IN WHOSE BEST INTEREST?: HOW EDUCATORS MAKE SENSE OF AND
RESPOND TO IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT NEAR SCHOOL PROPERTY

A Dissertation in
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by

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ABSTRACT

The enforcement of immigration policy presents new challenges for educators who serve undocumented students. This study examined how educators in different professional roles at one elementary school with undocumented students in Northern California made sense of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity near school property, decided how to respond, and perceived the outcomes of their decisions. Accordingly, this study asked: 1.) How do educators make sense of laws or messages regarding ICE and school policy toward undocumented students?; 2.) How do educators who work with undocumented students perceive in whose best interests they will act when their school has experienced ICE activity; and 3.) How does educators’ sensemaking of ICE activity on school property manifest itself in their decision making and in the outcomes of their decisions? These questions were addressed using a qualitative, embedded case study research design approach. The conceptual framework used sensemaking theory to investigate educators’ perceptions of ICE activity near school property and how they formulated a response. The framework also integrated the Best Interests of the Student model (Stefkovich, 2006) to reveal how educators made sense of their professional and personal responsibilities to make a decision in ethically complex circumstances.

The findings from the study demonstrate that schools can serve as both the physical and political grounds over undocumented immigrants’ right to access social services. This study showed that educators had minimal legal awareness of undocumented students’ educational rights, or district and school policies related to ICE activity on or near the school’s campus. These findings support the need for state and local policymakers to work with school districts to define and align policies to protect undocumented students’ educational rights, and to inform school personnel of those laws and policies. The findings also confirm that ongoing professional development for school leaders should include both political and law courses and that school leaders and teachers could benefit from opportunities to participate in ethical training workshops as well.
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Chapter One—INTRODUCTION

Schools are no longer simply symbolic ground in the immigration debate over undocumented immigrants’ right to access social services: They can serve as both the physical and political grounds. Access to education is one of the most critical social services a society provides. United States federal law guarantees a free, public K-12 education for undocumented students, but the immigration debate reaches into schools serving undocumented students when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity occurs near public school property, jeopardizing undocumented students’ educational access. When ICE comes near school property, educators must make sense of how ICE activity will affect the school, students, and local community. Educators then have to make decisions about how to respond. Educators’ perceptions of their legal and ethical responsibilities in this context has implications for the protection of undocumented students’ educational rights, the purpose of schools, and the role of educators as the United States becomes more racially and ethnically diverse.

Statement of the Problem

The United States struggles to reconcile competing viewpoints on whether undocumented immigrants are assets or detrimental to the health of society. Although the United States is a nation that immigrants built, it has continued to wrestle with the extent to which immigrants are welcomed and incorporated into society. Millions of immigrant families have come to the shores of the U.S. in pursuit of the American Dream and a chance at a better, meaningful life. Many immigrants have believed so strongly in this dream that they decided to come to the U.S. without official permission from the federal
government, and are therefore considered “undocumented,” or “illegal.” Subsequently, how the United States should respond politically and socially to the presence of undocumented immigrants is a topic that sparks intense national debate and consistently draws the attention and opinions of politicians, the media, and the public. Whether undocumented immigrants should have access to basic social services like healthcare and education provokes heated discussions and argument in particular.

People opposed to allowing undocumented immigrants to access social services like education argue that it encourages undocumented immigration rather than deters it. Undocumented immigrants, they argue, are drains on the social system (Rincón, 2008). They take jobs away from citizens and require the country to spend considerable fiscal and human resources to prevent further criminal behavior (Federation for American Immigration Reform, 2012; Morse & Ludovina, 2009). Undocumented immigrants choose to bypass U.S. rules and laws, and they have no right to receive the benefits of social services. Therefore, legislation should restrict access to social services and limit the paths—education being the primary one—leading to occupational and economic opportunities. By providing free access to social services, including education, the nation risks promoting further unauthorized immigration.

