UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

Teacher Sensemaking of District Policy for Underschooled Immigrant Students

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Doctor of Education

in

Teaching and Learning

by

Kristy Drake

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Signature Page

The Dissertation of Kristy Drake is approved, and is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

Dedication

Dedicated to the loving memory of my mother, Kathy, who began whispering to me as a young child that higher education was in my future, a fate uncommon in our impoverished family. She knew before I knew that I was destined to teach. Those whispers grew to roars and it is only because of her sacrifices that I stand here today in pursuit of my own dreams. I hope I make her proud.

Go gcasfar le chéile sinn arís, go gcoinní Dia i mbois a láimhe thú.

Until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his hand.

Epigraph

I am a stranger but for that one smile

I am a stranger
In this place
Where my family has run to
They whisper behind us
But I hear them

Why talk, when no one can understand
The language I speak?
Why learn, when I cannot understand
The language they teach in?
Why try, when they do not know me
When I am alone?

Why not quit?
I almost do
But for that one smile
That is given by the teacher
Who is trying to help
And sometimes succeeds
The one smile
That keeps me in this place
Trying as I can
For that one smile

-*Caelan Beard, age 12*
UNHCR refugee poet

Table of Contents

List of Figures

Acknowledgements

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Vita

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Abstract of the Dissertation

Teacher Sensemaking of District Policy for Underschooled Immigrant Students

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Doctor of Education in Teaching and Learning

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Every year, the United States resettles nearly 70,000 refugees, with a large minority resettling in Marisol County (a pseudonym). Approximately 3,000 students from refugee families are enrolled in local schools, often having received little prior formal education in their home countries. Studies acknowledge the breadth of challenges facing underschooled immigrant students and the schools who serve them. Further compounding the challenge is the recent onset of rigorous local and state policies. Teachers, as the primary point of contact for refugee students, must make sense of and implement the policies in ways that meet the needs underschooled immigrant students, yet little is known about how manage these complex demands. While several studies exist on

teachers' sensemaking of educational policies more generally, no studies deal with the role of teachers in mediating the intersection of policy and underschooled immigrant students. Using a sensemaking perspective, this qualitative study explores how teachers conceptualize their role as mediators between policy and student needs, and how this interpretation affects classroom practice.

This study involved analysis of district policy-related documents, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews of thirteen participants who worked with the Secondary Newcomer Program (SNP) in Marisol School District, including classroom teachers, lead teachers, counselors, and administrators at both the site and district levels. Data collected from these sources were analyzed for understanding challenges specific to this population of students, finding patterns of faculty's perceptions of the role of school for underschooled immigrants, and determining teachers' conceptualization of their role. Each of these factors were then analyzed in relation to how teachers make sense and implement policy in their own classrooms.

Findings indicate that teachers balanced multiple layers of factors in their decision-making, including student challenges, policy demands, and programmatic constraints. Though the district presented a unified policy message related to graduation requirements, participants articulated different purposes of school for underschooled immigrant students. These differing perceptions affected how teachers conceptualized their role and ultimately made curricular, instructional, and student placement decisions. This study's contributions to research and theory, as well as implications for policy, practice, and future research are also discussed.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Since 1990, the immigrant children population in the United States has increased seven times faster than their native-born peers and nearly one in five children are first generation immigrants nationwide (Hernandez, 2009). Nearly half of the children in California live in newcomer families, defined as families having lived in the United States for less than a decade. In their report on immigrant education, Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix (2000) define underschooled teenaged immigrants as those students who have been in the United States under four years, arrive with little or no English language fluency, and have limited literacy in their native language. This same definition will be appropriated for the purposes of this dissertation to distinguish this particular segment of immigrant populations. Not surprisingly, these students experience a range of struggles in academic and social settings (Hernandez, 2009).

The Experience of Underschooled Immigrant Students

By definition, new influxes of immigrant populations live in linguistic and cultural isolation from mainstream society once they resettle in a third party host country. When compared to families of native-born peers, parents of immigrant children are generally unfamiliar with how to access social services and health care to garner necessary services (Hernandez, 2009). Many immigrant children arrive in the United States with varied educational backgrounds, creating a need to teach basic literacy skills in secondary school. Secondary level underschooled teenaged immigrants require elementary reading comprehension strategies and basic writing skills, which few

secondary teachers are trained to teach. Entering the school system with less than seven years to meet graduation requirements and proficiencies, underschooled adolescent immigrants experience an urgency to learn, so teachers must accelerate subject matter and there is little research on how to effectively do this. Secondary schools also adhere to rigid scheduling structures, which further inhibit innovative approaches to providing underschooled teenaged immigrants with intense literacy instruction while simultaneously covering required content. These organizational barriers and a lack of trained teachers further compound the problem (Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix, 2000).

Additionally, underschooled teenaged immigrants face a host of age-specific challenges, ranging from the most obvious of learning the language of the dominant culture to the more complex of acquiring social and cultural knowledge to facilitate a successful resettlement. Often, they have come from war-ravaged countries or extreme poverty and must additionally deal with all the usual adolescent identity issues, acclimating to a new country and language, along with dealing with past traumas (Decapua & Marshall, 2010). Underschooled adolescent immigrants serve to mediate the social world for both themselves and on behalf of their family. They frequently find themselves in situations where they must translate or explain to their parents how a particular school or social service functions (Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003).

Issues of resettlement coincide with common adolescent developmental issues, including evolving parent-child relationships, developing a sense of identity, and the onset of puberty (Kovacev & Schute, 2004). Many students wrestle with pre-migratory issues even before resettlement. They may come from traumatic circumstances

compounded by separation from parents for long periods of time, which sometimes leads to difficult familial reunifications (Suárez-Orozco, M., Suarez-Orozco, C., & Sattin-Bajaj, 2010).

Furthermore, underschooled adolescent immigrants are especially susceptible to high transiency rates as they relocate to facilitate their resettlement. Students who are more stable perform better than students who move often; mobility is a major predictor in a student's academic success (Decapua & Marshall, 2010). Some students readily adapt to such drastic change and challenges, while others struggle. Even when school is engaging and newcomer students are motivated, they often must dropout to work. In her analysis of school attendance and completion rates among foreign-born students, Ruiz-de-Velasco and Fix (2000) found that despite higher than average attendance, underschooled teenaged immigrants drop out at higher rates than their native born peers.

The exact dropout rate for underschooled teenaged immigrants is unknown, due in large part to their extreme transiency rate during resettlement. However, data on English learners is illuminating. In a study of immigrant students in Los Angeles, Kim (2011) estimated the English Learner population dropout rate to be approximately 25% in 2008 compared to 15% of their native born peers. A study by Civic Enterprises (Bridgeland et al., 2006) found that nearly half of all English Learner dropouts cited their primary reason for not completing high school was boredom or feeling disengaged from the subject matter. When English Learner students feel isolated and marginalized, they are much less likely to engage in school and complete the coursework necessary to garner a diploma.

Underschooled Immigrant Students in Marisol School District

The United States resettles approximately 70,000 refugees annually, more than every other country in the world combined. Within the United States, California accepts the most refugees of any state (Immigration Center Policy, 2014). According to the Marisol School District (MSD)'s report on refugee children in the district (2015), between 2011 and 2013, the county of Marisol recorded 2075 refugee children resettled in three main districts: Marisol, Cane Valley, and Garden Unified (pseudonyms). This number represents 54% of all refugees entering the state of California, indicating that Marisol County is a primary resettlement site for refugees. From October 2013 through April 2014, the number escalated to 1388, or nearly 200 new refugee students per month in the county. Though MSD does not track this population specifically, the district uses two primary measures to estimate the number of refugees in their schools. They evaluate enrollment forms for birthplaces, identifying those known to be in areas with large numbers of refugees and analyze English Learner (EL) language data, noting languages that come from known refugee areas. Using this data, the district estimates there are approximately 3,713 underschooled immigrant student currently enrolled, with the bulk of these students residing in and attending school in two high school's cluster of schools. With students from more than 31 countries and 100 languages spoken across the district, MSD is faced with the daunting task of meeting the needs of refugee EL students and families from across the globe.

Second language research has long contended that students need significant time to acquire the academic language necessary to be successful in school (Krashen, Long, Scarcella, 1979; Cummins, 1978; Cummins, 1981a; Cummins, 1981b; Collier, 1989). In his seminal work on language acquisition, Cummins (1978) identified two types of language development: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). Krashen, Long, and Scarcella (1979) found that older students and adults tend to progress rapidly through the early stages of language acquisition, quickly learning basic language commands to meet everyday needs. However, "the language needed for school is unique and very complex" (Collier, p 512). Cummins (1981a, b) asserts it takes a student between five and seven years to acquire academic language that approximates that of a native speaker, and this rate is strongly related to how proficient a student is in the primary language. Given that underschooled immigrant students lack formal education, it is reasonable to assume that acquiring academic language necessary to succeed in rigorous classes would take closer to seven years.

This challenge is particularly prevalent at secondary level, where the goal for all secondary level ELs in MSD is to successfully meet the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and satisfy A-G college entrance requirements for California State University and University of California schools, a requirement for high school graduation in the district.

These requirements are shown here in Figure 1 (UC Requirements, n.d.):

a (History/Social Science)	• 1 year of world history, 1 year of U.S. history
b (English)	• 4 years of college preparatory English
c (Math)	• 3 years of college preparatory Math to include geometry and intermediate algebra
d (Laboratory Science)	• 2 years to include 2 of these 3: biology, chemsistry, physics
e (Foreign Language)	• 2 years
f (Visual and Performing Arts)	• 1 year of dance, drama, music, or visual art
g (College Preparatory Elective)	• 1 year

Figure 1: Admission requirements for the University of California and California State University.

Even though district policy requires the A-G curriculum for all students graduating in 2016 the current pathway established for underschooled teenaged immigrants allows only one rigid pathway for students to complete "A-G" requirements for graduation, allowing for a fifth year of study. A student of high school age who enters MSD from outside the country and whose native language is not English begins his/her course of study in one of two ways. In schools with small numbers of newcomers, students enter English as a Second Language (ESL) and other classes, typically not those which are college preparatory. In schools with larger numbers of newcomer ELs, students are enrolled at the Secondary Newcomer Program. Self-contained Secondary Newcomer Programs are located in seven middle and high schools in areas with concentrated

populations of refugees and immigrants, primarily in an impoverished urban area of the city. According to the Secondary Newcomer Program's course of study, all courses are taught in a self-contained class and students earn elective credits that are not college preparatory. Therefore, the entire first year that a newly arrived student is in high school, s/he does not meet any of the "A-G" requirements. The typical pathway for a newly arrived student follows, with bolded courses fulfilling graduation requirements:

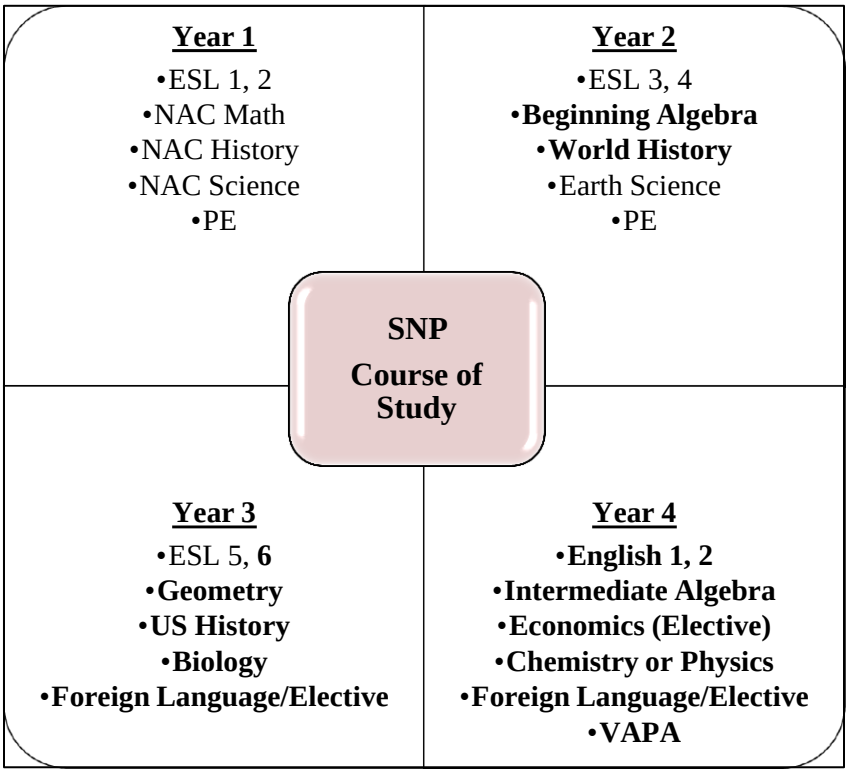

Figure 2: Proposed course of study for students in MSD.

By the end of four years of study, a newly arrived student will only have completed one and a half years of college preparatory English. Accordingly, a student who enters the country in high school and necessitates taking English as a Second

Language courses cannot fulfill graduation requirements. This course of study also assumes students will be able to progress from having a beginning level of English to functioning in and passing a college preparatory history and math course the second year, an expectation that is unrealistic and not often achieved. In essence, an analysis of the district's graduation requirements and English as a Second Language course of study reveals an impossible gap for underschooled adolescent immigrants. While this gives a sense of how district policy affects underschooled adolescent immigrants, there is clearly much more to learn.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine how teachers interpret and implement district policies with respect to refugee learners. The following overarching research question and sub-questions will guide the study:

How do teachers balance policy expectations with the demands of teaching and addressing the unique needs of underschooled immigrant students?

- What are district policies and requirements for secondary students with limited education?
- How do teachers make sense of and implement these policies in classroom instruction and advising students?

These questions will be addressed through a qualitative study that analyzes teacher's understanding and interpretation of policy and how this affects instructional practice. Interviews and observations of administrators, counselors, resource teachers, and classroom teachers will reveal teachers' beliefs about both policy and how they conceptualize their role in its implementation. Field notes and interview transcripts will be analyzed using a sensemaking perspective, which will ground this study in prior research on how teachers make sense of local, state, and national policy as related to literacy and math instruction.

Sensemaking theory suggests that teachers' prior knowledge and experiences shape how they prioritize and interpret policy messages (Coburn, 2001; Datnow & Park, 2009; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Weick, 2005). How teachers conceptualize their role affects how they interpret and implement policy in their practice. While there exist several studies focused on the process of teacher sensemaking in elementary schools, few studies exist which specifically deal with immigrant students at the secondary level. Several studies delineate the challenges associated with educating underschooled immigrant children in secondary school, but none have focused on the teacher's role in mediating policy in a way that accommodates these challenges. This study will explore the intersection of teacher sensemaking, how teachers conceptualize their role as mediators between policy and student needs, and how this interpretation affects classroom practice.

Organization of the Dissertation

In chapter two, I review the contributions from educational literature as it relates to the unique situation of underschooled immigrant students and the challenges they encounter. I also situate this study in the theoretical framework of sensemaking with a focus on how various levels of school systems make sense of and implement policies. In chapter three, I describe the research methodology including the study design, the data collection process, and the data analysis. Chapter four offers an overview of the policy, school, and teacher contexts in educating underschooled immigrant students.

In chapter five, I explore participants' differing perspectives on the purpose of school for this specific population. I examine how these perspectives affect how schools and participants view the purpose of a Secondary Newcomer Program. I discuss the complexities involved in implementing standardized policies in a non-standard program. Chapter six looks at how teachers in the Secondary Newcomer Program conceptualize their role as a mediator between policy and student needs. I then look at how these teacher perceptions of their role affect the curriculum they teach and the instructional techniques they utilize. Finally, in chapter seven, I draw connections between the findings in this study and the theory of sensemaking and prior research on underschooled immigrant students. I then discuss the implications of this study for further research, policy, and practice.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

In order to provide a foundation for this study, I review several areas of literature. First, I review theory and research on teacher sensemaking about policy. This work provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding how the teacher, the school context, and the policy context are related in implementation. Next, I review the research on underschooled immigrant students, discussing the student experience, the role of curriculum and pedagogy, and the role of the teacher. I conclude the review by discussing the implementation of educational policies as they relates to underschooled immigrant students.

Sensemaking Theory

As a theory, sensemaking arises out of organizational theory as a means to understand participants' actions through interpretation. Organizational changes require actors to make some plausible sense and enact order (Weick, 2005). Sensemaking begins with chaos and proceeds with actors noticing and bracketing information, then labeling and operationalizing new ideas. In describing the process of sensemaking in organizations, Weick (2005) suggests sensemaking is "the ongoing retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing" (p. 409). Mediated through language and affected by social factors, this process connects the abstract to the concrete.

Weick (2005) further asserts that sensemaking always has to be understood in the broader social and cultural context of a system. He identifies the three domains of

distributed sensemaking, sensemaking and power, and sensemaking and emotion. Distributed sensemaking occurs across an entire system and, as such, can be problematic when different parties have different understandings of the same message. Sensemaking and power refers to the idea that people with power have an unequally strong influence on social reality. Conversely, those with less power have less voice in shaping messages. Often, sensemaking occurs in intense emotional situations where people sense a threat to their identity or competency. In such instances, emotion influences the sense they make of information.

In educational settings, sensemaking theory attempts to describe the nexus of the three dimensions of cognition, school context, and policy interpretation. Numerous researchers have studied the implementation of educational policies using sensemaking theory. In evaluating the implementation of policy, conventional research assumes implementers lack understanding of policy or the policy itself is ambiguous and, as such, fails. An alternative explanation focuses on how implementers' sensemaking of policy affects its implementation (Coburn, 2001; Datnow & Park, 2009; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) outline a cognitive framework of sensemaking to describe the intersection of individual cognition, situated cognition, and the role of representations in policy design. These elements are important in guiding this study and are discussed in detail below.

Researchers who draw upon sensemaking identify several barriers to effective implementation of policy (Coburn, 2001; Datnow & Park, 2009; Spillane, 1999). Under the sensemaking theory, there exists a mutual dependence of policy and implementers.

Once a new policy is created, implementers, through sensemaking, are simultaneously forming policy and executing it, based on their understandings and beliefs (Datnow & Park, 2009).

The role of districts in framing teacher sensemaking. Actions at the school district level shape teacher sensemaking about policy in significant ways. In their review of research, Honig and Hatch (2004) found that districts deal with the convergence of multiple external policies that they then must translate into manageable forms, a process they refer to as simplification. District personnel draw upon "scripts", or a set of identities and appropriate responses to communicate policy messages, which are then "bridged" or "buffered" (p. 23). When bridging policy messages, districts connect new policy messages to existing practice. Alternately, districts may choose to "buffer" or deprioritize messages as a means to protect schools from increasing external demands. These processes of "bridging" and "buffering" repeat again at the site level. Hence, district central office personnel and site administrators play a key role in communicating policy messages to implementers (Coburn, 2001; Honig & Hatch, 2004). On a broad district level, Spillane, Reiser, and Reimer (2002) discuss the role of representations in this process, focusing on the language used to communicate policy and how teachers subsequently interpret this language. As such, leaders influence the logistics of sensemaking by allowing opportunities for interaction, structuring collaboration, and privileging and framing messages (Coburn, 2001). Administrators may overemphasize aspects of policy based on more influential voices or external pressures.

Sensemaking at the school level. Situated cognition occurs in the context of a school site. Here, the role of leadership is key as the principal mediates policies to staff by privileging certain messages over others and structuring collaboration. The principal occupies a unique structural position in that s/he monitors school progress, acts as the primary point of contact with the school district, and uses this information to develop the focus in a school site (Jennings, 2010). Despite all operating in the same state and local framework, principals interpret and enacted the policies differently (Coburn, 2005; Jennings, 2010; Sleegers et al., 2009).

In her study of two elementary school principals implementing state policy related to reading, Coburn (2005) notes that principals themselves engage in sensemaking and this affects the policy message relayed to teachers. Principals, like teachers, tend to link new policy with prior understandings and develop professional development opportunities and social interactions accordingly. In this case study, the two principals interpreted the same policy with drastically different foci. Whereas one principal believed the reading policy supported small group guided reading instruction, another principal focused almost entirely on reading comprehension skills. One principal's belief in social interactions led to teachers negotiating the intention and practicality of policy while another principal structured meetings and trainings in a way that teachers felt the need to comply with expectations rather than engage with practice. In this way, the structure of the staff social interactions also affected teacher understanding and implementation of state policy.

Jennings' (2010) study also found that ways in which principals made sense of external accountability systems in New York's school choice measures greatly influenced their subsequent actions. As the state underwent reform related to students choosing schools, Jennings compared three principals in three distinct types of small schools and found that their personal belief systems, ego, and presence of structured professional networks affected how they made sense of the school accountability policies, which in turn, affected how vigorously they circumvented procedures and sought out particular populations of students. Where some principals accessed networks to learn how to recruit students, other principals found this practice to be unethical and enacted the pure intention of the reform to allow students to choose schools.

Honig and Hatch (2004) recommend that school sites create distributed leadership structures to more effectively make sense of and communicate policy reform. Under this model, schools set their own goals consistent with their individual culture and needs, then use these goals as a means to determine whether new policy messages should be expanded (bridged) or minimized (buffered). In this way, site administrators and district leadership personnel negotiate the fit between external demands and the school's own goals.

Once the school's goals have been established, the principal's leadership, along with peer influence, can affect teachers' instructional practice and students' performance (Supovitz, Sirinides, & May, 2009). Principals who focus on instruction, fostering community and trust and clearly communicating mission and goals are associated with more change in teacher instructional practices.

Sensemaking at the individual teacher level. Individual cognition encompasses an individual teacher's personal understanding, which fits with personal experience, beliefs, history, and culture. While this is sometimes an individual process, teachers also engage in collective sensemaking as they construct and reconstruct policy messages in the context of professional communities and collaborative conversations. In her case study of an elementary school in California, Coburn (2001) found that as agents of policy implementation, teachers link the new messages to their prior knowledge or belief systems, then frame and reframe messages until they arrive at a new understanding, a process Spillane (1999) refers to as the "zone of enactment" (p. 144). The process begins in chaos as teachers bracket new information in familiar experiences, then label it to make meaning of it (Datnow & Park, 2009). This process may produce an implementation that is not consistent with the original intent of the policy, depending on how the teacher makes sense of the message. Coburn's (2001) study found that different groups interpret the same messages in different ways. These differences are rooted in social interactions and the embedded context, such as a grade-level teacher team.

Similarly, Spillane and Zeuli (1999) found that as "different teachers bring different knowledge, beliefs, and experiences to reformers' proposals, they often construct different ideas about what the reforms mean for their teaching and pursue different course of action" (p. 2). In their study of 25 math teachers who self-professed to understand and implement mathematics reform, Spillane and Zeuli noted only four of the teachers altered practice in ways that were consistent with the intentions of the reform

itself, namely moving from traditional procedural-based to problem-solving and conceptual mathematics. The authors argue that reform requires a change in teacher behavior and knowledge. Where some teachers focused more on one or the other of these aspects, few teachers inhabited both, indicating teachers need to construct new understandings and grapple with how these will fit into existing practices.

