend your days as principal? What are your favorite kinds of moments? Least favorite?

8. Anything else?
Appendix C

Interview Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

School Leaders as both Colonized and Colonizers:
Seeking a Syncretic Space in an era of No Child Left Behind

You have been invited to participate in a research study conducted by doctoral student candidate, Alisha Lewis under the guidance of professor and advisor Dr. Carolyn Shields, in the Education Organization Leadership department of the College of Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Thank you for your consideration.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the professional identity of six to twelve elementary and/or middle school leaders as shaped and defined by the mandates and constraints of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy. Ample literature has been written regarding teacher identity, and some of this literature relates to teacher identity during times of school reform. However, not much literature has been written about school leader’s professional identity and only a few studies have explored leaders’ professional identity during times of reform. My study aims to investigate school leaders’ perspectives of the rewards, benefits, pressures, and tensions faced in their schools and districts as a result of NCLB and how these perspectives impact their sense of professional identity during an era of accountability.

Your voluntary participation will involve a semi-structured interview to last approximately 60 minutes, at a time and secure location most convenient for you, such as your office. You may be asked to participate in a follow-up interview and/or focus group as a means to collect more specific data, also at a time and secure location most convenient for you, such as a school office. You may refuse to participate or may discontinue participation at any time during the project and this decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your status at or future relationship with the University of Illinois.

There are no foreseeable physical risks associated with this research, however there are emotional and reputational risks because you will be discussing your professional identity and discussing the frustrations, challenges, as well as strengths and benefits of No Child Left Behind as implemented in your school and district. You may benefit from articulating your beliefs about your professional identity in this era of reform and will contribute to the general knowledge on this topic that is underdeveloped in research literature. Upon completion of the interview, you will be given a small amount of gift
card money to a local bookstore as a token of appreciation for your time and willingness to share your experiences as a school leader.

All digital recordings and transcriptions of your interview will be kept strictly confidential and secure, and I will do everything I can to protect your privacy including use of a pseudonym and removing and/or concealing identifying comments in my writing. Results of this research will be published in a dissertation thesis and may be presented at conferences and in journal publications. After 3 years, all recordings and transcripts shall be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Carolyn Shields, professor and advisor at the University of Illinois at 217-333-0084 or by e-mail cshields@illinois.edu or Alisha Lewis, doctoral candidate researcher at 217-333-2561 or alilewis@illinois.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Bureau of Educational Research at 217-333-3023 or via e-mail at info@education.illinois.edu. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via e-mail at irb@illinois.edu (collect calls are accepted by both the BER and the IRB if you identify yourself as a research participant).

I have read and understand the above consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I agree to being digitally recorded: Yes ____  No  _____

Participant’s signature: ____________________________  Date: ______________

A copy of this consent form will be given to you.
Appendix D

Focus Group Consent Form

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

School Leaders as both Colonized and Colonizers:
Seeking a Syncretic Space in an era of No Child Left Behind

You have been invited to participate in a research study conducted by doctoral student candidate, Alisha Lewis under the guidance of professor and advisor Dr. Carolyn Shields, in the Education Organization Leadership department of the College of Education at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. Thank you for your consideration.

The purpose of this research study is to explore the professional identity of six to twelve elementary and/or middle school leaders as shaped and defined by the mandates and constraints of the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) policy. Ample literature has been written regarding teacher identity, and some of this literature relates to teacher identity during times of school reform. However, not much literature has been written about school leader’s professional identity and only a few studies have explored leaders’ professional identity during times of reform. My study aims to investigate school leaders’ perspectives of the rewards, benefits, pressures, and tensions faced in their schools and districts as a result of NCLB and how these perspectives impact their sense of professional identity during an era of accountability.

You have already voluntarily participated in a semi-structured interview with me and now you are being asked to voluntarily participate in a small focus group of 3-5 principals. This focus group will be conducted as a means to collect more specific data, at a time and secure location most convenient for you and the other participants, such as a secure school office or classroom. You may refuse to participate or may discontinue participation at any time during the project and this decision to participate, decline, or withdraw from participation will have no effect on your status at or future relationship with the University of Illinois.

There are no foreseeable physical risks associated with this research, however there are emotional and reputational risks because you will be discussing your professional identity and discussing the frustrations, challenges, as well as strengths and benefits of No Child Left Behind as implemented in your school and district with other principals. You may benefit from articulating your beliefs about your professional identity in this era of reform and will contribute to the general knowledge on this topic that is underdeveloped in research literature. Upon completion of the focus group, you will be given a $5 gift
card as a token of appreciation for your time and willingness to share your experiences as a school leader.

All digital recordings and transcriptions of the focus group will be kept strictly confidential and secure, and I will do everything I can to protect your privacy including use of a pseudonym and removing and/pr concealing identifying comments in my writing. During the focus group I will instruct participants to keep our conversation confidential and that no information shared during the focus group should be shared outside of the group. Results of this research will be published in a dissertation thesis and maybe presented at conferences and in journal publications. After 3 years, all recordings and transcripts shall be destroyed.

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Carolyn Shields, professor and advisor at the University of Illinois at 217-333-0084 or by e-mail cshields@illinois.edu or Alisha Lewis, doctoral candidate researcher at 217-333-2561 or alilewis@illinois.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Bureau of Educational Research at 217-333-3023 or via e-mail at info@education.illinois.edu. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via e-mail at irb@illinois.edu (collect calls are accepted by both the BER and the IRB if you identify yourself as a research participant).

I have read and understand the above consent form and voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I agree to being digitally recorded: Yes ____  No _____

Participant’s signature: ___________________________ Date: ______________

A copy of this consent form will be given to you.