People in favor of less stringent immigration and social policies toward undocumented immigrants are equally strong in their opinions. Those who support undocumented immigrants’ access to social services counter-argue that undocumented immigrants contribute to society through taxes and only occupy jobs citizens or legal residents do not want (Hanson, 2009). Undocumented immigrants also have reason to bypass a complex legal system that can take years to authorize immigrants to escape
deplorable social, economic, and political conditions or limited opportunities in their native countries. Once in the United States, providing unauthorized immigrants with access to social services like education, they argue, is critical as higher academic achievement is linked to less dependence on social services like welfare, and health care, and it reduces the probability of incarceration (National Immigration Law Center, 2006; AASC&U, 2007). In addition, supporters of undocumented students’ access to education believe that incorporating immigrants and their children into American culture through participation in the school system rightfully perpetuates America’s history as a nation of immigrants. Yet, undocumented students’ educational access can be circumscribed.

Immigration and law enforcement activity has the power to disrupt undocumented students’ education. In 2008, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the immigration enforcement arm of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, conducted operations close to schools in search of undocumented immigrants in two neighboring school districts in Northern California. These operations caused strong reactions in the local communities, because ICE activity took place near schools—and some people believed ICE actually came onto school grounds. Reports indicated that ICE agents positioned their vehicles across the street from a number of schools—including elementary schools—for several hours. Officials from both school districts had to respond to urgent calls from concerned parents, and reassure parents that the schools would not allow ICE to take a child from a school (López & López, 2010; O’Brien & Murphy, 2008; Tucker & Van Derberken, 2008).

ICE’s presence on or near school properties has myriad implications, but the effects that ICE activity has on the choices educators make to respond to such activity, as
well as their views of the outcomes of their decisions, has not been previously studied. This study is timely and relevant considering that the examples of two Northern Californian school officials’ interactions with immigration in 2008 are unexceptional: Similar incidents took place one year earlier in Colorado, Nebraska, and Massachusetts. Immigrants were held for days or months while others were deported, with repercussions for schools and educators (Capps et al., 2007; López & López, 2010). Schools and caretakers had to scramble to find childcare for approximately 500 children in result of these raids (Capps et al., 2007). ICE has stated that schools are not a place for routine immigration enforcement activities, and that is cognizant of the effect its actions or perceived presence could have on schools and schoolchildren (Martinez, 2008). Yet, immigration agents have come to schools, been on school property, or have questioned and subsequently detained students (Riccardi, 2008; Murillo, 1992; López & López, 2010). Further, the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA) does not completely curb ICE from conducting operations on school grounds (Borkowski & Soronen, 2009), potentially keeping the school doors open to enforcement. Despite ICE’s statements of sensitivity to the contexts of schools, the agency has demonstrated on several occasions that schools and school property are not beyond its oversight.

Students are affected by ICE activity when they fear a parent has been seized by ICE during a raid at the parent’s workplace during the school day (Riccardi, 2008). Immigration authorities’ unpredictable searches and seizures of adults and children suspected of being unlawfully present in the U.S., as well as the atmosphere of fear created by the possibility of a search and seizure, places immediate, serious demands on school teachers and administrators to handle the physical, psychological, and emotional
aftermath of ICE activity at or near schools. Compounding the problem, evidence shows that parents keep their undocumented children out of school, because they fear their children will be picked up by ICE (Capps et al., 2007). ICE’s presence at school raises ethical concerns about embroiling educators and students in the national struggle to reconcile dissatisfaction with U.S. immigration policy. Educators do not always have a clear choice as to how to reconcile compliance with immigration law and authorities and the policies or expectations a school places on them. This study proposed that authorities who enforce immigration law on or near school property can create unique legal or ethical dilemmas for schools and educators who work with undocumented students. They must balance their obligations while simultaneously attending to their responsibilities for their students and ensuring the classroom and school environments are free of fear.