At the core, teacher learning is influenced by opportunities and personal knowledge or beliefs that may contrast with reform messages (Spillane, 1999). Even within teacher communities, there can exist different interpretations of the same message (Datnow & Park, 2009). Some teachers find new policies to be threat to their identity, as if their prior practices and belief systems were wrong. Teachers may interpret the new policy as something they are already doing and therefore not see the need to make any change. Some policy is deemed unusable by implementers, noting that it is either too difficult, developmentally inappropriate for students, or does not fit into existing structures and the implementation would be unmanageable (Coburn, 2001). School site dynamics between the principal and teachers also factors into policy implementation (Sleegers et al., 2009). Teachers who lack faith in their leadership are less likely to change instructional practice.

In sum, sensemaking factors into all levels of the broader educational system, to include district leadership and personnel, site administrators, and individual teachers. Each of these organizational actors "constructs the demands of, and appropriate responses to, accountability systems differently" (Jennings, 2010, p. 229). These differences lead to variations in how educational policies are implemented. It is with this perspective of

sensemaking throughout varying components of educational systems that I will now discuss research specifically related to underschooled teenage immigrants.

Research on Refugee Students

A number of researchers and theorists have examined the achievement trajectories of immigrant students, and refugee students in particular. Ogbu's (1979, 1998) work from the 1970s through the late 1990s provides one framework for categorizing refugee students' perceptions of schooling and achievement gap issues. Ogbu labels African Americans as involuntary minorities and attributes their achievement gap to students and families not buying into the social mobility notion of education as a result of years of discrimination and subordination in a racially stratified, or caste-like, society. Voluntary immigrants experience an altogether different relationship with education in the United States, seeing it as a means to social mobility, though they still may struggle with achievement. Not everyone agrees with Ogbu, however. Foley (2005) finds Ogbu's model overly rigid about minority and race issues and feels more attention should be paid to the role of socioeconomic status. Gibson (1997) argues the issue is far more complex than a dichotomy of two typologies. In looking closely at unique groups of immigrants, including guest workers, undocumented immigrants, refugees, and economic migrants, Gibson finds that minority youth do better when they are anchored in their identities, communities, and peers and follow a path of selective/additive acculturation. Nonetheless, according to Ogbu, Foley, and Gibson, refugees lie somewhere between

voluntary and involuntary minorities, as people who did not necessarily chose to immigrate to the United States, but often see the potential opportunity education presents.

Prior to resettling in a third party host country, refugee students who remain in camps located in areas riddled with armed conflict (e.g., Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Eritrea) report a strong desire for completing their education, citing the notion that learning improves their outlook for the future (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). These refugees also connect well-being with learning, encompassing social curriculum as well as academics. Not surprisingly, upon resettlement, refugee students continue to exhibit motivation to learn. In their case studies of Kosovo refugee students in the United Kingdom, Bash and Zezlina-Phillips (2006) found that despite experiencing academic difficulties, students still displayed confidence in playground interactions and resilience in school. Successful refugee students seemed to take on another identity, integrating their native culture and host culture to allow them to take full advantage of educational opportunities while maintaining essential traditions and rituals.

Researchers agree that refugee students experience a range of academic struggles, categorized in McBrien's (2005) identification of key factors that create educational barriers for refugee students. Students themselves seem to be rarely surveyed, but in the few cases where they are, they are able to identify the major issues they face in completing their secondary education and they present coping skills, as shown in Roberts and Locke's (2001) case studies of three refugee students. The typical secondary school structure and the unique challenges associated with being an adolescent refugee create educational barriers.

McBrien (2005) summarizes these unique challenges as acculturation stress, pre-migratory trauma, economic issues, emotional issues, language struggles, urban resettlement issues. Orellana, Pulido & Dorner (2003) identify the role as family "para-phraser" as both an added stress and a source of pride amongst adolescent immigrant students. Students often have to translate everyday functions, financial transactions, medical situations, and cultural norms for their families, thus creating an urgency to acculturate and learn English. While many students reported positive feelings in conjunction with this role as familial broker, Orellana, Pulido, & Dorner (2003) assert that students often find themselves in situations where there is a power differential and students are unable to fully represent their families' interests.

Thus far, research on immigrant adolescents in the United States has concentrated on a few ethnic groups and is primarily limited to Hispanic immigrants, Vietnamese and Hmong refugees from the early 1970s, and current Somali Bantu populations (Dodds, Lawrence, Karantzas, Brooker, Lin, Champness, & Albert, 2010; Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003, Roxas & Roy, 2012). Little research exists that allows immigrant and refugee adolescent students to give voice their perceptions of accessing a foreign education system, learn the necessary curriculum, and socially adjust to their new surroundings. The small number of studies that do document student voice deal with a limited range of refugee groups and is, therefore, not broadly representational of refugee students' experiences of schooling in the United States. An important gap in the research is studies which investigate newly arrived refugees' understanding of school as an

institution in the United States and, as such, how refugees understand how to navigate this institution.

The Context of School, Curriculum, and Pedagogy for Newcomer Students

Traditional pedagogical practices disengage students who find it inaccessible and irrelevant (Albright & Luke, 2008). In his seminal work on critical pedagogy for underschooled populations in Brazil, Freire (1970) refers to many of these traditional practices as the "banking notion of education" (p. 57), likening students' brains to an account into which a teacher deposits information, and proposes rejecting it entirely. Rather than filling their students with knowledge, Freire advocates for educators honoring the idea that students come with their own relevant knowledge they have gained from interactions with the world and with others and then, working interdependently with teachers, create a problem-posing praxis of education, which emphasizes action and reflection. In this way, students are not dependent on teachers to supply them with information. They can work collaboratively to combine knowledge and resources.

In accordance with Freire's work with illiterate populations, Auerbach (1992) asserts students need not be fully literate to access critical thinking skills. In her work with developing literacy in foreign-born families, Auerbach found that lessons should be contextualized and relevant to learners' lives. They should build on the strengths and other resources students bring, often in the form of oral language, as they develop critical literacy skills.

Dooley (2009) garnered similar findings when she interviewed eight recent central African refugees in secondary school, their teachers, and families in Australia. Each of these students came from refugee camps where they had some limited education. Dooley conducted in depth case studies beginning upon their arrival and enrollment in intensive language schools in 2006 through their transition into mainstream high schools in 2008. Her study revealed that African refugee students with limited education were able to access critical thinking when teachers made connections with knowledge or thought processes students inherently used. For example, teachers could access students' knowledge of revolution in their native country to teach the content of the Spanish War, rather than circumvent the content altogether in favor of teaching only remediated literacy. She advocates for integration of basic skills and critical literacy approaches as opposed to linearly teaching entry-level literacy skills and, perhaps later, addressing critical literacy skills. Indeed, critical literacy and basic skills need to be addressed simultaneously when dealing with underschooled students. Though they may not be able to read and write, underschooled immigrants are able to think critically and assume pressing family responsibilities. These high level skills should be honored as well as built upon in educational practices.

Chu (2009) asserts that the largest share of foreign born students are in secondary school and, based on a review of successful programs, recommends a multi-pronged approach for designing and implementing an effective program that addresses the unique challenges associated with education recently arrived immigrants. Areas with influxes of immigrant populations should build strong school leadership, be prepared to provide

support services for immigrant students, place a high importance on involving immigrant parents, provide access to content and core curriculum in heritage languages if possible, allow for flexible scheduling, and a adequately train teachers. To evaluate programs, schools and districts need to establish criteria or standards, then gather performance data based on English proficiency levels, learning curriculum, and graduation and attendance rates, and then determine the effectiveness of a program and make necessary changes.

Programmatically, most areas with high populations of refugee students seem to create self-contained or isolated programs to deal with the unique traumas, literacy needs, and content gaps of students (Boyson & Short, 1997; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000). Feinberg (2000) finds that while these programs do allow for targeted instruction and intervention, they are also culturally and linguistically isolating. Refugee students are, by definition, isolated, and keeping them separated from the mainstream population only enhances this marginalization. Pugh, Every, and Hattman's study (2012) directly addresses this issue by looking more closely at a school that has a separate Secondary Newcomer Program on campus with mainstream students. While other programs also house refugee programs alongside mainstream populations, this case is interesting in that there is active exchange between the staff and students. The teachers collaborate and engage in inquiry groups with the understanding that refugee students will eventually leave the isolated setting and enter the other classes. Students are integrated for some limited portions of the day to facilitate interaction and cultural understanding. While the authors do not find every aspect to be ideal, this Secondary Newcomer Program

demonstrates promising effective structural and curricular modifications to allow for refugee education.

While there is limited research about targeted specific curriculum or approaches related to newcomers, Goodwin (2010) discusses how teachers of newcomers address issues of cultural diversity. In her study of Asian and Pacific Island students, Goodwin found that educational reform is not sufficient in meeting the needs of immigrant children. She argues that the policy of No Child Left Behind is overly broad and does not allow for diverse education. Though she agrees with the practice of culturally relevant pedagogy, Goodwin finds that this instructional strategy is often implemented in a superficial way, failing to meet the needs of immigrant students. Goodwin advocates for more understanding of the diversity within Asian and Pacific Island students and the need for more critical curriculum.

Dooley's (2009) proposed curriculum is a break from traditional thinking that newcomers must first learn basic literacy processes and grammatical structures before engaging in critical thinking. Dooley deconstructs literacy into four main areas: decoding, genre features, comprehension, and critical analysis, then advocates for the simultaneous instruction in all four areas. Dooley makes the point that particularly in the case of African refugee students who come with strong oral traditions but limited written literacy, students are able to think deeply before they are able to express it in the dominant language and they should be afforded the opportunity to do so. Due to the lack of trained teachers or relevant curriculum targeted to diverse populations, Ruiz de

Velasco and Fix (2000) found injustices inherent in the structure of secondary school and the inability to effectively educate refugee students in these settings.

Gay (2002) also proposes a model of Culturally Responsive Teaching, asserting teachers should have explicit knowledge, including cultural differences and norms, about the ethnic groups represented in their classes in order to meet the unique and individual needs as well as improve the success of culturally diverse children. Teachers must create a classroom climate conducive to multiple cultures co-existing and learning, dealing with cultural conflict and misunderstandings that arise between their newcomer students (Roxas, 2011). Just as Freire (1970) advocates building upon student's varied experiences, Gay (2002) suggests teachers implement "cultural scaffolding" which uses students' own cultures and experiences and then expands upon them (p. 5). Teachers exhibit culturally sensitive caring while also maintaining high expectations and a core belief that diverse students can achieve the same intellectual levels as their mainstream peers. A culturally responsive teacher holistically integrates culture and expectations to build a supportive classroom community. Culturally responsive pedagogy is not designed specifically for refugee students but rather is promoted for all students.

Teachers play a pivotal role in both the implementation of curriculum and advocacy of students. In her study of a school in Australia, Keddie (2012) found that newcomer teachers were often the sole advocates for immigrant students to be treated equitably in curriculum considerations as well as school policies. Keddie's study of an Australian school with a high population of refugees noted that schools homogenized refugee populations, and inherent in this homogenization, were social and political

injustices. Teachers of underschooled immigrants found themselves advocating for more inclusive policies and the adoption of critical reflective practices among the staff. National, state, and district policies dictate curriculum and instruction, but beyond this study, there exists limited research about how the teacher negotiates his or her role in relation to district policy and environment.

National, State, and District Policy Regarding Newcomer Students

Broad policies determine many of the program models and ensuing curriculum and instructional practices. This section will briefly discuss three policies which guided the work in Marisol School District during the time of this study: No Child Left Behind, Common Core State Standards, and the University of California's admission requirements with respect to coursework.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB). In 2001, The United States government reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 in a bill entitled No Child Left Behind (NCLB; Public Law No. 107-110, Stat. 1425, 2002). Under NCLB, states which use federal funds are accountable for student achievement, as measured by the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) report The AYP includes goals for graduation rates and student proficiency levels, as well as reports on a number of subgroups, including economically disadvantaged students and English Learners. Based on a school's AYP, federal funds are allocated or sanctioned. At the time of this study, NCLB was reconfigured into the

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015) and passed legislation. Nonetheless, schools will continue to operate under NCLB until the new legislation is fully implemented.

Though the intent of NCLB is to improve the performance of traditionally underserved subgroups, it "unintentionally place(s) undue test performance pressure on schools with large numbers of targeted students" (Abedi, 2004, p. 2). According to Abedi, schools with large populations of English Learners have students who begin at a lower baseline, and thus struggle to reach the adequate yearly performance goal of students who range in proficient levels of content knowledge. Nonetheless, if schools do not meet their annual growth goals regardless of the demographics of their student population, they are sanctioned.

Keddie (2012) addresses issues of cultural diversity and accountability policies in relation to refugee education in Australia. In her study of a school in Australia, she found that newcomer teachers were often the sole advocates for immigrant students to be treated equitably in curriculum considerations and well as school policies. Goodwin (2010) analyzes the impacts of policy on Asians and Pacific Islanders in the US. She finds that No Child Left Behind and other educational reform movements are insufficient in meeting the needs of immigrant students and the ultimate effects of these reforms is to perpetuate myths of Asian student achievement, which in turn leads recently immigrated Asian Americans feeling isolated and marginalized by educational policies.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS). Released in 2010, the Common Core State Standards Initiative is a set of unified standards intended to align instruction across

states to better prepare students for college and career readiness. According to the Common Core State Standards Initiative, "these standards are aligned to the expectations of colleges, workforce training programs, and employers. The standards promote equity by ensuring all students are well prepared to collaborate and compete with their peers in the United States and abroad" (corestandards.org, 2015). CCSS explicitly states what students are to learn, but not necessarily how they are to be taught. Forty-six states and the District of Columbia adopted these standards, essentially creating a national curriculum that allows for shared expectations, focus, efficiency, and quality of assessments primarily in English Language Arts and Mathematics (Porter et al, 2011). California adopted the CCSS and, as such, Marisol Union School District has implemented the standards across the district.

District A-G graduation requirements. In recent years, there has been a movement for secondary schools to require students to complete college and career ready curriculum. Backed by the American Civil Liberties Union, many urban school districts interpreted this policy to require graduating students to complete courses that qualify for university entrance. Recently, Marisol School District followed suit and, beginning in 2016, requires all graduating seniors to have completed the basic requirements of courses, categorized as "A-G requirements", with a grade of D or higher. Ideally, this new policy offers exposes all kids to a college preparatory and could increase access for historically underserved populations. But critics note that it "could inadvertently lessen equality of opportunity" because of increased academic rigor, which may lead to students failing,

attendance dropping, and rising dropout rates (Betts, Zau, Young, and Bachofer, 2015, p. 2). Furthermore, the push for college readiness could decrease offerings of Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses, thereby limiting the availability of career readiness in favor of providing opportunity for a university education.

In their study of the implementation of the effect of the A-G coursework graduation requirement in one school district, San Diego Unified, Betts et al. (2015) compared the trajectory of the first affected class of 2016 to classes prior to implementation. While they found a positive trend in A-G course completion in the class of 2016, they also found a widening achievement gap. Betts et al. (2015) identifies key subgroups experiencing unequal course completion rates: African Americans, Hispanic, special education students, students whose parents have lower educational levels, and English Learners. Particularly problematic are the English Learner students who fell behind due to cumulative subjects, such as English Language Arts and mathematics, making it more difficult to complete the sequence of courses. They note that the district needs to offer more summer school opportunities for these students, as well as abide by the California Education Code, which requires that schools offer an alternate route to a diploma.

Taken together, these are some of the major policies teachers must attend to while also considering the specific circumstances under which underschooled immigrant students enter schools. Secondary Newcomer teachers must find ways to address Common Core State Standards and district-mandated A-G graduation requirements, despite the fact that their students enter school with limited literacy and math skills.

Next steps

Though underschooled immigrant students often view education as an opportunity for upward mobility (Portes & Zhou, 1993), they enter the country with a range of challenges prior to beginning school. Once in school, they are faced with rigorous academic standards and graduation requirements that often prohibit them from earning a high school diploma. They usually rely on their primary point of contact, teachers, to mitigate these obstacles and guide them. It follows, then, that how teachers make sense of and implement these policies profoundly affects how students will navigate the system. There is ample research about how central office personnel, site administrators, and teachers make sense of policies (Coburn, 2001; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002). However, there is little research of how administrators and teachers interpret and implement policy related to the specific subgroup of underschooled immigrant students, a small but significant population of Marisol School District.

As the literature reveals, these students have a host of needs that call upon teachers to make some decisions about how to allocate their time, what academic and social curriculum to focus on, and how to advise students and staff. To make such decisions, teachers make sense of student needs, school expectations, and governing policies. Knowing that underschooled immigrants pose a higher risk of dropout, failure, or disengagement, how teachers make sense of policy and conceptualize their role is paramount to student success.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The goal of this study is to examine the overarching district policies related to educating underschooled immigrant students in MSD, analyze how teachers make sense of and implement these policies, and conceptualize their roles within this system. While there is ample research related to how teachers make sense of and implement instructional policies (Coburn, 2001; Datnow & Park, 2009; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Spillane, 1999), there is little research to investigate the effects of district policy on the education of underschooled immigrant students as a specific population. I employed qualitative methods and used a sensemaking framework to examine how teachers conceptualize their roles and implement policy.

This study is designed to answer the following questions:

How do teachers balance policy expectations with the demands of teaching and addressing the unique needs of underschooled immigrant students?

- What are district policies and requirements for secondary students with limited education?
- How do teachers make sense of and implement these policies?

Research Design

Qualitative research can be used to better understand a phenomenon about which little is known or to gain new perspective (Creswell, 2005). Mertens (2014) describes the role of qualitative research as providing "an in-depth description of a specific program, practice, or setting" (p. 225). Now in its seventh year of implementation, MSD's Secondary Newcomer Programs represent a relatively new phenomenon and little data has been collected regarding the practices, perceptions, or effectiveness of the program. While there is ample research about the benefits of rigorous standards as well as the challenges of underschooled immigrant children, less is known about the intersection of such a policy and its effect on marginalized populations like refugee students. Furthermore, in comparison to other district programs, the Secondary Newcomer Program is small and necessitated more intimate methods of study.

Researchers employ qualitative methods to understand how participants interpret and attribute meaning to their experiences (Merriam, 1998). Since the goal of this study was to examine teacher perspective and role in policy implementation with underschooled immigrant students, qualitative methods lent themselves to examining teachers' sensemaking processes. In order to validate qualitative data, multiple data collection methods allow researchers to gain information about different aspects of phenomena, represent varying perspectives, and triangulate conclusions (Maxwell, 2012; Mertens, 2014). As such, the design of this study included three types of data collection: document analysis, interviews, and observation in an effort to understand multiple layers of teacher sensemaking and to increase study validity.

Interview methods allow a researcher to access how individuals make meaning of a phenomenon (Brenner, 2006; Merriam, 1998). Both the amount of structure in the interview and the size of the participant group factor widely in how and what types of information a researcher acquires. Maxwell (2012) identifies goals and criteria for participant selection. The goals of selecting participants for a study are to represent typicality, note dimensions of variation, make comparisons, and establish relationships. Realistically, selection depends greatly on access and relationships. Maxwell refers to this process of specifically choosing participants who are accessible, representative, and willing to partake in the study as convenience sampling.

More open-ended, less structured interviews offer informants more freedom of expression while highly structured questions narrow and focus the scope of the investigation. Similarly variable, the size of the interview group affects how participants respond (Mertens, 2014). Where focus groups rely on the interaction of multiple people and allow for consensus building, individual interviews emphasize a single person's perceptions. Since this study focused on different ways that teachers make sense of and implement district policies, it was more aptly suited for individual interviews. To maintain focus but allow for adequate freedom of expression, I conducted semi-structured personal interviews of teachers, lead teachers, counselors, and administrators (Merriam, 1998).

Conducted in the field and representing a firsthand experience with phenomena, observation pairs with interviewing to depict a more comprehensive understanding of a research topic (Merriam, 1998). Observation methods invite researchers to experience a

more natural, flowing setting. Like interview techniques, observation presents an array of options based on the type of information desired. More focused and structured observations allow the researcher to focus on limited aspects of the study while less structured protocol may reveal unexpected data.

In sum, qualitative research methods allowed for in depth analysis to paint a picture of this highly specified, unique program.

Site Selection and Sampling

In its entirety, the Secondary Newcomer Program in MSD includes seven high school-age classes located across four campuses and two middle school classes at two different sites, serving a total of approximately 180 students. There are no elementary level classes because elementary schools are naturally structured to allow for integration and intervention of English Learner students. Though the program exists at multiple school sites, it is funded and managed out of the central district Second Language Office (SLO). SLO recruits the associated personnel, funds the staff and materials out of their budget, and designs and implements the curriculum. At individual school sites, administrators oversee how the program fits in the comprehensive school site. Counselors are charged with assisting all students, including Secondary Newcomer students, with navigating the necessary coursework to graduate. Additionally, one high school site funds a specific lead teacher designated to assess and work with English Learners, called the English Learner Support Teacher.

While there are four high schools hosting Secondary Newcomer programs, only two of them intake a sufficient number of underschooled immigrant students to warrant study. Nearly all refugee families resettled in the city attend school in two main high school clusters (source removed for anonymity). Accordingly, this study focused only on these two high schools. Within these two schools, there are five Secondary Newcomer Program classrooms, representing 71% of the high school Secondary Newcomer teachers and 56% of the total number of Secondary Newcomer teachers.

I asked each of the teachers in the two most heavily impacted schools to participate in interviews and classroom observations. All five of the classroom teachers were women between 30 and 55 years of age. Their experience ranged from 10-25 years of teaching. Four of the five held Multiple Subject Credentials, three of the five held at least one Single Subject Credential or a Supplementary Authorization in a content area they taught. All teachers held a Crosscultural, Language, and Academic Development (CLAD) certification that qualified them to teach English Learners.

In order to understand how people at each level of the system made sense of policies related to newcomer education, I also interviewed counselors, lead teachers, and site administrators. Amongst this group of participants, there were three men and five women. All were between 35-65 years old and had 10-35 years of experience in the field of education.

I conducted semi-structured interviews with each teacher and observed their classrooms during formal instructional time and more informal passing periods and advisory periods. Additionally, I interviewed the lead teacher at the most heavily

impacted school, as well as counselors and administrators at both sites who work with English Learners as they progress out of the Secondary Newcomer Program and into the mainstream classes.

At the district level, I interviewed the director of the Second Language Office, who acts as the program administrator, and the district lead teachers assigned to work on developing curriculum and professional development for the Secondary Newcomer Program across the district. In this capacity, the director and lead teachers provided administrative perspective of the comprehensive program. Participant sampling is shown in Figure 3 below.

District Level	School Level	Teacher Level
Director of the Second Language Office (1)	Lead Teacher (1)	High School One: 2 Secondary Newcomer Program teachers and classroom observations
	School Counselors (2)	
Lead Teachers (2)	Site administrators (2)	
		High School Two: 3 Secondary Newcomer Program teachers and classroom observations

Figure 3: Participant sampling.

Data Collection

Document analysis. For purposes of this study, I collected and analyzed district-generated documents related to course descriptions, courses of study for English Learner populations, and graduation requirements to understand the history and current state of district policy, particularly as it related to standards and graduation requirements. This analysis formed the basis for the subsequent data collection. Throughout the data collection process, I collected relevant documents. From teachers, I collected the notes form they kept in advance of the interview if they completed it, curriculum maps and pacing guides, and the Secondary Newcomer Program mission statement. From the district personnel, I collected the Pathways to Graduation document created to guide the placement of English as a Second Language students as well as the standard Pathways to Graduation document used for placement of mainstream education students. I collected the documents delineating A-G requirements. After the main data collection period, the state of California passed legislation pertinent to the California High School Exit Exam, Assembly Bill 484. I collected this bill from the California Department of Education website.

Interviews. Using a semi-structured interview protocol (Appendices A, B), I captured Secondary Newcomer Program personnel's understandings of policy and their roles in implementation by interviewing teachers and counselors at two most heavily

impacted high schools, district lead teachers, and the director of the Second Language Office.

I initiated contacted by emailing teachers with whom I had prior connections. Those teachers then assisted in recruiting counselors, lead teachers, and site administrators. Once I was connected to the site personnel, I contacted each individual by email and arranged an interview schedule, based on the flexibility of their scheduling and the teachers' preparatory periods. After arranging all the interviews, I scheduled classroom observations of each participating teacher during the remaining available times. I then sent each participant the consent form via email in advance of their interview to allow time for them to review the documents and discuss any questions or concerns. Participants who work with students in any capacity, including teachers, lead teachers, and counselors, were also asked to keep a log where they could jot down notes about policy and advising students to help guide our interview. Prior to each interview, I collected the consent forms, explained the interview and recording procedures, and verbally asked for consent to record again prior to conducting the interview.

I followed the same procedure for contacting district personnel, relying on a prior contact with the administrator and a lead teacher to connect with a third person who works with the Secondary Newcomer Program. I arranged a day that worked best in all their schedules to come to the district office and conduct all the interviews. They also

received all the consent forms prior to the interview and gave verbal consent to be recorded. At this time, I requested a schedule of professional development sessions that would occur in the future and arranged an observation of one session in the Fall, after school was to begin again. The lead teacher conducting this professional development explained that this session would primarily deal with policy implementation for the coming school year, based on data and feedback from the current school year.

My goal during the interview process was to understand how each of the participants understands the policy and be able to note similarities and differences both within the group of teachers and across the various types of personnel affiliated with the program. As the district's lead administrator of all English Learner programs, the director provided crucial information related to the formation and intention of the policy and her understanding of how it is and should be implemented in Secondary Newcomer Programs. Site administrators and counselors were asked about district policies, how it impacts the work at their individual site, and how they see policy affecting teachers and students. During their interviews, teachers were asked about their sense of district policy and how this connected to their current classroom instruction and counseling of student (Appendix A). District lead teachers were also asked about their understanding of policy and discuss how they supported its implementation in various Secondary Newcomer Programs in the district (Appendix B).

Transcribing interviews allows researchers to engage with the data from its inception and enhances trustworthiness (Mertens, 2014). Therefore, I personally transcribed each interview verbatim, changing each of the participant, site, and program names to codes in order to protect anonymity. I then sent each participant a copy of the transcripts and offered them the opportunity to clarify or amend their transcripts. I did not receive any further feedback from any of the participants aside from reassurances of anonymity.

Observations. In addition to interviews, I employed a system of semi-structured observation where I both looked for specific behaviors, but included field notes on other, incidental observations to examine a broader range of potential data. I used an observation guide (Appendix C) to guide observations of all five Secondary Newcomer Program teachers during class time and their advisory periods, a section of the day designed to allow for informal counseling and tutoring. In self-contained classes, the teacher serves as the primary point of contact for underschooled immigrant students unfamiliar with the United States school system, and therefore often counsels students in strategies for navigating the system. I specifically looked for evidence of policy implementation through both instruction and informal conversations with students. As

part of the observational process, I also noted artifacts and student work that demonstrated evidence of policy implementation.

During classroom and professional development observations, I recorded notes on my computer throughout the time I was there. Before leaving the classroom, I offered each participant the opportunity to view my raw notes, though none opted to do so. My notes consisted of lists of classroom artifacts I saw, as well as some photos taken with the assent of the teacher, short snippets of interactions with students or pertinent instruction, and notes about casual conversations we had regarding the study outside of the interview. At the completion of each of these observation days, I formatted my notes to categorize artifacts, interactions, and memos in order to make them more accessible for later data analysis. Shortly after all the observations, I wrote field notes to capture the setting and impressions that may not have been captured in the observations or interviews. All of these observation and field notes were used in subsequent data analysis.

Data Analysis

Data analysis occurred throughout the data collection process. Maxwell (2012) describes a multi-step process to qualitative data analysis, which includes reading and indexing transcripts and notes, writing memos to capture analytic thinking and insights, and categorizing and connecting data. This should be done both during and after the data

collection. In the categorizing and connecting phases, Strauss and Corbin (1990) recommend a progressive and recursive coding process. In this model, the researcher begins with open coding to group similarities then moves on to axial coding to find relationships between categories. The final stage involves selective coding of concentrating on the core study categories related to the theory. Here, the researcher can find the predominant trends among the data, then triangulate other data sources to increase validity.

I followed a similar process with my transcripts, documents, and notes. My goal in this process was to find similarities and differences in how teachers and staff make sense of and implement district policy. To that end, I began looking at how policy is interpreted and understood. This provided a basis for beginning the data analysis. I began by simply reading through interview transcripts and indexing poignant moments or related ideas. I kept memos to capture my insights and thoughts as I indexed my data. Then I moved to categorizing and coding, beginning with some a priori codes based on my research questions and theoretical constructs, but also allowing for more codes to present themselves through emerging patterns (Appendix E). Once the bulk of interview data was open-coded, I used the coding software, MAXQDA, to find relationships between categories and combine and eliminate categories accordingly. At this point, I also included the field notes, observation guides, and document analysis in the coding process. This allowed for relevant codes to have multiple data sources as evidence.

To move this coded data to text, I reorganized the data according to code and wrote summaries of each participant's responses related to each code. I subsequently created a large table of narrative summaries organized by both participant and code. As large trends began to emerge, I examined these summaries to understand the similarities and differences in participant responses, then grouped these together to formulate my findings, which I augmented with quotes from the raw interview data.

Limitations

Though this study will contribute to the growing body of research on how teachers make sense of policy and how that affects implementation, the small sample size may limit generalizability. However, generalizing to populations is not the sole goal of qualitative research, but rather to use qualitative data to describe a particular phenomenon related to one population of marginalized students. While this research focuses on one highly specialized population, it could potentially provide a model for examining how teachers make sense of policies for other marginalized subgroups of students, such as English Learners or Special Education students. Moreover, because this study focuses on teachers as the primary sensemakers, this study could inform other teacher-centered research related to sensemaking and policy implementation. The in-depth nature of the study allowed me to gather data only in one district; however, the findings from this study could inform other districts with large numbers of underschooled immigrant students.

Ethical Considerations

Maxwell (2012) asserts the primary ethical obligation of a qualitative researcher is "to try to understand how the participants will perceive your actions and respond to these" (p. 92). As a teacher, I was aware of the environmental nuances associated with discussing sensitive topics with a researcher in ways that will be made public. Minimizing risk to my participants is of utmost importance. Esterberg (2002) identifies maintaining confidentiality and obtaining informed consent as two essential considerations.

Prior to its onset, this study was reviewed and approved by both the University of California, San Diego's Institutional Review Board as well as the school district's research review board. Before interviewing participants, I explained the purpose of the study and all the confidentiality measures in place. Most importantly, I reiterated that the study is not an evaluation of their teaching or their interpretations of policy. I gave them a week to consider the risks, ask any questions, and make a decision, at which time, I asked them to sign an informed consent (Appendix D). To protect the identity of participants, data was collected, transcribed, and coded using pseudonyms. Names of departments, school sites, and job titles were also assigned pseudonyms. As this study is not intended to criticize policy or personnel, but rather shed light on an under-studied phenomenon, I ensured the data analysis maintained a focus on description and not critique.

Positionality

Having prior experience teaching underschooled immigrant students at both the elementary and secondary levels, I have firsthand experience with how district policy and implementation affects marginalized programs. I acknowledge that my own interpretation of teachers' sensemaking could be influenced by my own experience and create bias in the study. To counteract this potential bias, I sought the input of an outsider in reading through the transcripts and developing the coding system. By having a person not affiliated with the program assist with identifying trends and themes, I can be more confident that my interpretation of the data represents reality.

Similarly, I have had prior contact with each of the teachers I interviewed and observed. This could benefit my research in that teachers could view me as an insider and might feel more comfortable telling me their genuine interpretations of policy (Merriam, 1998). However, it could be disadvantageous if teachers do not fully explain their interpretations as a result of an assumed shared understanding. They may also feel threatened by sharing their views for a formal study. To counteract these potential issues, I relied on semi-structured interview questions in order to elicit elaborated responses. To ensure teachers felt comfortable sharing their perspectives for a formal study, I clearly explained confidentiality standards and answered any concerns or questions.

Chapter 4: Setting the Context

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to analyze how teachers make sense of educational policies as they implement them in their classes of underschooled refugee students and balance the demands of these policies with the specific challenges inherent in this population. The following three chapters address the research questions regarding how teachers balance policy expectations with the demands of teaching and addressing the unique needs of underschooled immigrant students. District policies are explained, as well as how teachers make sense of and implement these policies.

Data from teacher, site personnel and administration, and district personnel and administration interviews, observations, and policy documents were analyzed for emergent themes related to student and institutional challenges, participants' espoused beliefs on the purpose of school for underschooled immigrant students, understanding and prioritizing of local and state policies, and how teachers make ensuing curricular and instructional decisions. The findings will be described using an analytical framework of sensemaking (Datnow and Park, 2009; Honig and Hatch, 2004;Weick, 2005).

Weick (2005) addresses the issue of power how policies are interpreted and implemented, noting that those in power will have a stronger influence while those in the margins have less voice. Honig and Hatch (2004) discuss the role of shaping the policy message by various tiers in the hierarchy of education, from how the broad policy

message is “bridged” or “buffered” by district personnel and again by site administrators before reaching the classroom level. Once this policy is enacted, teachers simultaneously make sense of it and execute it based on their own understandings and beliefs. An analysis of transcripts, observation notes, and policy documents led to findings on how teachers balance rigorous academic policies with the social, emotional, and economic needs of underschooled immigrant students.

This chapter will begin by describing the context in terms of policy, the challenges students face, and the challenges teachers face. Subsequent findings chapters will focus on participants’ perceptions on the purpose of school in general and the Second Language Program in particular, the major educational policies identified by participants as instrumental to their decision-making, and conclude with a discussion of how teachers balance student needs and educational policy.

Setting the Context: Policy

The Secondary Newcomer Program is funded and governed primarily out of the district’s Second Language Office (SLO). Officially, the mission of the program is stated as follows:

> *The mission of the MSD Secondary Newcomer Program is to provide a solid foundation in oral and written English for students who are new to English and new to the United States. This program engages students in a rigorous accelerated course of study that builds everyday, functional language and academic English as well as background knowledge across the curriculum. The primary goal of the SNP is for students to obtain:*
>
> - *Intermediate level of English proficiency*
> - *Reading for Algebra 1*
> - *Understanding of the foundations of democracy*
> - *Readiness for Earth and/or Life Science*
> - *Completion of P.E. and/or a fine/practical arts elective*
> - *Orientation to U.S. Culture*

The district's website goes on to explain that "the instructional design stems from the fundamental belief that all of our students are capable of developing the high levels of proficiency in English that will allow them to access grade level content" and that students typically remain in the program for two semesters, but some may accelerate and leave after one semester to enter mainstream, credit-bearing classes (source removed for anonymity purposes).

Though this is the district's officially-stated purpose of the program, after seven years of implementation, the director acknowledged that some realities affect the ideal scenario of accelerating English Language Development and preparing students for rigorous coursework in a year or less. She explains:

> We have a couple school sites where the students, they might be recently arrived, but they are already very literate in their own language and have a lot of school experience, and compared to a couple of other school sites where the students truly are refugee immigrants, they're coming to us from having spent years in refugee camps, interrupted education or no education. So there's just a really, really broad range of academic needs, linguistic needs, and every other level of need within our Secondary Newcomer Program.

In essence, she realized that the program takes a different shape depending on the specific demographics of the neighborhood where it is located. Nonetheless, she did advocate for some program cohesion, particularly in the area of student monitoring. Though each site may have differed in its program model, they each must administer the same customized interim assessments to be used not only for instructional decision-making, but for tracking students and determining guidelines for exiting the program as well. While each site had different schedules and altered their curriculum, they were expected to adhere to the assessment schedule and the student placement standards.

One area where sites differed in their implementation of the Secondary Newcomer Program is how long students remained in the program. At sites with large numbers of underschooled students, the tendency had been to keep students until the teachers believed they had sufficient English proficiency and basic skills to pass credit-bearing courses or accelerate to higher levels of English as a Second Language. With the new A-G requirements, however, this practice of sheltering students until they seemed prepared to pass mainstream classes may have been inhibiting their chances for earning a diploma. None of the courses in the Secondary Newcomer Program counted towards graduation requirements. Hence, the longer a student remained in the program, the longer the delay for them to begin earning graduation credits. In response to this conflicting issue, the director advocated for more realistic expectations of what underschooled immigrant students should achieve in their one year of the program. Using the data collected from the uniform assessments customized for students in the New Language

Program, the Second Language Office developed clear guidelines of when a student is to exit the program and tasked the general education and higher level of ESL teachers with providing the scaffolded instruction that would support students in passing their classes. The director understood that the graduation requirements necessitated moving students out of the program perhaps before they might have been fully prepared for credit-bearing courses. In this way, the unofficial mission of the program changed from the idealism of attaining a level of English necessary for rigorous instruction to the more pragmatic practice of students acquiring basic level of English necessary for entering mainstream classes while still needing significant support.

The lead teachers in the district echoed the director's sentiments. They discussed their struggle with finding a balance between the urgency to enroll students in credit-bearing courses and the research-based models of language acquisition. Though these lead teachers understood that research shows it takes several years to acquire a language at an academic level, they realized the Secondary Newcomer students do not have this amount of time. One lead teacher discussed personnel issues at length, noting that many schools tend to put their weakest teachers in the middle levels of ESL and their strongest teachers in the mainstream English courses. She acknowledged this factors into how Secondary Newcomer teachers make their decisions. If they knew a student would be placed in a class with an ineffective teacher the following year, the Secondary Newcomer teacher often chose to keep that student longer to accelerate past that class. In this case, teachers made local adaptations in response to site policy. Prior to the district adopting A-G requirements, these decisions seemed less obtrusive as students continued to receive

elective credits toward graduation and could reach the basic level of English necessary for a diploma. With the new graduation requirements, there was a push from both district and site personnel to move students into these mid-level ESL courses regardless of the personnel considerations.

The district lead teachers pointed to two ways schools dealt with this conflict between urgency to move students along, student preparedness, and personnel placement. Some schools stopped offering ESL altogether because they are not credit-bearing classes and the administration feared that students would not be on track to graduate. In these cases, students were placed in "sink or swim" situations. Another possible solution lied in more professional development, ensuring that all teachers were adequately trained in and implementing instructional approaches effective for language learners. One lead teacher reasoned that since students must move into mainstream courses faster to be on the path to graduate, the issue should become an entire staff issue. No longer could it be the sole responsibility of the Secondary Newcomer teacher to scaffold instruction for students, because "if the school doesn't have a structure and identified supports for [students], then they're not going to make it, no matter how wonderful your Secondary Newcomer Program is." She acknowledged the difficult decisions facing the teachers, knowing their students would likely enter a course where they will fail, but saw the retention of students in the Secondary Newcomer Program as more detrimental, essentially ensuring they will drop out before earning their diploma. Thus, the lead teachers and the director directed Secondary Newcomer Programs to move students out as soon as they met minimal English requirements. In an observed professional development session for Secondary

Newcomer teachers, district lead teachers passed out a spreadsheet with assessment data and exit rates to highlight the need to move students out as soon as they reach the recommended proficiency level. While teachers discussed the challenges associated with moving students out at such a basic level, they also acknowledged that the past practice of retaining students in order to accelerate them now comes with the ultimate consequence of not meeting graduation requirements.

Setting the Context: Student Challenges

> "You'd almost want to say that the cards are stacked against them."
>
> -- Teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program

McBrien (2005) identifies acculturation stress, pre-migratory trauma, economic and emotional issues, language barriers, and urban resettlement as the primary challenges refugee students face upon coming to the United States. Orellana, Pulido, and Dorner (2003) add to this list the role of family "para-phraser," or brokering cultural and economic situations on behalf of their families. Once in school, students face programmatic and academic challenges in their quest for a diploma (Boyson & Short, 1997; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000).

Secondary Newcomer Program teachers, site and district personnel, and administration all point to these myriad challenges faced by both underschooled immigrant students in their quest to complete high school and the faculty and staff who

usher them through the system. In the Secondary Newcomer Program, they similarly identified challenges associated with migration and acculturation, poverty, and academic demands, along with programmatic challenges of resources, scheduling, and support.

Migration and acculturation. Faculty and staff who worked with underschooled immigrant students recognized their struggles both with leaving their home country and resettling in the United States.

Students who leave their country often flee violence, war, and extreme poverty. In addition to the emotional stressors caused by their pre-migratory lives, students also dealt with the effects of leaving family and surviving traumatic situations. One teacher noted that underschooled immigrant students often feel "sad and worried about their families and relatives" who are left behind. They feel guilty about being survivors.

Once here, students must acculturate to an entirely new way of living. One counselor explained:

> There's got to be an acculturation factor that might be a shock to some of them, depending on where they came from, their country that's a lot different and acculturating to not just America, but [neighborhood name]. You know, because [neighborhood] in itself is its own unique fabric of the multicultural pool so I mean, it's, just that acculturating and, and surviving [neighborhood].

Families are generally resettled in enclaves of immigrant communities, so the neighborhood at large is diverse in cultures and languages. Furthermore, the

neighborhood experiences the usual strife of inner city communities, with violence, crime, and gang activity. This counselor pointed to all these factors of cultural differences, language barriers, and inner city issues as acculturation stressors. Another counselor concurred and described how students eventually take on the persona of urban American teens:

> Coming to a new country's got to be crazy….so different from what [they're used to]…when they come, they're nice and they're proper and everything and then they become Americans, unfortunately, and they've got the saggy jeans and they've got the chains.

Teachers also pointed out that underschooled immigrant students "want to be on par with everyone else, [they] want to be where their peers are." Despite their attempts to fit in, teachers noted students often experienced a sense of isolation because of their language and culture. Not only does this occur across cultures, with students not interacting with students from other cultures, but also within their own culture. One teacher saw a "sort of internal discrimination or bullying" that occurred between students who have been here for a longer period of time and those most recently arrived.

An added pressure comes from the fact that students' families also did not understand American culture or systems and students often acted as "ambassadors for their families" (Secondary Newcomer teacher). As the program administrator explained, the students themselves have never experienced the system before and their families have never experienced this system, "so they have nobody else." They were solely responsible for understanding not only the workings of the school system, but for other cultural institutions, like medical clinics and welfare offices, on behalf of their family. One

administrator empathized with their plight “to navigate a system when you're coming from a completely different culture, and a system that's difficult because, [with] the bureaucracy that we have in the United States, it isn't exactly easy to access information.”

Poverty. Underschooled immigrant students are resettled in one of the most impoverished neighborhoods in a city with a high cost of living. This resulted in students and families living in “abject poverty, ” as one administrator noted. Teachers, counselors, and administrators all agreed the economic needs of housing and transportation played a central role in students’ lives. One teacher explained that her students spend a lot of time and energy “worried about food and shelter and really basic things,” while an administrator noted that “they need clothes, food, mattresses, lamps.”

Ultimately, these economic concerns affected the students’ ability to focus on academics and their motivation for coming to school. A counselor gave a specific example of a student who “works at McDonalds until midnight everyday and drags himself into second period [because he] sleeps through first”. The reality, he explained, is that in “low income families, students have to work,” so school may not be the priority. For students who came from countries where they already left school to work, motivation to complete their education waned. Representing a trend seen across the Secondary Newcomer Program, one teacher talked about students who were already working and supporting themselves or contributing to the family in their previous country, but now they must come to terms with the idea that, "I'm in the United States, and I'm 15, 16, and I cannot work because of my age, whereas in my country, I was already working, I was

basically an adult, and I have to come to school because that's the rule." She went on to explain that most of these students leave school as soon as they are able to do so, without any ambition for diploma completion. In the case of refugee students, once refugee families arrive in California, they live on a resettlement grant that covers approximately eight months of living expenses. At that time, they shift over to the county welfare system. Many families will instead choose to leave the state to find work, invoking a secondary migration and yet more transiency in a short amount of time.

Economic issues often superseded the need for education in the case of impoverished underschooled immigrant students, affecting their ability to focus on academics and their motivation for staying in school through graduation.

Academic demands. Underschooled immigrant students faced daunting academic challenges in school. Aside from not often knowing enough English to participate in mainstream classes, many students lacked basic academic skills to develop study skills and habits of mind to pass the classes, beyond the prerequisite language issues. Each teacher cited examples of students who entered school in their teenage years with no ability to read in their native language due to a lack of formal education. One teacher described one of her most recently arrived students:

> We have a student that just arrived in April from Somalia. He's 17 years old. He's never been to school before, absolutely no schooling experience, stayed at home his whole lifetime, taking care of family. You know, that's just hard and challenging to think about, about how we're going to get him to meet some of those goals, some of those requirements to graduate when he's already 17 and he's starting with learning how to write his name or hold a pencil or just know how to behave in a classroom.

This scenario was not uncommon in Secondary Newcomer Programs. Throughout the year, students enrolled in school for the first time in their lives and teachers were tasked with moving them from understanding the routines and expectations of formal education to learning enough English in a single year to progress on to mainstream classes. A lead teacher described the experience as grappling with, "how do you function in this place when you come from where you lived in a shack in the dirt and now you're in this beautiful building that you've never even seen before, and trying to understand what it means to sit in a chair for seven hours when you've never had to do that?" While teachers, faculty, and administrators noted that "English is their biggest challenge," they also pointed to a whole host of academic challenges, from understanding the purpose of the grading system in the United States to meeting graduation requirements to passing standardized testing. For some teachers, the "whole idea of making them take tests is ridiculous." While faculty and staff who worked with underschooled immigrant students were encouraging and hopeful, one teacher summed up the issue as, "I don't mean to be pessimistic, it's just the reality. They are never going to pass Chemistry."