According to U.S. law, undocumented children are entitled to a free, K-12 public education due to the landmark 1982 Supreme Court ruling in Plyler v. Doe. The Court ruled against the state of Texas to find that, irrespective of the legal status a child, an undocumented child cannot be subject to discrimination by the state deciding to withhold state funds for school districts, which would potentially inhibit students’ access to a primary and secondary school-level education. In the Plyler decision, the Supreme Court held that undocumented immigrant children could claim equal protection clause under the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which was designed in part to prevent legislation that creates or perpetuates social or economic caste-like systems in the United States or contributes to developing a subclass of people. The Court opined that denying any population like undocumented immigrants access to public education has more severe consequences than denying access to other governmental benefits. The Court
stated that, “…the deprivation of education takes an inestimable toll on the social, economic, intellectual, and psychological well-being of the individual, and poses an obstacle to individual achievement.” Undocumented children deserve equal protection under the law, and they cannot be punished for their parents’ decision to come to the country without authorization. The Court also argued that education is of vital U.S. national and state interest in order to “[maintain] the fabric of our society and [sustain] our political and cultural heritage.”

The Plyler decision ultimately obligates teachers to educate all students in their care. Professional codes of ethics also state that educators should not discriminate against students on the basis of their national origin (NEA, 2012). However, educators who comply with Plyler must also comply fully with immigration law, and thus they are expected to comply with ICE authorities. Educators can potentially be placed in a legal or ethical dilemma if they perceive dissonance or conflict among their different legal, professional or personal obligations and responsibilities as to how they should respond to ICE activity near school grounds.

Cooperation between ICE and schools could change the entire role of educators and the purpose of schools. Schools—and particularly the educators who are essential to the functioning of schools—are deeply connected with and committed to students, students’ families, and the local community. If educators succumb to pressure from ICE without first reflecting on the potential implications of their actions and whether they contradict formal/informal school or district policies or not, their choices have consequences that will extend beyond the school walls. Educators’ choices have the power to radically alter school-family relationships, reduce local control over schools,
jeopardize public trust in educators to keep both the school environment and children safe, and influence whether undocumented students can access education. Therefore this study argued it is necessary to understand how educators perceive education for undocumented students and make sense of and respond to ICE activity near school property.

**Research Questions**

This study examined educators’ thought processes, how they arrived at a decision to respond to ICE activity, and their views on the outcomes of their decisions. In light of educators’ potentially varied legal and ethical obligations, the study also investigated whether educators’ decisions and consequent actions were influenced by their perceptions of what was in their own best interests, the best interests of their school, or the best interests of their students when laws and policies competed or contradicted each other in the context of ICE activity near the school campus.

The intent of this study was to learn how educators made sense of their competing obligations, how this lead them to a decision point, and how they were affected by and made sense of their decisions in retrospect. The research was informed by the following three questions:

1. How do educators who work with undocumented students make sense of laws or messages regarding ICE and school policy toward undocumented students when these laws, messages, or policies conflict with one another?

2. How do educators who work with undocumented students make sense of their own best interests, the best interests of their school,
and the best interests of the students when their school has experienced ICE activity?

3. How does educators’ sensemaking of ICE activity on school property manifest itself in their decision making, and how do they make sense of the outcomes of their decisions?

**Organization of the Study**

This study, a qualitative embedded case study of one elementary school in Northern California, “Aurora,” is divided into nine chapters. In the second chapter, I build upon the introduction by examining the research literature surrounding the context of undocumented immigration to the United States, and I also address U.S. immigration policy and law enforcement. I use the research literature to demonstrate how and why immigration policy intersects with the U.S. schooling system and educators’ legal and ethical responsibilities concerning undocumented students’ educational access.

The third chapter presents the conceptual framework underpinning this study. I used Sensemaking theory as the theoretical lens to guide the research questions, which aimed to capture how educators perceived ICE activity near school property, made decisions to respond, and viewed the outcomes of their decisions in hindsight. I also integrated Stefkovich’s (2006) Best Interests (BI) of the Student model into my use of sensemaking theory. The BI model is a framework consisting of multiple ethical paradigms which helped me conceptualize what educators’ thought processes look like under ethically complex circumstances. The third chapter also includes a visual
representation and explanation of the theoretical propositions and assumptions that structured the study’s research questions in the study.