Nonetheless, in the face of enormous academic challenges, teachers and counselors all were impressed by the motivation and efforts of refugee students. One counselor talked about how students came in unskilled, but with motivation. An administrator talked about how the underschooled immigrant students on her site were hardworking and willing to stay until late in the evening receiving tutoring and working on homework. They were ready to work and take advantage of the opportunity of an education, but at times, the reality became overwhelming. Echoing this trend, one teacher

described her students as “feel[ing] trapped, the demands are too overwhelming, they don’t see a way over the mountain of difficulty they have to climb.” A counselor agreed, finding that even when students did have motivation, “they just don’t have the skills and when they fail, it kind of dims their light a little bit.”

As a Secondary Newcomer Program, the program hosted students who may never have held a pencil before enrolling in school in the United States. Though the students were excited and motivated, the academic demands of learning a new language, developing study skills, and understanding the school system and its requirements was often overwhelming.

Programmatic challenges. By design, the Secondary Newcomer Program was situated in a larger school context, housed on campuses throughout the district to accommodate enrolling students and their transportation issues. Though it received some funding and guidance from the district Second Language Office, the program must also fit in with the site budget and instructional focus. With these multiple layers of bureaucracy, there was some disconnect over who really controls the program, with both the district office and the site looking to each other for funding for resources and staff. While site administrators and the district office looked at broader systems, Secondary Newcomer teachers and site counselors were more focused on individual issues. One teacher described the difference: “I think they are more bound by those [policy] lines that are clearly drawn than teachers who see kids and know what kind of pain that can

cause." Policy and budgetary decisions affected how underschooled immigrant students navigated the school system.

One such policy with inconsistent messages that profoundly affected students is that of student age upon enrollment and previous education credits. While some schools referred students who are 17 years old to adult school, other sites enrolled them into the program to learn English prior to entering adult school. Even students who enrolled at 15 or 16 years old faced this issue, as they were either counseled out of high school upon turning 17 or 18, or they were encouraged to stay and try to complete a diploma before they aged out of the system at 22 years old. This conflict sent confusing messages to students and their families, who often relied on neighborhood information for decision-making. A Secondary Newcomer Program teacher explained that she would advise students that they can enroll in GED-equivalent courses at adult school and finish quicker, but her students would refuse because they heard from a neighbor or friend that this is not a viable option. For students who did attend some school in their prior country, there were also conflicting messages about how to receive credit for completed coursework. While some sites would give credit for courses that seemed equivalent to our courses in the United States, other sites relied entirely on how the course was listed on the transcripts to determine if it was eligible to receive credit. For example, in the sciences, if a course was listed as "Chemistry," it might not have received any credit if it did not have a "Chemistry Lab" listed as well. Older students who had prior education relied heavily on these credits to complete their diploma before aging out, but at times the systemic disconnect prevented them from doing so.

In addition to these bureaucratic communication issues, students also struggled once they moved into mainstream courses with teachers and fellow students who may have had little understanding of the role of the Secondary Newcomer Program. Teachers, counselors, and administrators pointed out that other staff might not realize the extent of a student's needs because s/he does not exit the Secondary Newcomer Program until s/he has some foundational language. Staff may assume students understand more than they do and offer limited support. Teachers explained that staff on site often do not realize there is a Secondary Newcomer Program on campus nor understand what the function of the program is. Those who do understand the role of the program tend to treat underschooled immigrant students "as if they were Special Ed students far away, like back in the old days" (teacher). In fact, one site began enacting a plan to move the Secondary Newcomer Program off the older, smaller section of campus on to the newer, larger campus in order to begin to integrate the program with the English-as a Second Language and mainstream English classes. A teacher at a different site felt like "there's a whole new kind of racism you encounter when you work with immigrant kids." In her dealings with site faculty, she found some other teachers to be insensitive to immigrant issues and overly focused on classroom policy, like homework completion, grades, and test performance. Her sentiments were commonly echoed by other teachers, indicating this tension between Secondary Newcomer teachers and mainstream teachers frequently exists.

This physical and emotional isolation contributed to a lack of collaboration among staff, which perpetuated the misunderstandings about Secondary Newcomer

Program programs and students, and created a disconnect when students left the program. In one classroom I observed, a teacher spent nearly the entirety of her advisory period explaining to former Secondary Newcomer students why failing a test so profoundly affected their grades. Students held the misconception that by simply attempting their classwork and homework, they would pass the class and were shocked to learn they were failing. This teacher later noted that she wished there was more collaboration with mainstream teachers so they could better target student needs and misunderstandings, particularly as related to understanding and navigating the school system. At the time of this study, students were responsible for initiating a conversation with a mainstream teacher who may or may not understand the limits of their language abilities and lack of prior education.

Despite being highly motivated and committed to learning, Secondary Newcomer students encountered numerous programmatic and academic challenges in school, in addition to the acculturation obstacles they grappled with outside of school, as shown in Figure 4 below:

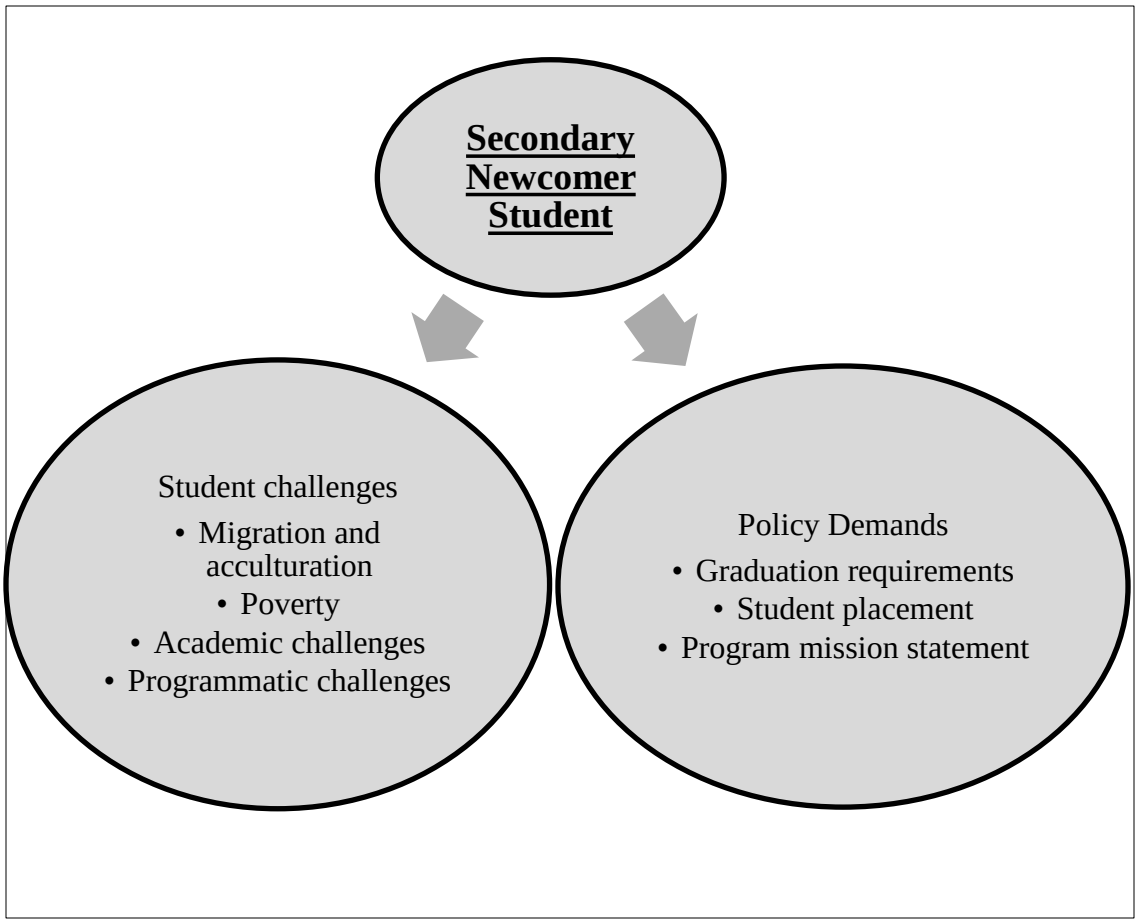

Figure 4: Challenges faced by underschooled immigrants in school.

Taken together, these issues create a "near impossible situation," as one teacher explained.

Setting the Context: Teacher Challenges

"They need to learn English…but they need so much more."

-Teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program

Differentiating Instruction. Though this study focuses on underschooled immigrant students, Secondary Newcomer Programs house both underschooled and highly educated immigrant students, as it serves as the entry point for students to begin their high school education in the United States. Finding ways to meet the broad range of educational needs from Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) to highly educated students all housed in one self-contained classroom entailed addressing numerous challenges. Throughout all the Secondary Newcomer Program classroom observations, teachers consistently delivered lessons that they then modified to meet the needs of their newest, most underschooled students. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in how one teacher described the challenge:

> I have one girl who has never been in school and she's 15. 15. No, no reading, no writing, can't read in Somali, can't look up a word, can't go to Google translation, so it doesn't help. And so during that block of time, I'm really challenged. How do I help her when I'm trying to help the majority of kids?

Another teacher encountered similar difficulties with the inability to communicate and the lack of adequate resources or time to fully differentiate instruction:

> Students who are refugees are usually SIFE (Students with Interrupted Formal Education) and those are the ones we struggle with the most because we don't speak the language, the majority of them don't have the skills they need in order to succeed and even in this setting, we don't have the materials to teach them. We always have to make up our own materials. And that's really stressful, too.

As a one-year program, the Secondary Newcomer Program teachers felt pressure to accelerate students as quickly as possible, but were challenged to do so when each student seemingly had a unique set of needs. Adding to the difficulty was the breadth of languages present in the classroom. Classroom observations noted a range of between five and fifteen languages spoken in any single class. Some students spoke languages they had learned in refugee camps only known to exist in oral form or pidgin forms. This creates compounding difficulties communicating with both students and families, as one teacher explains:

> The parent communication, because we don't have those languages, or we don't have interpreters who are readily available, it takes us a long time to get somebody to help us with that. And sometimes there is nobody. So we just try to make the best we can. If there's Google Translate, we try to use Google Translate. If not, like, for Amharic, we don't have an Amharic interpreter, we either have to try to get somebody from the school, [like] another student to come and help. But then we have to be very careful that it's not personal things that we're trying to communicate through a student. That's another challenge.

Teachers struggled to meet the needs of students who spoke more obscure languages. There may not have been another student in the classroom who could translate or explain procedures or basic school functions. Outside students who could act as translators were difficult to locate and arrange times they can come assist new students.

Additionally, this diversity of students presented cultural challenges as well. Each student comes with his/her own cultural norms and expectations. Aside from learning the culture of the United States, students must also learn to interact with each other, and hence, a host of other cultures. Not surprisingly, with multiple cultures and languages in one classroom, cultural misconceptions often occurred between students.

Since students in the Secondary Newcomer Program arrive throughout the year, teachers constantly felt as if they needed to repeat curriculum. When underschooled immigrant children first enrolled in school, they needed basic, functional English, which is often taught the first month of the school year. Secondary Newcomer Programs, however, receive students all year long, meaning these new students also need the same basic, foundational language at different points throughout the school year. Teachers discussed the seeming impossibility of pacing the curriculum to both accelerate students who had been here longer and remediate for their most recently arrived students at the same time:

> I try to do like a spiral design where every few weeks or months, I'm cycling back around because our mobility is so high, so I get a lot of new kids throughout the year and inevitably they've missed what happened at the beginning of the year, so this advisory's designed to catch them up, hopefully.
>
> -Teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program

One solution was to create an advisory period designed to meet this specific needs, but in sites where they did not have such scheduling freedom or an advisory period in the course of the regular day, this possibility did not exist.

While teachers agreed that providing targeted, differentiated instruction in a class of broad diversity and range of need is their most daunting challenge, they also delineated a long list of other issues that affect their ability to adequately instruct their students. As noted previously, students enter school with prior traumas and extreme economic needs, so managing these along with maintaining academic rigor is problematic. Teachers and counselors alike pointed to the need for some sort of case manager who could more thoroughly interact with the family. Students who present with learning difficulties must be referred for Special Education assessments, but the safeguards around this process created a vexing issue. In its attempts to prevent students from being designated as in need of Special Education for simply not understanding English, the district has employed a number of bureaucratic steps to qualifying a student for additional services, one of which is to prove a student's issues are not related to language acquisition. In a classroom of students who speak obscure languages, teachers struggled to provide adequate documentation of learning issues and were often denied Special Education considerations for their students. Finally, teachers complained of the lack of time to squeeze in all of the curriculum, assessments, scheduling, and advocacy they must do for their students. Like most educators, Secondary Newcomer teachers felt there simply aren't enough hours in the day to complete all the tasks they are given.

Additionally, every teacher discussed the issue of curriculum. They all expounded the need for curriculum, but acknowledged that with the changing demographics and transient nature of the population, it may be an impossible fantasy. Generally, teachers relied on a basic English grammar text, curriculum pacing guides and maps, and targeted instructional approaches. Some sites collaborated with teachers in credit-bearing courses to identify the basic skills students would need to function in their class and build their curriculum around these skills. For example, one teacher described how she meets with the science teachers to determine which vocabulary to cover so students will not be seeing it for the first time the following year. Other sites focus primarily on foundational English Language Development, building students' vocabulary and grammar repertoire, believing that this is what students need to function in any credit-bearing course. All teachers explained that they create most of their curriculum for day-to-day instruction themselves.

Regardless of the focus on their curriculum, Secondary Newcomer teachers now face a higher level of inherent accountability. Students must accelerate their language development, move into credit-bearing classes, and pass those classes the first time in order to complete the required courses in the five-year time allotment they have. Prior to the adoption of A-G requirements, teachers had more freedom to retain students and design curriculum that covered English Language Development and concept knowledge in more depth, but now teachers must look at the bare minimum that students need in order to exit their program. If teachers do not comply, there is a very real possibility that their non-compliance will directly lead to student failure or dropout. They can no longer

choose which policies to strictly adhere to and which they can work around because there is a direct consequence for not adequately and urgently preparing students to leave the program in a year's time or less.

In sum, the Secondary Newcomer Program teachers who were interviewed discussed layers of challenges affecting underschooled immigrant students. As shown in figure 4, they identified student ability range and diversity, linguistic barriers, qualifying students for specialized services, the lack of adequate curriculum, and inherent accountability and pressure to adhere rigorous academic policies as constraints to working with underschooled immigrant students.

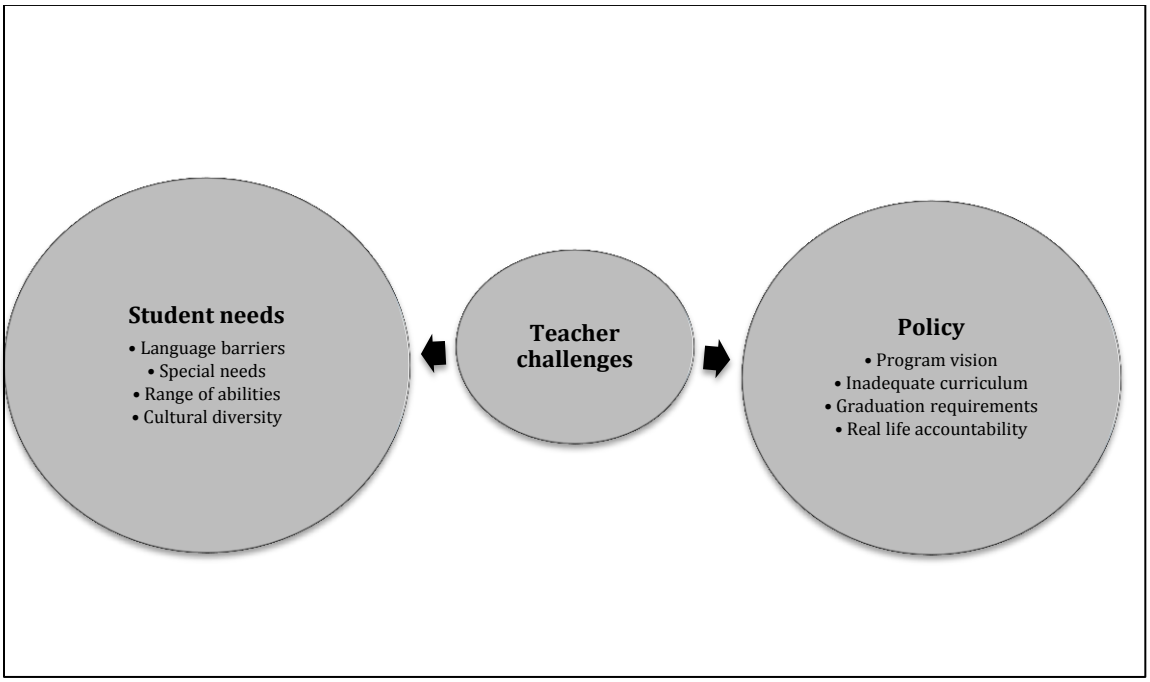

Figure 5: Challenges faced by Secondary Newcomer teachers.

Rather than simply disregard the policies, in order to get students on track to graduate, Secondary Newcomer Program teachers work within the policies, modifying their curriculum and collaborating with other faculty on site. In essence, they enact Coburn's (2001) model of collective sensemaking. They construct and reconstruct the policy message in collaborative environments until they arrive at a new understanding. As teachers redesign their curriculum and even their program philosophy in order to comply with graduation requirements policy, teachers at different sites may find alternate paths to achieve the same desired result of accelerating student progress. This is consistent with research that shows that teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and experiences affect their interpretation and implementation of policy (Coburn, 2001; Datnow & Park, 2009; Spillane and Zeuli,1999). Though the Secondary Newcomer Program teachers at different sites may create classes and curriculum that differ from each other, illustrating Jennings' (2010) assertion that actors may construct responses to accountability systems differently, but they all identify the central goal as preparing students to leave the program and move on to a path to graduation.

Chapter 5: Perspectives on the Purpose of School

"Education is the key for success and changing the trajectory of poverty in their family."

~Teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program

Introduction

Chapter 4 described the context of policy, student challenges, and teacher challenges in Secondary Newcomer Program programs for underschooled immigrant students. While the district's stated mission was to accelerate language development to prepare students to enter credit-bearing courses in one year's time, the breadth of challenges faced by students and teachers complicated this district mission.

When interviewed, both site and district personnel spoke of the purpose of school in terms of a chain of events that leads to social and economic mobility. Participants varied in which aspect of the chain they emphasized, but all acknowledged the same general progression. Both school and district personnel believe that students enter school with the primary goals of getting their most basic needs met and learning foundational English skills. Once basic needs are met and students begin to form relationships, they learn to navigate cultural and social systems in the United States, which helps them graduate from high school, realize post-high school opportunities, such as getting a job or going to college, and gives them more social mobility in their community. Academically, once students learn some foundational English, they can function in mainstream, credit-

bearing classes, which moves them toward graduating high school and either getting a job or going to college, both of which would garner more economic mobility for both the student and his/her family.

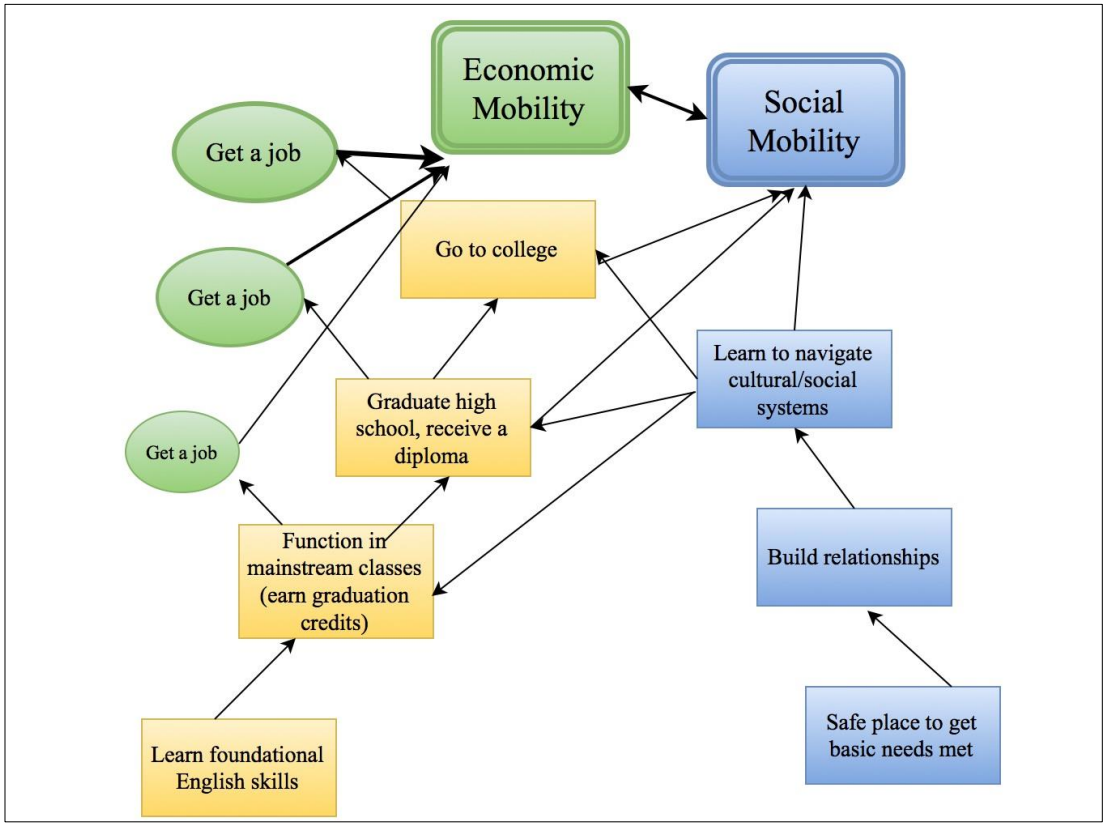

Figure 6: Purposes of school for underschooled immigrant students, as defined by participants.

As shown in Figure 6, there are multiple pathways in the progression toward economic mobility, an issue where participants varied in their perspective on the purpose of school.

Teachers. While every teacher mentioned the primary goal of school for under-educated immigrant students was "to acquire the English language…so they can succeed in their regular classes and be able to get a diploma in order to go to college" (teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program), they varied in their degrees of emphasis based on their own perception of the reality of achieving a college education for different groups of students. Teachers noted that the purpose of school is different for students who enroll at an older age than for those who begin high school at the normal age. Students who first enrolled in high school at 16 years of age or older faced the dilemma of aging out of the system before they could complete the required courses for graduation. In these cases, most teachers acknowledged that the purpose of school might be to acquire as much English as possible before moving on to a job or adult school.