Chapter four describes the methodology and methods I used to ascertain how educators at an elementary school, Aurora, made sense of ICE activity near school property in 2008. Briefly, the study was an embedded case study that included fourteen research participants, and data collection took place over the course of five weeks at one school in Northern California. Research methods included interviews, shadowing and observations, and document collection.

In chapters five through eight, I present the findings from the study. Notably, a large part of chapter five is dedicated to describing the chronology of the major events in 2008 and participants’ accounts of what happened during and after reports of ICE activity in the local neighborhood reached Aurora’s campus. In chapter five I also revisit the research questions that guided the study and the theoretical propositions and assumptions on which those research questions were based. Chapters six, seven, and eight are divided according to the three research questions. Each chapter addresses one research question, and the research questions are answered in the same sequence in which they were proposed. Chapter six addresses the question of whether participants perceived they had to make sense of contradictory policies, laws, or messages related to undocumented students in the context of immigration enforcement near school property. Chapter seven presents answers to the question in whose best interests educators acted when they learned of ICE activity close to the school grounds. Chapter eight addresses the third research question, which asked how educators’ sensemaking of ICE activity near the school affected their decisions to respond. Chapter eight also gives evidence for how
participants reflected on the outcomes of their decisions in 2008, and why the outcomes of those decisions influenced how they would perceive future ICE activity close to the school and would respond.

The final chapter, chapter 9, first reviews the salient findings from the research study. After reviewing the findings, I discuss why the findings contain implications for both policy and educational practice, moving beyond the specific context of how educators perceived ICE activity near one school’s campus. Specifically, this study shows that schools have been and will likely continue to be used as political pawns by actors on both sides of the immigration debate. Accordingly, this study presents reasons why educators working with undocumented students need to have explicit immigration policy knowledge and knowledge of policies related to undocumented students’ education at the national, state, and district levels. I primarily suggest that creating opportunities for school staff to increase their policy knowledge and having educators engage in ethical training workshops can help them better anticipate and think through how shifting policies could affect their ability to safeguard undocumented students’ educational rights. Finally, I close the last chapter by outlining areas for future research to explore and build upon the findings in this study, asking additional critical questions about how the relationships among schools, communities with a population of undocumented immigrants, and immigration policies shape the educational experiences of undocumented students and their access to schooling.
Chapter 2—LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study uses several stands of literature to examine how educators working in a school with an undocumented population made sense of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity near school property, and how they arrived at decisions to respond to this activity. To situate the study and demonstrate how immigration policy and law enforcement increasingly intersect with and influence schools’ ability to protect the educational rights undocumented students, I use the literature to investigate the complex history of the United States’ relationship with undocumented immigrants. In this chapter I first examine United States policy around undocumented immigration and how these policies have affected and influenced the flow of unauthorized immigrants into the country. I also use the literature to demonstrate how public attitudes toward immigrants shape policy, which has implications for undocumented immigrants’ access to social services like education. I then turn to look at how the literature around the education of immigrant children has focused largely on the academic achievement of these students, but issues affecting the education of undocumented children remain understudied.

I contend more research is necessary to understand factors that may affect the education of undocumented students, in particular ICE activity on or near a school campus. I narrow the review to look specifically at undocumented children, their participation in American schooling, and the potential for increased immigration enforcement activity on public school property. I do this in order to show how educators’ sensemaking of the context of ICE activity near school property and their subsequent decisions can influence the education undocumented children receive even though
undocumented children are legally guaranteed the right to a free, public K-12 education. Understanding how educators view their obligations and responsibilities to respond to challenges to these students’ educational access will be increasingly important as immigration policies—and the enforcement of immigration law—shift.

Undocumented Immigration in the United States

Who and How Many are Undocumented

The number of immigrants coming to permanently reside in the United States shows no sign of slowing down. Throughout the 1990s, more immigration to the U.S. occurred than ever before and was more geographically dispersed (Fry, 2007; Massey & Capoferro, 2008; Sobczak, 2010). The Pew Hispanic Center (2008) projects 82% of the population growth in the United States between 2005 and 2050 will be attributable to immigrants and their U.S.-born children. Gonzales (2009) estimates that between 2010 and 2030, immigrants and their children will be responsible for the entire growth of the U.S. labor force. However, not all who immigrate will arrive with official documentation.

Research over the past few years estimates 11 to 12 million unauthorized persons are living in the United States, or 4% of the total U.S. population, about half of whom arrived after 2000 (Hoefer, Rytina, & Baker, 2010; López & López, 2010; Passel & Cohn, 2010; Passel & Taylor, 2010). However, the percentage of undocumented immigrants in the country has fluctuated. The Pew Hispanic Center approximated that between March 2007 and March 2009, the overall population of unauthorized persons

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1 The terms “illegal,” “undocumented,” and “unauthorized” are used interchangeably to denote the legal status of an immigrant. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) uses the term “alien” to refer to a person who is not a U.S. citizen or U.S. national. DHS defines a person as an “illegal alien” if the person entered the United States without undergoing inspection; The “unauthorized resident immigrant population is defined as all foreign-born non-citizens who are not legal residents” (Hoefer et al., 2010).
decreased by 8% to 11.1 million, though other estimates place this number even lower (Hoefer et al., 2010; Passel & Cohn, 2010). Certainly, an exact count of how many undocumented immigrants come to the U.S. is difficult to ascertain. More recently, the Pew Hispanic Center posited in a report that the flow of undocumented immigrants from Mexico into the U.S. has come to a halt due to the United States’ current economic situation. However, the authors of the report suggested that the cessation of undocumented immigration may only be temporary and could resume as the economy recovers (Passel, Cohn, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012). Other factors besides the state of the economy also factor into undocumented immigrants’ decisions to come into the country without official authorization. Undocumented immigrants often follow seasonal patterns to look for work opportunities, such as in agriculture. They also weigh their decisions to come based on the likelihood they can successfully cross the U.S.-Mexico border without getting caught by immigration authorities (Espenshade, 1995; Passel, Cohn, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2012).

An argument exists that the focus of anti-immigration policy as it relates to undocumented persons is specifically directed at undocumented immigrants from Mexico (Johnson, 2004). One reason this argument exists is because the largest percentage of those who come to the U.S. without proper documentation come from Mexico. Undocumented Mexican immigrants account for approximately 7 million or nearly 60% of the undocumented population. However, Central America, Asia, and other major regions contribute a significant portion of the influx of undocumented immigrants. The number of immigrants coming from Latin American countries other than Mexico and those from the Caribbean decreased by 22% from 2007-2009 (Passel & Cohn, 2009;
Passel & Cohn, 2010). In spite of this decline—a notable reversal in the growth of the undocumented population—the number of unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. has tripled since 1990; this number was 32% greater in 2009 than it was in 2000 (Passel & Cohn, 2010). These data suggest that the patterns and flows of undocumented immigration to the U.S. can change as immigrants return to their countries of origin, receive legal status, or pass away (Passel & Cohn, 2010). Political and economic forces, and certainly immigration policy, also factor into decisions as to who chooses and is able to come, and who is able to stay in the U.S. (Sobczak, 2010).

An Overview of U.S. Immigration Policy

Immigration policy has significantly shaped immigrants’ paths of entry into the United States. Immigration policy adds layers of complexity to the national debate over immigration by regulating who and how many people can come to the U.S., and the criteria used to make those decisions. Legislation to deport undocumented persons was first enacted in the last two decades of the 19th century. By the 1920s, the federal government had placed quantitative restrictions on the number of immigrants allowed into the country. However, contrary to the underlying purpose behind these restrictions, policy created an upsurge in illegal immigration instead (Espenshade, 1995). As concerns about undocumented immigration grew, the U.S. Department of Justice established the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), which then created the U.S. Border Patrol to begin tracking the number of undocumented persons seized while trying to enter the United States. The government also systematized deportation as measures to staunch the flow of illegal immigration (Espenshade, 1995; Massey, Durand, & Malone, 2002). By
mid century, however, legislation concerning undocumented immigration shifted once again; this time, imposing fines on those “‘harboring’ illegal aliens” (Espenshade, 1995, p. 211).