This issue of student age upon enrollment proved complicated, as each site varies in its policy. Furthermore, personnel at individual sites also differed in their views of adult students on campus. One school preferred to move students out to adult school once they reached 19 years of age. At this site, there was consistency among staff and administration in this message. But in another school, the age policy seemed muddled. The administrator preferred that students stayed as long as possible, which was generally supported by the Secondary Newcomer Program teachers. The counselors, however, felt uncomfortable with adult students on campus with minors. Though teachers at this site ideally preferred that students remain in school, they also acknowledged it creates potential issues to have adults and minors together. District administrators saw this is a site-based decision, but believed there was some compromise in keeping older students a

bit past high school age, but not well into adulthood, as evidenced by the graduation pathways policy document which specifically delineates a five year high school plan for students entering as English Language Learners.

Likewise, teachers' beliefs about the purpose of school may change based on a student's level of prior education in his/her own country. One teacher explained, "our highly educated students…they have a goal of 'I want to go to college, I'm here because I want to finish my education and, and I want to get my diploma so I can go to college,'" whereas others may "think, 'I just have to come to school because it's the law,' because in their country they were already working" (teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program). For underschooled immigrant students who, by definition, entered high school with limited literacy and numeracy skills, completing the required coursework to graduate in five years, as delineated in the district's Pathways to Graduation policy was overwhelmingly challenging due to the rigors of the A-G policy (source removed for anonymity purposes). In these cases, teachers tended to view the purpose of school as "number one, when the kids first get here, they know they need to learn English. I think their parents have stressed to them that they, that they need to learn English so they can navigate this world," as one teacher explained. They also noted that students came to school to have a safe place, to make friends, and to "have a home base for whatever they need." The more practical issues of learning English and meeting basic needs took precedence over graduating and attending college.

District personnel/administrators. District lead teachers and administration focused on the ultimate goal of attaining a college education as the primary purpose of school. This belief originated from the district at large, as explained by the director of the Second Language Office: "I think there's a pretty clear message in our district right now related to the recent policies around, you know, graduation having met A-G requirements. We're preparing you for college and career." Additionally, all district personnel identified various interactions with students who "expressed their desire and commitment to continue on to…college and university" (director, Second Language Office). They believed the purpose of school, then, is to "get an education so that they can open up opportunities and go to college and they can pursue…their dreams" (district lead teacher).

Site administrators, counselors, and lead teachers. Similar to teachers, site administrators, counselors, and lead teachers realized that the stated purpose of school is to earn a diploma and have the opportunity to go to college while demonstrating an understanding that there may be different goals for students based on their individual situation. They pointed to economic factors shaping the purpose of school, including living in "abject poverty" (administrator) and the idea that for some families "it is more important to get food on the table than to get an education" (counselor). For students in these situations, administrators and counselors understood they were in school to accelerate their learning of English to facilitate garnering gainful employment as quickly as possible. Ideally, students would continue in school as long as possible, completing a

diploma, to allow for more economic opportunities. If a student finishes a diploma, s/he can find a better job. This opportunity increase exponentially when a student goes on to college. In this way, the ultimate purpose of school was to gain economic mobility, but the degrees varied based directly on the amount of education completed.

Site administrators also discussed the social and emotional aspects of school. One administrator defined school as "a safe place…to hang out with friends….and get lunch" and another administrator talked at length about the various ways her site connects students to agencies and charities for basic necessities.

> We try to bring in and support, give them what they need through our foundation, our alumni foundation, through our community connections, and other wrap-around services and community agencies. We try to, you know, if they need clothes, food, um, mattresses, lamps, whatever it is, we try to connect them with those services. We also have a church that works with us that rents our facilities on the weekend and for the last three years, they've donated all the school supplies for those classrooms.

Site administrators realized that these social and emotional needs of adjusting to life in the United States, understanding how school works, and meeting basic everyday needs such as clothing, shelter, and food security must be met in order for students to remain on the pathway to graduation.

Lead teachers and counselors, also acknowledged that high school can serve as a stepping stone to college, but were far more focused on the social and economic purposes of school than were teachers. They believed that students saw education as a way "to have a better life" because "in a lot of their countries…they don't have school and they can't go to school and they can't afford school" (site counselor). The issue of "a better

life" came up multiple times, as counselors and lead teachers alike grappled with who defines what it means to have "a better life." As an example, one counselor explained:

> In theory they come for more opportunities and a better way of life, but I don't know if they fully know what that means here in the United States. You know, for some families, and, and I'm not saying this to belittle, but for some families having a better way of life is having an apartment that has indoor plumbing. So right away, they've already improved the quality of their life...they come with that mind, where I think we have our own opinion of what that should be for them, but they're already coming with their own… So we have our preconceived notions about it, but then they come with their reality.

Similarly, a lead teacher explained that students think the following:

> We came here for a reason, I've been given this amazing opportunity to go to school and be educated, which no one in my family has ever had. I'm going to use that to get myself a good paying job that's going to provide for my family…not to say that they don't want to go to college or graduate, because I do believe that, but I do think that providing for the family and having a good life here, which they dreamed about would, would be more important…if you can get a high school diploma, you can get a job that pays a decent amount of money that's going to help…with rent, help…with groceries.

In their discussion of the purpose of school, site personnel differed greatly from district personnel. Where district personnel primarily focused on the purpose of school as a means to college and, later, job opportunities, site personnel saw the purpose of school as learning enough English to enter the work force as soon as possible. Where district personnel saw high school as the first step towards educational and career opportunities, site personnel were much more likely to see high school as the final step before entering the work force.

Summary. Underschooled immigrant students arrive with a wide variance of social, emotional, and economic needs that must be met in order to thrive in school. Though all participants acknowledged this fact, people in different roles focused on different aspects. Teachers and site administrators tended to align more with the district policy and message, where site personnel, such as counselors and lead teachers focused more on immediate needs of language development and economic security. The structure of the Secondary Newcomer Program made teachers directly accountable to the Second Language Office, but the program was housed at individual school sites. This accounted for more alignment between the district office and the teachers than the site-based personnel and administration. Being housed on specific school sites, however, allowed teachers to understand the unique demands of the site. District personnel had limited interaction with site personnel and, therefore, could have experienced disconnected expectations and understandings of the purpose of school for underschooled immigrant students. Participants also differed in their perspectives of the purpose of the specialized program for Secondary Newcomer students. These varied purposes are discussed in more detail below.

Purpose of the Secondary Newcomer Program: Meet Basic Needs of Students

"If you step back and look into what are their needs… one of the needs of the New, of the Secondary Language Program, [for] someone who has significant gaps in their education, their struggles are totally different than a student who comes with some formal education or with their regular, uninterrupted education."

~School Site Counselor

A common theme across all participant interviews was the notion that the Secondary Newcomer Program extended beyond academic demands of "school". A large component of the program was to meet social, emotional, and economic needs of students.

Each of the teachers interviewed emphasized the purpose of the program in terms of meeting basic needs, dealing with issues related to student age upon enrollment, and graduation preparation. In the realm of meeting basic social, economic, and emotional needs, a teacher explained, "even the smallest kind of needs that allow them to be able to focus and study, their housing needs or their medical needs or their families' needs just to be able to read their mail or any of those little things," while another teacher saw the program as a "conduit for connecting families…to emergency services." Administrators echoed this sentiment. One administrator defined the purpose of the program as

"bring[ing] in and support[ing], giv[ing] them what they need through our foundation, our alumni foundation, through our…community connections, and other wrap-around services and community agencies. If they need clothes, food, mattresses, lamps, whatever it is, we try to connect them with those services." She recognized that these students had basic needs that superseded their academic needs in the first months of their resettlement here in the United States. In this capacity, the school served as a community institution and, as such, connecting students and families with services was partially the responsibility of the school.

Inside the school, site personnel believed the program "shepherds" students though the system. In the first year, students learned to navigate the basics of the institution of school in the United States. Thereafter, the connections and support they received in the Secondary Newcomer Program guided them through whatever they decided to do next, whether it be college, a trade school, or a job. Being new to the country, recently arrived immigrant students were unaware of the various components of a school. For instance, they often did not understand that they had a counselor who ensured they have the proper classes required for graduation. The Secondary Newcomer Program helped students understand the role of personnel on campus in order for them to effectively make use of available resources.

One site's personnel focused primarily on the role of the Secondary Newcomer Program as meeting the basic needs of underschooled immigrant students. A counselor viewed the program as a way to learn as much English as possible in a short amount of time in order to be able to enter the work force and help their family financially.

Additionally, he believed it was a place where “they connect with the kids that are from their home… country…so they can get used to things, which is really nice and they're really usually nice with helping them out.” A lead teacher described the role of the program as “an introduction to American culture and American life.” Site personnel noted that learning English is essential to navigating the world, but the central focus of the program was to meet the most basic of student needs.

Additionally, the program served to build a safe community where students could practice budding English and academic skills without fear of humiliation. One site counselor saw the Secondary Newcomer Program as a place where students had the opportunity to practice English without worrying about making mistakes. He discussed the difference in what he sees inside the classroom and out in the wider school community. When he would visit the Secondary Newcomer Program classrooms, he frequently observed the students speaking with each other and trying to speak predominantly in English. Outside of the classroom, however, he noticed students tended to associate solely within their own ethnic group and speak primarily in their native language. From this observation, he ascertained that students used the Secondary Newcomer Program as a springboard for risk-taking they wouldn’t have otherwise attempted.

Secondary Newcomer teachers realized their students came with emotional traumas resulting from living in extreme poverty as well as their pre-migratory life circumstances. They understood that students were sometimes unable to fully focus on academics until they gained a sense of security and trust. For this reason, the teachers felt

part of the purpose of the program extended to creating a compassionate environment and fostering supportive peer relationships. One teacher aptly represented the pervasive beliefs of newcomer teachers when she described the mission of the Secondary Newcomer Program this way:

> [The] Secondary Newcomer Program is for kids new to the country to come in and learn some of the basic conversational skills, build some academic language,[and] get used to society, US culture, [to] learn a little bit about laws and regulations, [and] what it's like to be a teenager in the United States before being mainstreamed into regular high school classes. It's a place where they can come and feel safe and build language and academic skills and get ready to move on to the rest of their high school career.

Aside from academics, this teacher viewed the program as a place where students could deal with ordinary adolescent issues and extraordinary resettlement pressures. Ideally, she would like her students to have a place where they can learn the nuances of acculturating to the United States without being singled out by peers. She understood that teenagers innately strive to feel a sense of belonging, and she prioritized this in her classroom.

Similarly, another teacher spent the first few minutes of the day checking in with her students and explaining school expectations. During a classroom observation, she attempted to collect school notices that were supposed to be signed by parents. Some students did not understand that this practice of parents signing and students returning forms, as it was not practiced in their home country. The Secondary Newcomer teacher took a few minutes to explain and demonstrate the importance of returning school documents and asked if they needed translation, or if she should call the parents to

explain the procedure to them. She then moved on to talking about arriving at school on time and the cultural expectation of being punctual for several students who consistently arrived late. Her intent was not punitive, but rather to explain the cultural norm to which she would begin to hold students accountable. Before even beginning the academic lessons of the day, this Secondary Newcomer teacher focused on her students' cultural understandings to create a space where students are comfortable learning and making mistakes without fear of punishment or humiliation.

Purpose of the Secondary Newcomer Program: Prepare For a Job

> "If they come from countries where they have been disenfranchised from education, that they know this is a gift to come to school. And they think that going to school is equated with getting a great job and not having to live in poverty."
>
> ~Teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program

For some students, economic security took precedence and the Secondary Newcomer Program offered a means to learn English and basic math skills necessary to enter the work force in the United States. Though participants in multiple sites acknowledged the role of economic security, different sites and even different participants within a site discussed it with varying degrees of emphasis.

At one site, the Secondary Newcomer teachers demonstrated much more focus on the role the Secondary Newcomer Program plays in a student's economic status. The teachers themselves discussed the idea of students needing to work to help their families and learning English in their quest to do so. One teacher pointed out that many of her students worked prior to coming to this country and were primarily interested in working again once they developed adequate language skills. While one site's teachers would prefer students graduate from high school or get a GED equivalent, they acknowledged that their students' economic circumstances may pull them in a different direction. A teacher at this site described the situation for her students this way:

> I think that they think that school is a place to learn and they want that opportunity. It's an opportunity for them to get better than the opportunity they had in their home country. It's a place to help them get to their goal, to go to college or to get a better job.

In this aspect, these teachers also felt the program needed to provide some emphasis on functional English and math skills to be used in the workplace In her view, the Secondary Newcomer Program was pivotal to helping student reach whichever educational or economic goal they chose. She viewed both to be equally important.

Counselors often discussed the program as a means to an education for a marginalized population. With this education, students would have the prospect of bettering their opportunities. One counselor, when discussing the potential for improving students' and families' economic and social status, acknowledged that just by coming to the United States, they have often already positively changed their lives. Here, despite living in poverty, they have more basic resources than they may have had in their native

country, including running water and access to transportation. Given that their living situation drastically improved just by coming here, he noted that some students find it more important to work and maintain this lifestyle change than to complete their education. These students may fear losing some of these luxuries if they do not work. In such cases, the Secondary Newcomer Program simply served as a means to learning a sufficient amount of English to function in the workplace.

In another school, teachers and site personnel focused less on the immediate and direct link between the Secondary Newcomer Program and a job, but rather viewed education in general as a means to "changing the trajectory of poverty" in their lives. These participants spoke of the need for students to obtain a high school diploma and go on to a higher education, whether it be college or a trade school, so they could potentially have access to higher paying jobs. Though both views emphasized the importance of economic security, one site focused more on immediate access to jobs while another saw the program as one step in a longer-range goal of employment.

Purpose of the Secondary Newcomer Program: Earn a Diploma and Prepare for Higher Education

> "Every single one of them expressed, um, their continuing, every single one of them expressed their desire and their commitment to continue on to college and university."
>
> ~Director, Secondary Newcomer Program

While most participants believed the ultimate purpose of the program was to prepare students for completing high school and continuing on in their education, some noted that the problem is complex. The purpose of the program varied based on the needs of the students and their age. Because of this, participants did not have one clear-cut idea, but saw the program as having multiple purposes.

One administrator viewed the Secondary Newcomer Program as an essential step in preparing students for graduation. She had arranged her Master Schedule with English Learners and their pathway to graduation in mind. The Secondary Newcomer Program stood alone, providing self-contained instruction for students, but once students left the program, they entered another "academy" where they were placed in cohort classes to receive sheltered English instruction in credit-bearing courses. In her mind, this offered

the underschooled immigrant students the support they needed while still affording them the opportunity to complete the required A-G courses for graduation. Another administrator contrasted this message, seeing the Secondary Newcomer Program more as a place for students to form social connections that may or may not encourage them to complete high school. For this administrator, the peer relations were tantamount to a student potentially staying in school; without them, he believed many would leave for work.

All of the Secondary Newcomer teachers described the program as first and foremost a place to learn enough English to be successful in mainstream classes. They focused on students first learning functional English to be used for getting basic needs met, then progressing through to a more academic register in order to prepare them for the credit-bearing courses they would take the following year. They felt it was imperative to move students through the Secondary Newcomer program as quickly as possible because the classes did not count towards their graduation credits and the longer students remained with them, the more they delayed the possibility of graduating from high school. Thus, to meet this objective of accelerating students' language development to progress quickly, the teachers at one site identified students' necessary academic progression and focused on the language necessary for the courses they would take after they left their class, primarily Biology, World History, and the next level of ESL. Secondary Newcomer teachers also collaborated with mainstream teachers as a means to helping their students understand the intricacies of education in the United States, including how grades work, the importance of completing and submitting assignments,

and the notion that tests are more important than classwork. Both sites saw these varying forms of collaboration as important to preparing students for completing credit-bearing courses, graduating, and continuing on in their education.

As teachers struggled to prepare students for high school graduation, they also managed the high school exit exam and graduation requirements, as discussed below.

Role of high stakes tests. Until recently, high school students in California were required to pass a basic competency exam in order to receive a high school diploma. At some sites, students may have completed all the necessary coursework to graduate, but were unable to pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), and thus, were considered a dropout. In response to this high stakes test requirement, some administrators emphasized passing the CAHSEE above all other policies, which then became a central concern of Secondary Newcomer Programs as well. For example, one administrator arranged the advisory period in her Master Schedule to provide intense supports for passing the CAHSEE. She explained:

> So many of [the ESL students] will do very well and pass the, the math portion, but the English portion takes a lot more concentrated support and so we've had some great success in having an advisory that supports them and also having Saturday School, that specifically targets the writing and teaching them how to write. And so we've done the six to eight week program where they go through the entire CAHSEE writing prompts.

From this description, this administrator prioritized the CAHSEE in two ways: integrating exam preparation into core courses and dedicating advisory periods and Saturday school to the sole purpose of passing the test.

Accordingly, all of the Secondary Newcomer teachers at this site discussed the role of the program in terms of preparing students for graduation, specifically emphasizing the CAHSEE. They structured their advisory periods to accommodate CAHSEE preparation, pooling all the newest students in one class to work on foundational English skills to allow for other classes to address genres and course work related to the CAHSEE. They discussed the need to follow up on students, explaining "as long as they're [here] we try to keep them tethered to us and check in on them and see how they're doing". In this way, they identified students who may have met all the graduation requirements, but failed to pass the CAHSEE, and enrolled the student in their advisory period and Saturday school.

At another site, the administration acknowledged the pressure of ensuring students pass the CAHSEE, but did not place this pressure on students in the Secondary Newcomer Program or in other low-level ESL courses. When asked about policies that factored into the Secondary Newcomer Program, the administrator did not mention the CAHSEE at all. This omission indicated that the CAHSEE was not a priority. The Secondary Newcomer teachers at this site similarly followed suit, explaining they don't "worry too much about the CAHSEE because it's a much higher level skill, that's much more [in] ESL 5/6 when they should really have those skills to be successful with the CAHSEE attempt. But we're teaching the basics to be successful with the next level of

English." Though the test was generally a concern across the site, the administration and teachers believed Secondary Newcomer students had more pressing concerns of learning basic, functional English and left the CAHSEE preparation for later years.

Though recent legislation nullified the role of an exit exam in determining a student's graduation status, this analysis highlights the role of site administration in prioritizing local policy. In schools where administrators acknowledged but did not emphasize the role of high stakes tests, teachers likewise did not focus on test preparation. At sites where administrators emphasized the role of high stakes tests, school resources such as scheduling, funds for Saturday school, and curriculum were dedicated to test preparation.

Role of graduation requirements and student placement. With the new graduation requirements being implemented at the time of this study, there was more pressure for students to accelerate and enter credit-bearing courses sooner. Underschooled immigrant students, having less prior formal education, often failed in these classes and needed to repeat them. This began to conflict with their age, as they were only permitted in high school up until a certain age, which varied based on site administration decisions. As Jennings (2010) noted in his research, the principal serves as the primary liaison between district policy messages and site faculty and staff. Different principals may interpret the same policies differently (Coburn, 2005; Jennings, 2010; Sleegers et al., 2009). This specific phenomenon is evident in how different sites

with Secondary Newcomer Programs interpreted and enacted the state and local policies regarding student age in high school.

A site administrator recognized that a specific issue unique to the Secondary Newcomer Program is that of student age upon enrollment. The program regularly enrolled students who were 16 or 17 years old, but were beginning high school with no credits. She explained that students "come in and they're 17 years old, many of them don't stay because they have to work. We've had several cases in the last three years that I've been here where you have some kids that are really great, but as soon as they turn 18 they drop out to work because they need to support their families". The district laid out a five year pathway to graduation for such students which, in the best case scenario of a student accelerating English Language Development and subsequently taking and passing all credit-bearing courses, still put these older students at 21 or 22 years of age upon graduation. Though the state of California Educational Code allowed students to attend comprehensive school sites until the age of 22, districts and school sites could counsel students into adult or continuing education at age 18 (http://www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/studentoptions.asp). The administration at one particular site preferred students remain on campus as long as possible because she would "rather keep a student on our site where we know where they are, we know they're being supported.

Each of the teachers at this site also gave specific examples of how the issue of student age upon enrollment defined the purpose of the program. While some of their students remained in school well past the usual age of 18, some students found other

paths to a diploma while yet others dropped out. They gave examples of students who went through other states' online programs to complete diploma requirements and students who enrolled in credit recovery classes to try to meet the requirements before aging out of the system. They saw the purpose of the program as "trying to counsel them on what's…their path going to look like," acknowledging that it's "frustrating [figuring out] what to do with kids that are too old to follow a traditional pathway".

As noted earlier, in terms of students who enrolled at an advanced age, site counselors and lead teachers, Secondary Newcomer teachers, and administration often differed. Though site personnel agreed that the comprehensive school site was the best place to maintain a connection and ensure students were progressing through the system, they realized that having adults on campus with minors could be problematic and thus necessitated alternate solutions. The site counselors and lead teachers advised students from the outset that they could begin in high school, but they needed to understand they would not graduate from there. Where the administrator openly argued that older students should be kept on campus as long as possible, site counselors and lead teachers believed they should be counseled out to continuing education programs in the communities.

Though students could benefit more from adult school, there were often difficulties with transitioning students out of the high school. One counselor came to the site with extensive connections to continuing education programs at his previous site and was surprised to learn that this particular site had no working relationship with the programs in the community. Likewise, a lead teacher wanted "to see there be a stronger connection between our site and those places that can take kids that don't make it." She

offered a possible scenario: “Like, if you need to go to an adult school program, if you need to go to community college to get your GED, that we have a very clear, ‘here we go, we're going to make an appointment, we're going on this day, you and I are going to sit down, I'm going to help you.’” Despite their belief that adult students should be placed in community programs, site personnel knew the lack of connection and clear transitioning policies made their solution ineffectual.

Conversely, another site in the district adhered to a strict policy of counseling students out to adult school once they surpassed 18 years of age. As evidenced in the discussion at the observed Professional Development session, in these cases, the administration set the message and site counselors, lead teachers, and Secondary Newcomer teachers followed the directive. At one site, all site personnel agreed that students should not remain on campus on into their 20s, and were working on devising a more streamlined system of transitioning students over to the local adult school. They had contacted the counselors at the school to get a clear understanding of the process for enrollment and were working within the school site on how to best ensure older students enrolled once they were counseled out of high school. Curiously, in the case of underschooled immigrant students, these decisions of when to counsel students to stay in high school or when to leave and enroll in adult school were primarily made by the teachers in the Secondary Newcomer Program. Counselors admittedly had limited contact with Secondary Newcomer students, often only meeting them on their first day to give them a brief orientation to school, and then rely on Secondary Newcomer and ESL teachers to determine all future class placements. Hence, each individual school site

tended to rely on Secondary Newcomer teachers to determine the educational trajectory of their students.