The 1952 Immigration and Nationality Act (INA) marked the first time U.S. immigration law was consolidated in one place, whereas it had previously been governed through multiple statutes (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2009). The INA was originally notable in large part as legislation that removed explicit race-based prohibitions in immigration policy for some groups (Massey et al., 2002). Still, this legislated discriminately determined who was permitted access to the United States based on geography. Despite its reputation for removing raced-based immigration prohibitions, different systems were put in place for Western Hemisphere and Eastern Hemisphere countries. In result, the INA signaled an important shift in where immigrants came from, and drove up the numbers of immigrants coming from Asia, Africa, and Latin America (Sobczak, 2010).

The next significant piece of U.S. immigration policy was the Immigration Act of 1965. Alba and Nee (2003) cite the Immigration Act of 1965 as “…the centerpiece of current immigration policy” (p. 127). Although legislation in 1965 serves as a hallmark turning point in U.S. immigration policy, policy toward unauthorized immigration was left largely unchanged (Espenshade, 1995). Yet, the undocumented workers who were caught rose from 30,000 in 1960 to 100,000 in 1965, and the number of deportations also continued to grow rapidly (Rincón, 2008). Massey et al. (2002) speculate that undocumented migration from Mexico would not have grown had pre-1965 immigration policies remained in place.
Post-1965 immigration policy ushered in the current era of immigration reform (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Sobczak, 2010). Policy has since increasingly restricted legal immigration (Massey et al., 2002). Massey et al. refer to the 1965-1985 period as the “era of undocumented migration” (2002, p. 41). This era was directly followed in 1986 with the passage of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). This legislation was passed during Ronald Reagan’s presidency, a time of heightened fear that the U.S. could not secure its borders. Since then undocumented immigration has been connected to concerns about national security (Espenshade, 1995; Massey et al., 2002).

IRCA marked a significant overhaul of the nation’s immigration policy (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008). IRCA was designed to control the flow of unauthorized immigration into the U.S. as well as reduce the undocumented population already present in the country. However, IRCA’s effect on curbing unauthorized immigration, specifically that of U.S.-Mexico migrants, was short term (Espenshade, 1995). IRCA also gave employers incentive to hire legal temporary workers (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006), but Espenshade (1995) argues that IRCA was largely ineffective because immigration law was not strictly enforced and there was a demand for and provision of false documentation. Massey and Capoferro (2008) state that IRCA offered some 3 million long-term undocumented residents (primarily agricultural workers) legal reprieve, and put them on the path to legalization. Further, the authors assert that the process of legalizing 2.3 million formerly unauthorized Mexicans stimulated legal immigration, and that millions more pursued legalized status and applied for visas (Massey et al., 2002; Massey & Capoferro, 2008).
The legislative knot of U.S. immigration policy grew even more tangled after IRCA. For one, the flow of Mexican immigrants to the U.S. did not decrease as much as expected. As immigrants became legalized, their relatives became more likely to come to the U.S. without authorization. In addition, the preference system under IRCA had suddenly provided family members of newly authorized immigrants with legal pathways to the United States. Massey et al. (2002) argue that instead of reducing illegal immigration, IRCA had the opposite effect and actually stimulated it. Certainly, the levels of overall immigration were amplified (Massey & Capoferro, 2008; Sobczack, 2010). Consequently, the Immigration Act of 1990 was the next major piece of immigration legislation attempting to address the issue of undocumented immigration.