Summary. Although participants idealistically believed all students should complete the Secondary Newcomer Program and go on to earn a high school diploma and perhaps enroll in a college or university, they were also realistic about the more urgent needs of underschooled immigrant students. Teachers, counselors, and site administrators in particular accepted the idea that, in some cases, the program served to meet the basic needs of students and allowed them to learn a rudimentary amount of English in order to get a job as soon as possible. While these realities often did not align to the official stated mission of the Secondary Newcomer Program or the broader district vision of students graduating "college and career ready", participants in this study placed higher priority on preparing students for the next step in their education or economic future, whatever that may be.

Chapter 6: Teacher Decision-making about Curriculum and Instruction

> "I think that when you look at the students who are in the Secondary Newcomer Program compared to the total number of English Learners that we have the district, it's a small, it's a small cohort of students, but, it's a critical cohort of students that absolutely need a very uniquely designed instructional program."
>
> ~Director, Secondary newcomer Program

Introduction

Chapter 4 described the context of the district's stated mission for Secondary Newcomer Programs and the challenges teachers and students meet in trying to meet this vision. Chapter 5 described different participants' perceptions of the purpose of school in general for underschooled immigrant students, and more specifically, the role of the Secondary Newcomer Program within that purpose. This chapter will illustrate that teachers conceive of their role as extending far beyond the reaches of traditional academic classrooms and this conceptualization affects how and what they decide to teach underschooled immigrant students.

Sensemaking theory suggests that teachers' prior knowledge and experience, espoused beliefs and conceptualization of their own role affect how they interpret and implement policy (Coburn, 2001; Datnow & Park, 2009; Spillane, Reiser, & Reimer, 2002; Weick, 2005). Classroom observations and teacher interviews were conducted to

determine how teachers conceive of their role in this complex, highly specialized program and how they make curricular and instructional decisions.

Teachers' Conceptualization of Their Role

> "I think my role is to help my kids find success here. And I think that that means, personally, I think that that means learning enough English so that they can move forward productively in their lives within school and then eventually beyond."
>
> ~Teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program

All the Secondary Newcomer Program teachers began by describing their role as providing curriculum and instruction to their students and providing them with a "vision for their future," but then went on to delineate all their other "outside" responsibilities relative to the program. Not surprisingly, teachers focused heavily on the goals set forth by their administrators as shown in Chapter 5, including meeting students' needs outside of school and finding ways to keep students connected to school as long as possible.

One teacher characterized the sentiments of the group as a whole when she differentiated the class from the job, explaining the curriculum and instruction portions are "the class. But that's not the job. I think the job is much bigger than that." Another teacher explained:

> It's not about just teaching English. I mean, that's a big part of it, but that's not what it's about. It's about teaching them to be successful. Yes, they need to English to do it, but they need so much more. They need confidence. They need know-how. They need resourcefulness. They need everything.

Each of the Secondary Newcomer Program teachers that was interviewed expressed a sense of feeling overwhelmed with the usual teaching demands compounded by the external pressures they faced in working with this particular population. Site and district personnel also notice that the role of the teacher in the Secondary Newcomer Program extends far beyond that of a mainstream teacher. One administrator recognized the jobs' unique demands and the teachers' crucial role in meeting those demands:

> They are immersed in the kids' lives. They know the kids intimately in terms of what their heart feels, [their], passions, what their hopes and dreams are. They also know their needs, you know, their basic needs, and their more spiritual [needs], or, what they need to really feel fulfilled. And those teachers, the teachers that we have on campus dedicate themselves to that. They know the families, they make extreme attempts to outreach to the families, to make connections, to give kids what they need. It's really almost like they are immersed in their world and I don't think it would function if we didn't have that.

The director of the program concurred, explaining:

> Not just anyone can be [a Secondary Newcomer Program] teacher because, the multiple challenges that the students present both academically, linguistically, and on every other level. So for me, that's…the reward, to be able to work with these individuals who are so dedicated, so persistent, and so diligent about their work. They go above and beyond every single day for their students. I really really admire that.

In interviews with Secondary Newcomer teachers, they delineated a long list of responsibilities that both fell within the purview of standard teaching responsibilities and extended beyond ordinary classroom teaching, as displayed in Figure 7.

Standard Teaching Responsibilities	Additional Teaching Responsibilities for Secondary Newcomer Program teachers
Understand expected curriculum and outcomes	Remain a support for students once they have left the program.
Modify curriculum	Help families access services, such as Special Education.
Plan and prepare lessons	Run a club to connect students to the social network of school.
Conduct formal and informal assessments	Advise and assist older students to explore alternate pathways.
Analyze assessments for next instructional steps	Advocate to administrators and colleagues on behalf of students.
Collaborate vertically with teachers in the next sequence of classes	Connect with other teachers to assist with students who have left the program.
Attend required trainings and meetings	Help students navigate U.S. social and school systems.
Write letters of recommendation for former students.	Liaison between families and school to help find translators.
	Explain other teacher's grading systems to former students.
	Connect students with social services.

Figure 7: Teacher responsibilities as identified by Secondary Newcomer teachers.

In discussing their roles, teachers generally emphasized three main areas: to accelerate student language development, to make connections with resources both within and outside of school for students and families, and to advise and advocate for their students and their program.

Accelerate language development. Academically, one teacher described her central role as "language." She explained that she felt she needed to "teach them enough language so that they can succeed and learn at school, be social…with their friends, and [be] out in the world." In her classroom, the emphasis on accelerated language development was evident both in the artifacts posted around the room (Figure 8 below) and in her instruction.

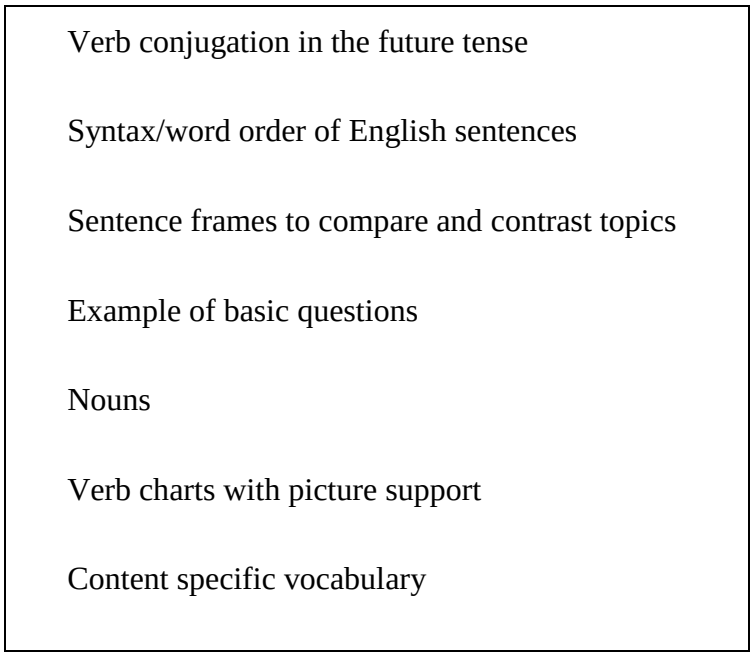

Figure 8: Language charts in classroom.

Throughout the observed instruction in one classroom, students worked to read, write, and orally practice questions and verb forms they might use to answer the questions. Some students practiced an example of a dialog they might hear while other students worked on writing grammatically appropriate sentences. The teacher worked with the most recent arrivals in a small group to practice the most basic, functional English. In this way, this teacher represented all Secondary Newcomer teachers in their plight to deal with the wide range of academic abilities in their program and viewed part of their role as modifying their curriculum to accommodate these learners.

This pattern of the teachers focusing curriculum to fit the needs of students' language acquisition was observed in every classroom. At times, it was done with the class in its entirety. One observed whole-group lesson focused on verb tenses. Students

worked with both regular and irregular verbs to express something that happened in the past, present, and future. The teacher began the lesson by reviewing the standard curriculum in the grammar-based textbook, but then asked students to apply these verb forms to situations they encounter in real life. One student demonstrated the word "spill" in an everyday context, saying, "I spilled my coffee at Starbucks. He slips and spills his coffee." The full class period was dedicated to learning different applications of verbs and culminated in students working on a writing assignment in preparation for an upcoming assessment. In another class, a Secondary Newcomer teacher mixed students heterogeneously in groups to read and analyze a short text. In this case, the teacher expected the more proficient students to assist the less proficient students, and as a group, formulate an analysis they then orally shared in groups and with the teacher.

During interviews, teachers were asked to describe their typical day. From their answers, it was clear that the majority of any given day in a Secondary Newcomer classroom centered around English Language Development. Whether they were relying on other students to help newer arrivals or they were grouped specifically based on their language level, all teachers designed their daily activities around student language acquisition, indicating that Secondary Newcomer teachers primarily conceive of their role as providing instruction that supports accelerated language development.

Connections to resources. Some teachers expressed a belief that part of their role is to make connections between students, families, school personnel, and outside resources. For example, one teacher discussed her relationship with P.E. teachers. She

explained she often gets calls from her students' P.E. teachers warning her that students will fail the class if they do not "dress out" in their P.E. clothes. She would then explain the rule to the students and to their parents so they understood the expectation. Similarly, another teacher connected with teachers who were slated to receive her students once they left the program. During this collaboration, she would explain the curriculum they covered and any specific student-related concerns. In this way, she tried to educate the mainstream teachers on the role of the program as well as the unique needs of underschooled immigrant students.

One common issue among the teachers was the need to listen to students when they talk about their personal lives and connect them with resources. They gave examples of students living in poverty who may need some economic resources or parents who are unsure how to navigate the system. One teacher gave two specific examples of students she was currently struggling to connect to resources they needed:

> I have to meet with a girl tomorrow to talk about how we can get her family hooked up with the regional center because the brother's in Special Ed and he's already 18…[and] I've been calling for this other girl [because] I've got to find time to research what preparatory school in Mexico… this girl can go to that is close to her house and how much is it and what do they need from [our high school] so that she can enroll.

In each of these cases, the families were unsure of how to maintain some continuity of education and the Secondary Newcomer Program teacher was their only point of contact.

In some cases, the teachers were able refer these cases to the parent center or counselors on campus so families could make connections to outside services:

> I try to make those connections. So if the parents say "yes, I need help", then I refer them to the Parent Center, just because I want the Parent Center to make the connection with the parents just so they can get them some counseling or other resources they can use to have a better relationship with their children. And if I think it's more than that, then I'll refer them to the counselor and the counselor usually refers them to the social worker to get therapy sessions if needed. But if our students don't have any of those signs and we don't see them, then we might not think of it and not give them any therapy when the child might need it.
>
> -Teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program

In other cases, the teachers felt like they were the sole person who could assist the families.

For older students who were about to age out of the system, teachers often undertook the responsibility of connecting them with counselors at the local adult school, as described by one teacher:

> They don't always feel comfortable going. They don't know what it is. [Their high school] becomes their home but it's not necessarily available to them after a certain point, so we have to help them see what's available in the community and, and get them comfortable so they can accept that, that help or that program.

At one site, the teachers talked about working on a plan to bring the adult school counselors in to talk to the older students. They realized the lack of communication

between the comprehensive high school site and the adult school was inhibiting students, as explained by this teacher:

> We want to reach out to [local adult school] to try to find out more about what the requirements are what options can our students have. But I feel we need to bring them in. Get somebody from the community, bring them in, into high school and say, "if you're not on track to graduate, if, if you think you'll be this age by the time you think you can graduate, this is another option". I feel that sometimes we want them to just do it this [traditional] way and we're not giving them options.

They realized that just counseling students to enroll in adult school was not effective, as students were unsure of how to navigate yet another new school system, so they contacted the local adult school and began to plan for an informational session for students.

Whether it be in meeting everyday challenges, assisting students and families in navigating the school system, or transitioning older students to adult school, the Secondary Newcomer Program teachers act as liaisons between the students, families, and resources they seek.

Advising and advocating for students. In addition to developing language and connecting to resources, Secondary Newcomer teachers discussed advising students as another major component of their job. This included advising students in their future class placement as well as presenting older students with options outside the comprehensive high school site. One teacher explained that she advised all of her

students of the requirements for graduation and the expectations they will encounter in credit-bearing classes, but for older students, she scheduled time for individual conferences where she explains adult school and GED programs, then asked them to consider all of their options. This focus was also evident in the artifacts in her room, where there were charts hanging to show how the grading system in the United States work and visually showed the consequences for receiving grades that are below the passing mark.

As part of their ongoing school culture curriculum, the Secondary Newcomer teachers invited one of the counselors to come in and graphically represent the graduation requirements for students. This discussion included charts that showed the progression of classes and what happens if students failed classes, with clear arrows demonstrating how they will have to repeat courses. Throughout the conversation, one of the teachers asked students to calculate their age if they pass all their courses the first time and their age if they have to repeat classes multiple times. For some students, they calculated over 22 years of age, at which point the teachers explained they were going to meet with them to talk about their other options This indicates they conceived of their role as partially that of an adviser or counselor to help students navigate the system and work with their families to make appropriate decisions.

All Secondary Newcomer Program teachers discussed their role as advocates, both for their students and their program in general. This role of student advocate was especially prevalent in their discussions about students with special needs. Because of the rigid specifications and documentation required to have a student tested for Special

Education, underschooled immigrant students often fall through the cracks of being identified. Teachers must prove their learning issues are not related to their lack of schooling or their lack of English, a daunting task when students speak obscure languages. In these cases, teachers often find community translators to document that the family has noted a history of issues with the student that are unrelated to language or lack of education. For example, in one class, a student was visibly disabled with some sort of head trauma. The teacher had to find translators to interview the family to find about the student's past in order to refer him for Special Education testing.

Each of the Secondary Newcomer Program teachers also pointed to their advocacy on behalf of the program, most often in relation to budgetary concerns or educating other staff on campus about underschooled immigrant students in their midst. At the time of this study, one school was experiencing a shortage of texts and a Secondary Newcomer teacher had joined the site's decision-making team specifically to represent the interests of the program. While the site and the district were debating the domain of who is responsible for providing these texts, the teacher felt compelled to be present at budgetary meetings to maintain visibility in the process.

Every teacher interviewed discussed their role in relation to educating staff on campus about their program. Indicative of this conceptualization of the role of the teacher, one teacher saw her role as an "ambassador":

> I think we're the ambassadors. We're the ambassadors for these kids on this campus. Because even faculty who work here and have worked here for years still don't quite get what a Secondary Newcomer classroom does....they still are blown away by [it].

This feeling that other staff were unaware of the program was a common sentiment across Secondary Newcomer Program teachers in the district. As a self-contained classroom that more regularly collaborated with other Secondary Newcomer teachers at other sites than mainstream teachers at their own site, it is not surprising that these teachers felt the program was isolated and misunderstood. They took it upon themselves to inform site faculty and personnel about their program by showcasing students' work through multi-cultural fairs or trying to highlight their program during staff meetings. A teacher described this type of advocacy work this way:

> When we describe kids, when we do multi-cultural celebrations….[the teachers] always seem like surprised or amazed…So I feel like we have to constantly advocate for our kids with other faculty or just even if we're not actively advocating exactly, even if we're not advocating for them in that moment, just by helping the kids be successful, in the other people's classrooms and that's sort of helping them be ambassadors, getting to know the kids' like talents that the other teachers might not already know.

In these cases, the teachers are both actively advocating for their students and training their students to have some sense of self-efficacy and agency. Freire (1970) believed that teachers should honor the relevant knowledge that students come with and build upon that to make students independent. He suggested that students should not rely solely on teachers, but should learn to advocate for themselves. In teaching students to be successful in mainstream classes and highlight the talents they come with, Secondary Newcomer teachers enact Freire's theories.

Summary. In conceptualizing their role, Secondary Newcomer Program teachers began with the academics they teach, but quickly defined their job as connecting students to resources and serving as students' primary counselor and adviser. In this regard, a Secondary Newcomer Program teacher takes on an all-encompassing role. In fact, the non-academic demands of the job prove so daunting that one teacher lamented, "there is not enough time to do it all," explaining that she does not have the time to adequately plan and prepare lessons and assess students because of all the demands of the program.

Teacher Decision-Making: "What" to teach

> "We have to really work on that discrepancy between what the expectation is and the reality of the support the kids are getting."
>
> ~Lead teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program

As students entered the Secondary Newcomer Program, they were assessed to determine their level of oral and written English proficiency and math skills. Teachers also completed an intake form to determine their prior education levels and language proficiency in native languages. From this information, Secondary Newcomer teachers were able to map their class and determine appropriate levels of curriculum and instruction. If they found that the majority of their students lacked formal education, they

focused on more foundational literacy and math skills and modified their lessons for more advanced students. As the year progressed, teachers developed more complex curriculum to prepare students for credit-bearing courses they will take once they exit the program. Since they received new immigrant students all year, they then needed to modify their lessons to accommodate the newest arrivals and continuously include instruction on basic survival English. One teacher described her decision-making about curriculum this way:

> A lot depends on what we really need. Every year, it's totally different. We've never had the same curriculum. Never….We have something to go back to, but that doesn't mean that we're always going to have that same curriculum. It just varies so much. So when we see, this is where they're at, through our assessments, because we're constantly doing those assessments, we can determine, ok, this, this class needs more of this, so let's give them more of this.

Her description was often reiterated by other teachers interviewed, indicating this is a common scenario in Secondary Newcomer Programs. Understanding student levels and student need was essential in how teachers made decisions about what and how they would teach their students.

Role of district-provided curriculum. When asked how they decide what to teach, all the Secondary Newcomer Program teachers at one site agreed that they used the district-provided curriculum as a base. This included a basic English textbook, *Keys to Learning,* district curriculum maps and pacing guides for writing, science, and social

studies, and old math textbooks that the program secured when the district adopted a new curriculum. As an example, one teacher explained:

> For English…we started with the initial framework, kind of the quarterly breakdown by [Second Language Office] as far as the writing genres. We have our Keys to Learning book which kind of follows its scope and sequence for sort of some of the grammatical structures and things, so that would be kind of how I would decide for those two subject areas.

This grammar text and writing units represented the most standardized, formal curriculum in use. In this case, they worked through the curriculum at a pace determined by the district and tried to adjust for students who enrolled later in the year by reviewing previous chapters in the text in small group instruction. This teacher went on to describe how she then thinks of her students' individual needs:

> For reading strategies, that's kind of dictated what's happening in the small group instruction or in some of the ongoing assessments, like running records or just what I'm noticing in class informally, if there's something that it just seems we need to do more of, that kind of guides me into what might be our next unit or revisit to a former unit.

As evidenced in this quote, teachers differentiated instruction for students, placing them into groups and targeting specific needs that they identified through formal and informal assessments. In classroom observations, students worked on a broad range of skills during group time, including basic phonemic awareness, grammatical structures, comprehension and inference of short stories, and review of math or science vocabulary and concepts. During this time of the day, teachers were creative and efficient with time,

as it allowed for targeted intervention, review, and instruction to meet the range of student abilities in the class.

For content courses, such as science and social studies, all teachers who were interviewed discussed the need to create units based on site demands and student ability. One teacher explained:

> For content, [sigh] that one's kind of a hodge podge because I've done it so many different ways now within the SNP that I don't even know what, what is supposed to be done anymore. So it started with the initial, like, quarterly breakdown but it really wasn't feasible to do it that way on a 4 x 4 because we don't have four clear quarters of content because we're kind of, kind of toggling between science and history rather than teaching both science and history in, in a year long sequence.

Here, the Secondary Newcomer teacher was working within a block schedule. As discussed previously, block schedules in a Secondary Newcomer Program allowed more time for mathematics instruction, but less for literacy. Teachers often took a chunk of time from the content block to supplement their literacy, leaving even less time for social studies and science. In a traditional six-period day, students would receive an hour dedicated to science and another hour for social studies. In a block schedule, once the teacher usurps an hour to supplement literacy, students had only an hour for both subjects. In this instance, the teacher “toggled” between units of science and units of social studies. She tried to adhere to the original topics laid out by the Second Language Office and cover them by year’s end, but struggled with the site schedule to do so.

Role of high stakes tests. As discussed in Chapter 5, each site prioritizes policy differently. Where one site placed a heavy emphasis on the CAHSEE, another site focused primarily on the pathways to graduation and ensuring students enroll in credit-bearing courses. Accordingly, each of the Secondary Newcomer teachers then modified this curriculum based on two main criteria: what they thought students would need to function in mainstream classes and what students needed exposure to prior to taking the CAHSEE.

At a site where CAHSEE was a priority, one teacher identified the genres and concepts addressed in the CAHSEE to ensure both her literacy and math instruction incorporated them. She determined an "endpoint" where they should be before exiting the program then built her curriculum to meet that endpoint using district-provided materials. She explained that, "in a lot of our decision making, it comes from things that they need to know for certain tasks, like particularly the CAHSEE thing is a heavy focus."

Role of A-G requirements. In cases where teachers were focused on what students need in order to pass a credit-bearing class under the new A-G system, they consulted mainstream teachers who were slated to receive Secondary Newcomer students once they exited the program. New Arrival teachers repeatedly emphasized the need to develop students' language skills as rapidly as possible. To prepare students for credit-bearing courses, they consulted with counselors and teachers who receive students once they exit the program to determine which classes the students would be required to take and the skills and vocabulary they would need to succeed in those classes. The Secondary

Newcomer Program teachers then focused their curriculum and instruction to include the grammatical forms, genres and vocabulary students would most likely encounter. For example, upon learning the subsequent ESL teachers included some instruction in more complicated verb forms, the Secondary Newcomer teachers limited their formal instruction to the past, present, and future forms of verbs, leaving such forms as the conditional and past perfect for higher levels of ESL. Another teacher frequently consulted with the math department to determine what students needed to know to be successful in the next math class they enter, then tailored her instruction around those concepts. She described her thinking this way:

> Like with math, we know that we have to start at the beginning for some of our kids just in teaching numbers and what are the words for numbers and at the end, we've got to get a point where the kids have a grasp of algebra and geometry so they can go on into their next class. So, trying to pace that out so that you don't lose everybody by starting too far ahead and if you can bring everybody to that same point at the end is a huge challenge.

Similarly, when teachers knew students would most likely enter biology the following year, they attempted to expose students to some basic, common biology vocabulary and try to draw linguistic connections, particularly with Latin-based languages in hopes this would provide some familiarity with the subject matter for their students the following year. Even with attempting to align the curriculum, some Secondary Newcomer Program teachers acknowledged that students' next steps would still be challenging. One teacher lamented the frustration teachers felt in sending their students out to mainstream courses:

> I need to get these kids ready, but they're nowhere near the mainstream English class. [They need] to be ready for ESL 3/4 and participate in art classes, elective classes and such, but to be thrown into a science class right now can be extremely challenging. To be thrown into a World History class would be extremely challenging. However, that is the next step for them.

Given the district's requirement that all students must complete the A-G requirements necessary for entrance into the state's university system, teachers felt additional pressure to move students out of the program as quickly as possible and into credit-bearing courses. This teacher realized that students might not be ready for this step. She tried to prepare students as much as possible in the year they are with her, but the demands of entering mainstream courses with expectations that students will perform as well as their native-born peers simply may not be attainable. Nonetheless, Secondary Newcomer teachers factored this reality into their curricular and instructional decision-making.

Teacher Decision-Making: "How" to Teach

> "That student's only been here for a year, they need a little bit more scaffolding, they need a little bit more support."
>
> -Teacher, Secondary Newcomer Program

As one teacher astutely observed, the "what" they teach differed from "how" they teach it, which also required decision-making. She believed "the 'how' depended on the kids" because "each year…the range of abilities is different." Administrators also focused on the "how," discussing at length the instructional approaches they expected to be used across the campus. One site specifically arranged the Master Schedule to cohort underschooled immigrant students in sheltered English classes that use Quality Teaching of English Learners (QTEL) approaches adopted by the district. The administrator then tasked her English Learner Support Teacher with collaborating with teachers to ensure their instructional methods are appropriate for language learners. In this aspect, sites aligned closely with the expectations of the Second Language Office governing the program. A lead teacher at the Second Language Office explained:

> In terms of the teachers at large, we need to really school them in socio-cultural theory and…have them understand the rationale behind it, and provide those opportunities for students to work with each other and talk to each other and co-construct their understanding so that that language does develop. And again, it's the QTEL approach, um, that we've been advocating. We need to have a shift in the way it's presented. We need to provide time for the teachers to plan because it does initially take a lot of planning. And…I think that will help them acquire these requirements but we need help within the structure itself and possible some of it is coming down from the state of California and to change that, it's going to take a little bit more time.

The Second Language Office also discussed the need for differentiated instruction in the Secondary Newcomer Program. All the teachers interviewed talked about how they attempted to implement the expected small group instruction, but some ran into

scheduling challenges because of the block schedule at the school. They often decided to shorten the math or content class to allow for some small group literacy instruction, or to change the content (social studies or science) period to allow for differentiated literacy instruction. Additionally, they pointed to the fact that advisory was also designed to accommodate the differentiated needs of the population, with the newest arrivals being placed together in order to learn rudimentary English skills.

Similar to determining what curriculum they will emphasize, Secondary Newcomer teachers also factored in how future teachers deliver instruction into their decision-making. During one classroom observation, a teacher was explaining how next year's teacher was going to expect students to learn vocabulary, read text, and answer questions. While she may not have agreed with such instructional methods, she knew they were a reality for her students:

> I would want teachers to spend more time going over, repeating concepts, in almost like a shared reading in World History, or shared reading for Earth Science. If it's a key concept, students need to see that academic vocabulary on a regular basis, not just one day and then expect them to know it by Friday. It's not gonna happen. So that's a frustration. And those are QTEL strategies I think that...people go to the trainings and then they don't have a chance to implement.

During this classroom observation, she explained these expectations to the students and then worked with the class on strategies for reading a text and finding important information based on key vocabulary in the questions. She also counseled her students on how to study for this type of course, including making flashcards and being sure to ask for help if they don't understand. Though this was not her preferred instructional

technique, she saw part of her role as preparing students for their future and thus included some of these methods into her own teaching.

In addition to using instructional approaches specifically designed for language learners and techniques they knew students would encounter the following year, Secondary Newcomer teachers also discussed the role of technology and how it factored into their decision-making. They recognized that all standardized testing and many mainstream course requirements relied on basic technological and computer skills, and thus tried to incorporate technology when possible to ensure students can access these modalities. In multiple classroom observations, teachers had groups of students learning to navigate the computer, from the most basic act of logging on to accessing learning programs and making presentations.

Summary

In this chapter, participants' conceptualization of their role and factors in their curricular and instructional decision-making were analyzed to determine how teachers balance the unique needs of underschooled immigrant students with the demands of local and state educational policy. Figure 5 illustrates the interplay between student needs, policy demands, and the purpose of schools and how these define a teacher's conceptualization of her role, which ultimately affects how she makes decisions about what and how to teach.

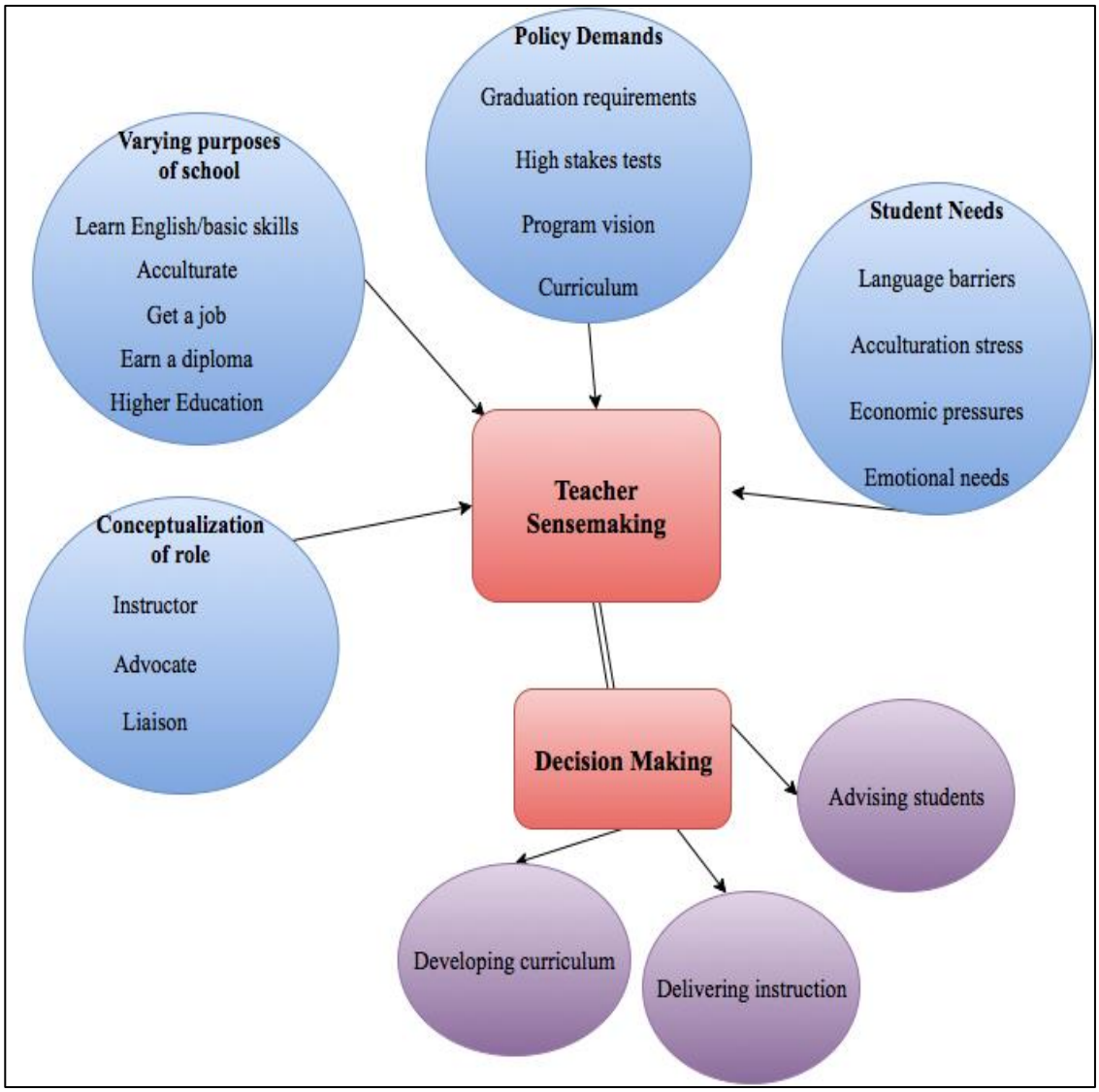

Figure 9: Factors in teachers' decision-making about curriculum and instruction.

Secondary Newcomer teachers saw their role as extending far beyond the academic demands of the classroom. In addition to being responsible for teaching students basic language development, math skills, and exposing them to science and social studies content, they believed their job included making sure basic student needs were met, teaching students to navigate the institution of school, and advocating for

raised awareness of their students' unique situations. Understanding their students' challenges on this deep level led teachers to be thoughtful and deliberate in their decision-making. Teachers factored in structural demands of graduation requirements and site schedules as well as individual needs of students for differentiated instruction that would prepare them for future academic and economic endeavors. Site and district administrators, counselors and lead teachers all acknowledged the difficulties in balancing policy demands and student needs for underschooled immigrant students, but noted that the Secondary Newcomer teachers' tireless work makes the program a success. As one lead teacher explained:

> I think the instruction that happens is the best I've ever seen, by far. The curriculum that these teachers have put together to decide what it is that we're going to teach and when we're going to teach, and how we're going to teach it, I think every school in the nation should do it.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Study Goals and Design

The goal of this study was to better understand how teachers balance the unique needs of underschooled adolescent immigrant students with the demands of local and state policy. Adding to current research on how districts, site administrators, and teachers make sense of and implement policy, this study investigated how teachers in complex learning environments factor broad-based policies, such as A-G graduation requirements and high stakes test, site-based constraints of schedules and administrative expectations with the social, economic, and academic challenges of Secondary Newcomer students in order to guide instructional and curricular decisions. Through document analysis, interviews, and classroom observation, this inquiry focused on the specific role of the teacher as a mediator between student need and district requirements. To recap, the following questions guided this study:

How do teachers balance policy expectations with the demands of teaching and addressing the unique needs of underschooled immigrant students?

- What are district policies and requirements for secondary students with limited education?
- How do teachers make sense of and implement these policies in classroom instruction and advising students?

Overview of Findings

This study focused on the local and state policies that govern the Secondary Newcomer Program in Marisol School District. As presented in Chapter 4, a document analysis of the vision of the program, district-provided curriculum and assessments, and pathway options to acquiring a diploma revealed the district's vision for the program directly aligns with local and state policies, particularly as they relate to graduation requirements and preparing students to be college and career ready (district vision statement). Though the stated goals for this program are situated in the broader vision for all students in the district, all participants recognized that underschooled immigrant students and their teachers face extreme challenges that inhibit access to A-G core curriculum prior to aging out of the system. Underschooled immigrant students enter school with extreme economic pressures and pre-migratory stress, in addition to limited native language literacy skills and little understanding of English. Even with an added fifth year of high school, these students are often unable to accrue the required number of credits to earn a diploma in such a short period of time.

In the face of such challenges, participants acknowledged the purpose of school in general and the purpose of the Secondary Newcomer Program in particular may differ for this specific population of students, depending on their age at the time of enrollment and their access to education prior to entering the United States. Chapter 5 presented a continuum of how underschooled immigrant students may use their schooling for economic and social mobility, indicating that students may not have the ultimate goal of a

high school diploma or college education. For some students, the purpose of school may be to learn enough English to secure a job and rescue their family from abject poverty. This idea that, for many underschooled immigrant students, education functions to provide students with basic skills directly juxtaposes with the district's stated vision for the program. Where some participants agreed that the primary purpose of school for this population is to garner a diploma and continue on to higher education, others believed that school provided an opportunity for students to learn some foundational English and basic math skills which facilitate them entering the workplace. Such variance in the espoused beliefs of the purpose of school alter participants' perceptions and sensemaking of the purpose of the Secondary Newcomer Program to focus on economic and social issues that fall outside the scope of policy.

As the primary point of contact for students and outside personnel and administrators, teachers mediate the intersecting worlds of rigid, broad-based policy and individual student need. As shown in Chapter 6, this complex interplay of policy demands and student need defines how teachers conceptualize their roles and, subsequently, make instructional and curricular decisions. By and large, teachers defined themselves as much more than an instructor. They viewed themselves to be advocates for both their students and their program as well as a liaison between students and their families, school, and community resources. Understanding that they had one year to prepare students to take on some of these mediating roles of liaison and advocate for themselves, teachers often included more pragmatic curriculum related to acculturation, which fell outside the scope of the district vision. Furthermore, teachers understood that

their students' academic and linguistic challenges necessitated specialized instructional techniques to ensure comprehensible input, and would devise lessons and classroom structures to support student learning. In the case of Secondary Newcomer Programs, teachers often act as the sole decision-makers and advocates on behalf of underschooled immigrant students, and as such, occupy a pivotal role in the success of the program.

Contributions to Research and Theory

This study builds on the existing research on refugee students and sensemaking in important ways. First, with respect to educating refugee students, this study further supports previous research, while adding some new considerations, particularly related to programmatic implications. Additionally, this study builds on current research about how sensemaking occurs throughout the multiple layers of a school system, but expands on the role of the teacher as the primary sense-maker and decision-maker. Where previous studies have focused primarily on sensemaking in isolated cases, such as a singular policy, this study explores the interplay between numerous policies and student factors.

Research connections: refugee students. McBrien (2005) identifies the key factors of acculturation stress, pre-migratory trauma, economic issues, emotional issues, language barriers, and urban pressures as barriers to refugee students successfully completing their education. Similarly, when asked to describe the challenges their students face, Secondary Newcomer Program teachers pointed to migration and

acculturation pressures, poverty, and academic demands. Teachers also discussed at length the added pressures on underschooled immigrant students to learn English to help their family to navigate bureaucratic systems and to garner employment and assist the family economically. This further supports Orellana, Pulido, and Dorner's (2003) research on immigrant children as "para-phrasers" for their families. As discussed in their study, immigrant students often find themselves in positions where they must advocate on behalf of their families, and this creates a conflict, as these situations may not be developmentally appropriate for children. As discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, underschooled immigrant students in MSD also find themselves with extraordinary demands to learn English rapidly and go to work, though they are barely teenagers. This economic pressure often leads to students dropping out of school prior to earning a diploma.

Nonetheless, despite these challenges, all participants in this study revered students' motivation and work ethic, a trend noted in prior research on refugee students. Winthrop and Kirk (2008) found that even students who came from areas of armed conflict and experienced extreme violence demonstrated high motivation to complete their education. Kingom, Bash and Zezlina-Phillips (2006) discussed refugee students' resilience, even those who had come from war-ravaged countries. Several teachers in this study offered stories of students who had come from extremely violent situations but had still gone on to complete their education. In several of her site visits and events she had attended, the director of the Secondary Newcomer Program heard former underschooled immigrant students speak about the importance of their education and how they planned

to use it to better their communities, a further indication of the resilience of this population of students.

One area where this study expands on current research involves programmatic issues of school schedules and graduation requirements. Chu (2009) discusses the need for flexible scheduling and evaluative criteria for determining underschooled immigrants' progress. In Marisol School District, the Secondary Newcomer Program is housed on comprehensive school site campuses and, as such, must follow their schedule. As shown in Chapter 6, this schedule conflicts with the teachers' need to provide prolonged instruction in language development, and teachers often cut into content-area courses to accommodate this need. Furthermore, though teachers complete the district-required assessments designed to monitor student progress, these do not factor into future placement of students in the program. With the onset of A-G requirements, once students meet a basic proficiency level in English, they are moved out to mainstream courses to begin earning credits. In essence, these assessments allow for progress monitoring, but outside of daily instructional decisions, do not ultimately affect the academic trajectory of an underschooled immigrant student.

Research connections: sensemaking. Researchers have written about sensemaking at various levels. When faced with multiple policies that converge, district personnel prioritize and simplify messages (Honig and Hatch, 2004). At the time of this study, Marisol School District was facing the first year of a broad-based policy related to graduation requirements. In an effort to make students college and career ready, all

students, with the sole exception being those students in special education on a non-diploma bound pathway, were required to pass the California State High School Exit Exam and complete coursework that qualified for university acceptance. This universal policy made no exceptions for marginalized populations, particularly English Learners or underschooled immigrant students who may enter school for the first time at 16 years old. Not surprisingly, in their study of how A-G requirements might affect the students in a district at the preliminary stages of implementing this policy, Betts et al (2015) predicted English Learners would experience higher dropout rates and the district would ultimately sacrifice Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses in favor of adhering to the new policy. In prioritizing the A-G requirements, the district eradicated any alternate pathways to earning a diploma. Accordingly, in setting their mission for the Secondary Newcomer Program, the Second Language Office adhered to the district's vision and policy requirements.

Sites with large populations of underschooled immigrant students then "bridged" or "buffered" these requirements (Coburn, 2001; Honig & Hatch, 2004) by prioritizing or deprioritizing messages. As the primary point of contact between site faculty and district leadership, the principal experiences external pressures that define how s/he mediates policy (Jennings, 2010). Where one site structured the school's Master Schedule to allow for interventions and supports for students to pass the CAHSEE and pass A-G required coursework, another site de-emphasized the role of this high stakes test and defined the role of the Secondary Newcomer Program as providing "an opportunity for students to bridge into the school system here in America and to provide not only the academics, but

the social and emotional aspects to get them to transition successfully from where they're coming from to school here in the United States" (site administrator). In the case of the Secondary Newcomer Program, the site administrator's enacted policies differ.

These differing messages then factored into how teachers made sense of and implemented policy. As seen in prior studies related to teacher sensemaking, while all Secondary Newcomer Program teachers understood and articulated policies related to course work, standards, and graduation requirements, each teacher had a different perspective of how these policies played out in their classrooms (Coburn, 2001; Datnow and Park, 2009). This resulted in a large variance of curriculum and instruction observed in individual Secondary Newcomer Program classrooms. Just as Coburn found in her 2001 study, some policies were not implemented at all because the teacher deemed them inappropriate for the population. For example, in one class I observed, students were working on basic English skills, learning how to say the date and greet people. This lesson did not align with Common Core State Standards, A-G coursework, nor address genres covered on the CAHSEE, but the teacher felt these policies were not appropriate for the level of her students. Furthermore, teachers interviewed often described the impossibility of fully enacting the district's stated vision of the program because it was too difficult given their students' lack of prior formal education and the structure of their block schedule where they had less instructional minutes. In the case of Secondary Newcomer Programs, teachers' varying degrees of policy adherence was not based on misconceptions of varying interpretations, but rather their assessment of how the policies would affect their students' access to curriculum.

Teachers in this study also defined their role as advocates for their program, as they felt the state and local policies had little understanding of the population of underschooled immigrant students. Weick (2005) addressed this phenomenon in his work on organizational sensemaking when he discussed the role of power in organizations. He asserted that people in power have an unequally strong influence whereas those who have less power have little voice in policy messages. As seen here, the district's universal requirement for all students to complete this rigorous coursework does not factor in the plight of a student who has attended little to no school before immigrating to the United States. Secondary Newcomer Program teachers sensed the injustice of this lack of representation in policy and actively worked to raise awareness about this population and advocate for a change in policy to allow for a more flexible program model or to allow students an alternate pathway to graduation.

This process of the district prioritizing a policy message, site administrators emphasizing or de-emphasizing these policies, and teachers making sense of and enacting these policies as they deem appropriate in their individual classrooms situates squarely in the established sensemaking research. In this way, this study further expands the theoretical framework of sensemaking to apply to how actors in the system shape and enact policy on behalf of marginalized populations.

At the same time, as a qualitative study of a complex program situated in a large district amidst policy reform, this inquiry diverges from some research on sensemaking frameworks. Coburn (2001) asserts that teachers link new policy messages to their prior knowledge or belief systems in a process Spillane (1999) refers to as the "zone of

enactment" whereby teachers frame and reframe messages. There is evidence that Secondary Newcomer Program teachers engage in this process of framing and reframing messages in their discussions of how they collaborate with mainstream teachers to understand how the new policy requirements affect their students and determine curriculum they should cover. Their sensemaking, however, is much more reliant on a deep understanding of the unique challenges this marginalized population of underschooled immigrant students face. Teachers often spoke of students who lacked basic needs and how they perceived it to be their role to connect students with these resources. During my time at one site, we had to reschedule a teacher interview because she realized some students did not have transportation to a school sporting event and she left to drive them herself. Each teacher gave detailed accounts of specific students who did not "fit the mold" of a regular high school students, ranging from students who had never held a pencil before to students who had clearly experienced physical trauma that required medical care and special education services the family did not know how to attain. The only time teachers referenced their prior knowledge in reference to district policy came when they discussed specific academic skills they taught. Teachers might draw on their knowledge of how to teach phonics from their past job as a primary teacher, for example, to meet the need of a student who has no literacy skills. Much more poignant in their discussions of policy was their knowledge of their students, their students' families, and how they felt these policies would affect their students' educational trajectory.

Where many sensemaking studies focus on the implementation of a singular academic policy or curriculum program, this study aimed to understand the role of teacher sensemaking in the context of a complex environment. This presented many layers of factors that affected teachers' understanding and implementation of high stakes tests and graduation requirements. As such, teachers in this study discussed balancing multiple factors in their sensemaking process. They considered student need, programmatic challenges, the role of advocacy, students' next steps, site-based policy messages, and district requirements when determining the curriculum they would teacher and how they would deliver their instruction. Additionally, these Secondary Newcomer Program teachers are often the sole decision-makers in domains of curriculum, instruction, and student placement. In interviews with site counselors, lead teachers, and administrators, all other faculty on staff had less knowledge and contact with this population of students and openly admitted they rely on the teachers to guide them

While some sensemaking studies emphasize the role of the principal or even the district personnel, in the case of Secondary Newcomer Programs, teachers are the primary sensemakers and decision-makers (Coburn 2005; Honig & Hatch, 2004; Jennings, 2010; Sleegers et al., 2009; Supovitz, Sirinides, May, 2009). With very little site or district guidance, the teachers determine their students' academic needs, develop curriculum to move students from this basic level to being prepared for core courses, implement instructional strategies to make content accessible, and determine student placement once they exit the program. In contrast with other studies where teachers are accountable to administrators and data, teachers in the Secondary Newcomer Program

experience real-life accountability: if they do not successfully meld district policy with student need, their students will not have the opportunity to earn a high school diploma. This extraordinary pressure to balance policy demands and student challenges places teachers as the lynchpins to the success of the program.

Implications for future research

This study investigated the convergence of multiple broad-based local and state policies in a holistic program designed for underschooled immigrant students. A theoretical framework of sensemaking was used to contextualize the findings. Where much sensemaking research focuses on isolated policies or programs, this inquiry attempted to explain the role of teacher sensemaking in the midst of multiple external factors. Future research would be well-served to expand on a more complex model of sensemaking where multiple policies, complicated social systems, and marginalized populations intersect.

This study was situated in one district in the state of California, where several large districts have moved to a system of A-G graduation requirements. The results of this study may have been entirely different had it occurred in an area where there are varying pathways to diplomas, allowing for more flexibility and a broader range of educational policies to interpret. Therefore, it would be beneficial to conduct a similar qualitative analysis of teacher sensemaking of educational policy in other cities with large populations of underschooled immigrant students, such as Denver or Minneapolis.

Due to the transient nature of refugee populations who often experience secondary migration to meet economic needs, it was outside the scope of this study to quantify how underschooled immigrant students fare under these new policies. Future research that tracks student performance and investigates its relation to students' and families' economic mobility could add a quantitative element to the discussion that this study lacks, examining student achievement over time. A comparative quantitative study that analyzes enactment of different aspects of a policy could shed light on which policies are most and least effective for student achievement. In the case of the Secondary Newcomer Program, for example, a quantitative study that compares how students fare at a site that emphasizes high stakes testing preparation compared to how students fare at a site that emphasizes expediting student enrollment into credit-bearing courses could yield important implications about policy efficacy. Similarly, a quantitative study that measures the effectiveness of instruction could refine teaching practice for underschooled immigrant students. Such a study could identify best practices that could then be expanded to mainstream teachers who teach this population of students once they leave the Secondary Newcomer Program.

Qualitatively, this inquiry solely focused on district and site faculty and administration. Future studies could include the role of student voice to the greater conversation of how educational policy affects the marginalized population of underschooled immigrant students. How students understand the policies, plan or not plan for their course of study, and access resources to assist them in their studies could enlighten teachers, counselors, and administrators about students' and families' sense of

agency. Likewise, families play a vital role in their students' perceptions of and motivation for education. A qualitative study that examines the families' understandings of school's purpose and policies could allow for more interaction, communication, and collaboration between school and home.

Implications for district policy

This study also yields important implications for policy. Prior to full implementation of A-G requirements, a research consortium investigated potential effects of such a policy in the San Diego Unified School District and subsequently analyzed the longitudinal data once the policy was implemented (Betts et al., 2015). The authors predicted that this policy would unduly affect marginalized populations with the lack of credit for English as a Second Language courses and the eradication of a Career and Technical Education pathway to graduation. As seen in this study, it is nearly impossible for underschooled immigrant students in the Secondary Newcomer Program to earn a diploma under the current policy reform. As foreseen by Betts et al. (2015), mathematically, students run often out of time before they are able to complete the A-G coursework. This finding was later confirmed when Betts et al. analyzed data to determine how many students would graduate in the first year of this policy implementation (Betts et al.; 2016). With no CTE pathway, they have no choice but to drop out of school. Furthermore, Betts et al. advised the district of the possibility that courses would lose standardization. In an effort to ensure adequate high school completion rates, sites may alter curriculum so students can pass more easily, making A-

G courses significantly easier in areas where they traditionally experience high dropout rates. In my observation of a counseling session, a site counselor explained to the students that if they received a grade of an "F" in Integrated Math the first semester, but increased the grade the second semester, the school would change the original "F" to a "D", allowing the student to receive credit for the course. A further inquiry into this practice at the district yielded confirmation of this policy, with a lead teacher explaining that the idea is that students would have increased their mathematical understanding by the end of the year and, therefore, should not be required to take the course again. In a discussion about the standardization of courses, a lead teacher explained there is very little standardization across the district. For example, an English 1/2 course in a low performing school may look vastly different from the same course in a more high performing area. These interviews and findings support Betts et al's (2015, 2016) assertions that curriculum may be watered down for the sake for meeting policy requirements.

The district implemented these policies with the intention of providing equal access to rigorous curriculum. This came is response to school sites in low performing areas historically not providing underrepresented students with access to courses that would allow them entrance into the university system. In trying to rectify this injustice, the district may have unwittingly created another one. Underschooled immigrant students have one narrow pathway to graduation that relies entirely on students defying theories of language acquisition. They must accelerate their language development from the research-supported norm of five to seven years down to one year. They must

simultaneously learn the basic tenets of U.S. and world history, physical science, and develop mathematical skills up to algebraic levels. Should they meet these prerequisite standards, they must take extra ESL and English courses during the summer to accrue sufficient credits, courses which are offered only if budgets allow and often at sites where students do not have transportation. Underschooled immigrant students must progress through all these courses without failing and having to retake any of them, lest they risk running out of time before they age out of the system.

Given these unintended outcomes of unequally penalizing underschooled immigrant students and de-standardizing coursework, Marisol School District should consider altering the policy in one of the following ways: either allow underschooled immigrant students and other marginalized populations an alternate type of diploma, allow an alternate pathway to attaining the same diploma as all other students, or highlight the alternate path of acquiring a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) for students who enter school at a late age or with significant disabilities. The district could create a second tier of their high school diploma that allows some concession for students who are unable to access the coursework of A-G classes because of language barriers or disabilities. Alternately, they could allow the standard diploma to accept a CTE course of study as opposed to rigidly imposing one singular pathway to graduation. As seen by the participants in this study, schools, families, and students believe that completing a GED is a sub-standard option and students often choose to remain on a comprehensive high school site long after they could mathematically achieve a diploma, ultimately leading to the student dropping out of school with no certificate of completion. District personnel

and counselors should openly communicate about the role of the GED and advise older students and their families that it may be more feasible to attain a GED than complete a high school diploma. By presenting it as a reasonable and acceptable alternative, families and students may view it as an option as opposed to a failure.

Furthermore, basing the diploma on the University of California's entrance requirements has shifted the locus of control. Whereas previously the district unilaterally determined course eligibility, now the district must advocate to the UC system for acceptance of certain classes, a technicality most teachers advocating for students may not realize. For example, should the district decide that ESL courses could count for the foreign language requirement for language learners who already speak one or more other languages, they would need to get approval from the University of California to do so. Though this exponentially expands the bureaucratic process for qualifying courses for A-G requirements, the district should advocate for ESL to qualify as a foreign language credit. This would free up a significant amount of a student's course of study to allow for the realistic possibility that an underschooled immigrant student may fail a course and need to retake it or a student could use these vacancies to concurrently take English courses once they complete the ESL sequence.

Implications for practice

Both Auerbach (1992) and Dooley (2009) discussed the role of critical thinking in classes of immigrant students. They found that while students may lack the language necessary to express their thoughts, they were able to engage in the critical thinking

process, an opportunity rarely presented to students with such low levels of English proficiency. Throughout the course of this study, this idea of students' ability conflicting with their language proficiency frequently arose, leading to some instructional implications.

Both in the Secondary Newcomer Program and in the subsequent levels of ESL, students would benefit from curriculum designed to simultaneously promote both critical thinking and language acquisition. Both lead teachers and classroom teachers in the program discussed instructional techniques such as QTEL (Quality Teaching for English Learners) and scaffolded instruction as ways to support student learning and provide access to core curriculum for language learners. Unfortunately, they also felt these techniques were not present in higher levels of ESL and mainstream content courses and students were rarely presented with opportunities to engage in and demonstrate critical thinking. As such, teachers in areas known to have large populations of underschooled immigrant students who will be moving through these courses should be trained in these instructional strategies.

In addition to implementing effective instructional techniques, teachers would also benefit from collaborating and sharing curriculum. Throughout interviews and classroom observations, Secondary Newcomer Teachers often discussed the amount of time they spent developing and modifying curriculum to fit the needs of this particular population. Since there are multiple school sites housing the program, teachers often find it logistically impossible to collaborate with other newcomer teachers at other sites. As

such, it would be helpful for teachers to have an organized way to disseminate curriculum they have created.

One site studied acknowledged that students leaving the Secondary Newcomer Program were not totally prepared for mainstream credit-bearing courses and cohorted students together to received sheltered instruction. In this way, students can be identified and targeted as needing additional support. Other sites with large populations of language learners should follow a similar model of grouping students together and specially training the teachers who will have these students in their courses. At the time of this study, district and site personnel readily acknowledged a lack of standardization in ESL courses. Given that the students will leave the Secondary Newcomer Program and enter subsequent levels of ESL, it makes sense for sites to vertically align their English Language Development curriculum to ensure that by the time a student exits the ESL sequence, s/he has learned both the grammatical forms and literacy strategies necessary to succeed in mainstream English classes.

Throughout the course of this study, classroom and lead teachers often lamented that they felt isolated and even inferior as a Secondary Newcomer teacher. This was attributable to being physically isolated on the site, as many Secondary Newcomer Program classrooms were located on the fringe of the campus, and a pervasive attitude that teaching students new to school was less important than teaching in a credit-bearing course that counts toward graduation. To alleviate this sense of isolation and encourage collaboration across programs, schools should centrally locate Secondary Newcomer Program classrooms and include newcomer teachers in all site professional development

and department meetings. Site administrators could highlight the need for providing services across the whole spectrum of education as a means to elevate the status of newcomer teachers. These two changes would both physically and professionally include Secondary Newcomer Programs in the general daily life of the campus.

Additionally, though many schools offer tutoring, underschooled immigrant students do not access these services. Often they may not realize they exist or they feel uncomfortable in a room of people with whom they cannot communicate. Schools in Marisol School District would benefit from connecting with outside agencies to provide tutoring services specifically targeted to underschooled immigrant students. As noted in Chapter 4, there are alumni foundations, religious associations, and resettlement organizations that voluntarily assist refugee families with a number of needs. Some of these groups offer tutoring off-site, but students are unable to find transportation to attend. Merging the student need for tutoring and outside agencies that are willing to provide volunteers would allow students to have additional support in areas where they struggle.

While these suggested changes would offer further supports to underschooled immigrant students, teachers in Secondary Newcomer Programs will inevitably continue to balance the intersection of broad-based policy and the unique needs of this student population. As with any marginalized population, generalized approaches tend to be ill-fitting and require substantial modification. In the case of Secondary Newcomer Programs, teachers fill this distinct role.

Final Thoughts

Throughout my time in Secondary Newcomer Programs during the course of this investigation, I often questioned how teachers persevered in the face of seemingly impossible obstacles. They completed all the standard professional expectations of preparing, planning, and implementing lessons, attending meetings and training sessions, assessing students and completing report cards. For them, all those responsibilities were where the job started. They referenced this litany of teacher duties in a simple paragraph, then went on to talk about what they called "the real job", which seemed to entail the full scope of resettling a traumatized family, getting them educated, and finding them jobs. Teachers often talked about how their colleagues mischaracterized their program as belittled their jobs as not real high school teachers. The pressure on Secondary Newcomer teachers to not only satisfy the academic needs of their students, but to attend to the minute details of their students' lives like reading their mail for them as well as the urgent issues of medical and economic need, all the while feeling as though their work is not valued in the greater context of their school site or the district itself seemed overwhelming.

When I asked the teachers themselves about why they do this job, without hesitation, every teacher responded with a story of student inspiration. I heard stories about students who went on to college and continued to email their teacher to check in and thank her, stories about students who had been through unspeakable acts of violence and degradation arriving at school each day with a smile and eagerness to learn, stories about students who had been unable to walk for the entirety of their lives but at the behest

of their teacher, got their first wheelchair and could finally make some friends. Teachers and administrators alike talked about students whose life goal was to do something to help their community and their families back home. As inspired as I was by the teachers' dedication, the teachers were more inspired by their students' determination and perseverance. On more than one occasion, a teacher who had spent nearly an hour discussing horrific student experiences, crippling professional pressures, and extreme frustrations would only break down and cry when talking about their students' successes. One teacher described the sentiment:

> Knowing that the most difficult part of their journey has been to come here and so what I feel responsible for what can I do to make their journey here easier…it's holding their hand, making sure that they know that they can do it even though I know that the obstacles are enormous.

More so than in any other type of teaching role, Secondary Newcomer teachers connect with their students. They are invested. And when their students achieve any type of success, whether it be graduating from high school or finding a job that allows their family food security, these teachers feel validated. As described by perhaps the most famous refugee student, Malala Youfsazi, "one child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world" (http://blog.malala.org). Indeed, for underschooled immigrant students in Marisol School District, one teacher can change their world.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview Protocol: NAC Teachers

This interview should take approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

Thank you so much for sharing your classroom with me. I'm really interested to see and hear about what's going on in your classroom, as well as how you manage the challenges of your job.

As we discussed, I'm going to audio record our interaction, as it will help me to make sense of it later. If you would like me to pause, stop, or erase any of the audio recording at any time, please feel free to let me know. Of course, I will not share the audio recording or the transcript to your colleagues, your principal or others in the district, and I will not use your name when discussing it with my adviser or other students in my doctoral program.

Questions for NAC teachers/counselors

1. How did you come to teach in the Secondary Newcomer Program?
2. Describe your class.
3. What is the most rewarding aspect of the job?
4. What are some challenges you face as a teacher?
    a. What are some challenges you face in working with students?
    b. What are some challenges you face in working with other faculty?
    c. What are some challenges you face on a broader level in the district?
    d. How is teaching in a Secondary Newcomer Program the same as teaching in other contexts? How is it different?
5. What are some challenges your students face?
    a. What are some academic related challenges?

   b. What are some social/emotional related challenges?
   c. What are some immigration related challenges?
6. How do you decide what to teach and when to teach it?
   a. If there is no discussion of policy, I will ask:
      i. How do CCSS, A-G graduation requirements factor into your decision making?
      ii. What are your feelings about CCSS, A-G graduation requirements, relative to ELs? Underschooled immigrant students?
      iii. Can you give me an example of a time when you taught a lesson or advised a student that was directly connected to CCSS or A-G graduation requirements? What was your thinking behind planning for this lesson or advising this student?
7. In your opinion, what is the purpose of school for New Arrival students? What is the goal?
   a. What do you think your students think the purpose of school is? What makes you think that?
   b. What do you think your students' families think the purpose of school is? What makes you think that?
   c. What do you think other teachers on staff the purpose of school is for New Arrival Students? What makes you think that?
   d. What do you think site administration thinks the purpose of school is for Secondary Newcomer Programs? What makes you think that?
   e. What do you think district administration thinks the purpose of school is for Secondary Newcomer Programs? What makes you think that?
8. What is the role of the teacher in a Secondary Newcomer Program?
   a. If someone was interested in this job, how would you describe it?
      i. What is the role of the teacher in the Secondary Newcomer Program?
      ii. What are the responsibilities?
      iii. What are the goals of the teacher?

iv. How is teaching in a Secondary Newcomer Program the same as teaching in other contexts? How is it different?

b. How would you describe your role as it relates to students and families?

c. How would you describe your role as it relates to other staff on site?

d. How would you describe your role as it relates to administration?

Appendix B

Interview Protocol: District Personnel

This interview should take approximately 45 minutes to one hour.

Thank you so much for taking time to meet with me to discuss your work with Secondary Newcomer Programs. As we discussed, I'm going to audio record our interaction, as it will help me to make sense of it later. If you would like me to pause, stop, or erase any of the audio recording at any time, please feel free to let me know. Of course, I will not share the audio recording or the transcript to your colleagues, administration, or others in the district, and I will not use your name when discussing it with my adviser or other students in my doctoral program.

Questions for director/resource teachers

1. How did you come to be the director of the Office of Language Acquisition? Tell me about your career path.
2. How do you define your role in relation to the Secondary Newcomer Programs?
3. What is the mission of the Secondary Newcomer Programs?
4. What is the purpose of school for students in Secondary Newcomer Programs?
    a. What do you think your students think the purpose of school is? What makes you think that?
    b. What do you think your students' families think the purpose of school is? What makes you think that?
    c. What do you think other teachers on staff the purpose of school is for New Arrival Students? What makes you think that?
    d. What do you think site administration thinks the purpose of school is for Secondary Newcomer Programs? What makes you think that?
    e. What do you think district administration thinks the purpose of school is for Secondary Newcomer Programs? What makes you think that?
5. What governs the Secondary Newcomer Programs?
    a. If there is no discussion of policy, I will ask:

i. How do CCSS, A-G graduation requirements factor into your decision making?
ii. What are your feelings about CCSS, A-G graduation requirements?
iii. Can you give me an example of, ideally, how you would like to see these policies implemented in a classroom? (For resource teachers: Can you give me an example of curriculum or instruction that addresses these policies?)

6. What guides your work with the Secondary Newcomer Programs?
    a. What are some of the challenges in working with Secondary Newcomer Programs?
    b. What are some of the rewards?
7. If you are hiring for a new teacher in this position, how do you describe the job?
    a. What is the role of the teacher in the Secondary Newcomer Program?
    b. What are the responsibilities?
    c. What are the goals of the teacher?
    d. How is teaching in a Secondary Newcomer Program the same as teaching in other contexts? How is it different?
8. What is working in the Secondary Newcomer Programs? Why?
9. What would you like to see different about Secondary Newcomer Programs? Why?
    a. Curriculum?
    b. Instruction?
    c. Governing policy?
    d. –Community connections?

Appendix C

Observation Guide

Artifacts **Around campus**	**In classroom**
Curriculum/Instruction	Advising Students

Appendix D

University of California, San Diego

Consent to Act as a Research Subject

Teacher Sensemaking of District Policy for Underschooled Immigrant Students

Kristy Drake, under the supervision of Dr. Amanda Datnow, Professor in the Department of Education Studies at UCSD, with the approval of the Marisol School District, is conducting a research study to find out more how teachers make sense of and implement district policy as it relates to underschooled immigrant students. Mrs. Drake is conducting this research for her doctoral dissertation in the UCSD Doctoral Program in Teaching and Learning. You have been asked to participate in this study because you work with students in the Secondary Newcomer Program in Marisol School District. There will be approximately 10 participants in this study. The purpose of the study is to understand teachers interpret and mediate district policy in their classrooms and advising of students. The goal is to inform future research and understand how policy at district, state, and national levels affects marginalized populations of students.

If you agree to be in this study, the following will happen to you:

For district level administrators: You will be asked to participate in one or two interviews about your school's/district's organizational policies and supports for policy implementation. Each interview is expected to last approximately 1 hour and will be audio-recorded to improve the accuracy of the researcher's notes. Interviews will take place at your school/work site or another local location of your choosing. Participating in the interviews is voluntary. You can choose not to answer any question at any time for any reason. You may decide not to answer some or any questions, and can stop the interview at any time or erase any portion of the taped recording. You can withdraw from the study by telling the researcher.

For teachers: Over the course of the next approximately 2.5 months, a researcher will complete approximately 2 hours of classroom observation, in order to learn about how governing policies are implemented in classroom practice. When conducting

observations, the researcher will create descriptive notes, reflective comments, and sketched pictures of the environment. However, no audio recordings will be created of the classroom. The researchers may also request copies or photos of documents, charts or other instructional materials used by the teachers. All participation is voluntary. These observations are in no way intended to be evaluative. You may ask the researcher to stop the observations at any time, decline to share documents, or may elect to only allow observations in certain settings. Doing so will not impact your participation in any other portion of the study.

In addition to the classroom observation, a researcher will ask you to participate in a formal interview about your understandings and beliefs about governing policies, the types of policies you reference for instructional decision making, and the factors that inform decisions in advising students. Each interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be audio-recorded to improve the accuracy of the researcher's notes. Interviews will take place at your school site or other local location of your choosing and may be outside of your regular work hours. Again, participating in the interviews is voluntary, and there are no negative consequences if you decide not to participate. You can choose not to answer any question at any time for any reason. You may decide not to answer some or any questions, and can stop the interview at any time or ask to erase any portion of the taped recording. You can withdraw from the study by telling the researcher.

At the completion of the study the researchers will write a report with the results of the study which will be shared with the district. The researchers may also discuss the results at scientific meetings, conferences and in research papers. The results will present information in only in summary form so you will not be identified by name. Quotes may be used in reports and presentations, but they will not be connected with specific individuals. Any information that could identify you such as your name, grade level, or school name will not be used in any reports. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to individuals and schools. We will use confidential study ID numbers rather than names to record information. Only the interviewers will know which ID number refers to each participant, and only the interviewer and a typist will hear the interviews or see written summaries of the interviews.

Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. The UCSD Institutional Review Board may review records.

Risks: Participation in this study may involve some added risks or discomforts. These include:

1. A potential for the loss of confidentiality. However, all possible care will be taken to protect the confidentiality of your records including but not limited to keeping data on

a password protected server and following standard UCSD security protocols to maintain confidentiality. Research records will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by law. In addition to the researchers listed above and their research assistants, research records may be reviewed by the UCSD Institutional Review Board.

2. A potential risk of emotional discomfort. You may be asked personal questions about your professional goals and beliefs. There is the possibility that this may lead some participants to feel some mild emotional discomfort or embarrassment. Please be advised that you are under no obligation to discuss any topic which makes you feel uncomfortable, and you may choose not to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable and still remain in the study.

3. For those participating in the observation portion of the study: A potential risk of loss of confidentiality/emotional discomfort. While researchers will make every effort to be discrete and go unnoticed at your school and other settings their presence may raise questions among your colleagues and students. Researchers will not discuss your participation in the study or reveal the purpose of their presence unless you give them explicit permission to do so. All notes taken during observations will be recorded using only your project ID number and will be subject to the same protections as all other project data.

4. A potential risk for feelings of frustration, stress, discomfort, fatigue, and boredom. You are under no obligation to participate in or complete the interviews. Please be advised that you may stop the interview at any time for any reason.

Under California law, we must report information about known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder including physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any investigator/researcher has or is given such information, he or she may be required to report such information to the appropriate authorities.

Because this is a research study, there may also be some unknown risks that are currently unforeseeable.

Benefits: There will not be any direct benefit to you from participating this study. The study, however, may identify issues related to implementing broad policies and their effects on marginalized populations that will assist in addressing the issue of implementing policy in the classroom, and society may benefit from this knowledge. You will be informed of any significant new findings. There will be no cost to you for participating in this study.

Participation in research is entirely voluntary. The alternatives to participation in this study are no participation or limited participation (e.g., a subject might choose to complete some of the initial interviews/observations but then decline to participate in further interviews or observations).

You may refuse to participate or withdraw or refuse to answer specific questions in an interview at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. If you decide that you no longer wish to continue in this study, you may notify the interviewer at any time or notify Kristy Drake via email or phone:

Kristy Drake
kdrake@ucsd.edu
(619)933-9018

The researcher named above has explained this study to you and answered you questions. If you have other questions or research- related problems you may reach Kristy Drake at (619) 933-9018. You may call the Human Research Protections Office at (858) 657-5100 to inquire about your rights as a research subject or to report research-related problems.

You have received a copy of this consent document.

You agree to participate.

_____ _____

Participant's signature Date

Appendix E

Code System	#
Code System	1477
Role/Purpose of SNP	40
Purpose of SNP: socio-emotional	57
Purpose of SNP: social justice	31
Purpose of SNP: academic	55
Policy	18
Policy: Other	89
Policy: CAHSEE	28
Policy: A-G	101
Policy: CCSS	17
Purpose of school: academic	55
Teacher decision-making	72
Systems focus	45
Individual focus	6
Proposed changes	51
Successes	30
Purpose of school	61

Purpose of school: conflict	11
Purpose of school: justice	1
Purpose of school: economic	36
Purpose of school: social	14
Purpose of school: academic	42
Challenges	14
Challenges: district	56
Challenges: admin	21
Challenges: colleagues	36
Challenges: teaching	71
Challenges: students face	95
Rewards	17
Pedagogy: student agency	27
Pedagogy	32
Curriculum	65
Balance	28
Teacher conceptualization of role	122
Background	33

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