The Immigration Act (IA) placed even tighter controls on immigration. Alba and Nee (2003) state that the IA (IA) modestly increased legal immigration. The IA placed a ceiling on the total number of immigrants allowed into the U.S per year and imposed limits on the number of family visas permitted (Massey et al., 2002). This legislation also sought to modify immigrants’ countries of origins by increasing the number of visas for those coming from more developed nations with more job skills. The IA also provided monetary resources to add more manpower to the Border Patrol, among other measures (Massey et al., 2002). In short, the IA exemplified how U.S. immigration policy can prefer some immigrant groups to others in allowing them to come into and remain in the country.

Congress followed the Immigration Act with more austere legislation by passing the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) in 1996. Scholars have characterized IIRIRA as anti-immigrant and punitive, and it has also been
cited as legislation that has spurred other anti-immigrant legislative initiatives (Johnson, 2004; Romero, 2009). Once again, policy enabled increased immigration enforcement along the U.S.-Mexico Border. IIRIRA also contained provisions, many intended to work retroactively, to broaden the types of people who could be detained (i.e., children and even long-term residents), ratchet up the penalties and bases under which people could be deported, and expedite the review of deportation orders and deportation itself (Massey et al. 2002; Rincón, 2008; Romero, 2005).

One key objective of IIRIRA was to restrict unauthorized immigrants’ access to public benefits such as Social Security. The federal government also stipulated in section 505 of IIRIRA, coupled with the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), which are both federal mandates, that noncitizens are ineligible for postsecondary education benefits, namely in the form of tuition assistance (Olivas, 2008; Romero, 2005). With the enactment of IIRIRA, states were also given the power to set conditions for public assistance to both undocumented and legal immigrants. This included the power to stipulate eligibility for access to educational benefits (López & López, 2010; Massey et al., 2002; Romero, 2005; Sobczak, 2010). Thereby, IIRIRA enables federal, state, and local governments to work in tandem to limit undocumented students’ access to a postsecondary education. As the literature demonstrates, U.S. policy profoundly influences and affects the lives of immigrants, and as far as it is able, intends to discourage and prevent unauthorized immigration.
Public Attitudes Toward Immigrants

Since the start of the mass immigration era in 1965, immigration has been a highly politicized issue of national interest. Unsurprisingly, public attitudes toward immigrants vacillate. Economic swings and social unease impact attitudes and behaviors toward immigrants. Polls have shown that, over time, the public has increasingly favored restricting immigration (Sobczak, 2010). Anti-immigrant sentiment related to concerns over heightened competition for jobs, unfair siphoning of taxpayer dollars through increased use of social services (including schooling), and the prospect of diminished wages are long-standing (Morse & Ludovina, 1999). This is important to note for the proposed study because public attitudes, or the “national mood,” affect politicians and the lawmakers who design policy (Kingdon, 2003). Public attitudes about immigration directly affect the education of students by trickling their way back to the schoolhouse. This trickling happens through policies and a climate of tolerance or intolerance toward immigrants in the community where undocumented persons reside and undocumented children are educated.

Scholars have studied the types of circumstances under which natives’ attitudes toward immigrants are most likely to fluctuate. For example, Wilson (2001) applied group threat theory as a way to document whether native-born Americans’ (i.e., the dominant group) attitudes toward policies and programs concerning legal and illegal immigrants (i.e., the subordinate group) shift. Wilson found that Americans, beyond concerns for their own individual interests, become more likely as a group to support restrictive policies because they begin to view immigrants “…as a direct threat to their interests,” when they sense their cultural and economic interests are in jeopardy. (p. 495). Wilson cautioned, though, that policy itself may also affect attitudes. Since the twentieth century, unauthorized immigration
has become the main focus of U.S. immigration policy (Ngai, 2004). This raises questions about how legislation itself shapes public attitudes toward undocumented immigrants.

U.S. immigration policy has historically differentiated between how citizens are treated versus how noncitizens or “aliens” are treated. Immigration policy has discriminated against groups of people (e.g., homosexuals, people of color, the poor) (Johnson, 2004). Scholars have characterized various pieces of legislation as anti-immigrant (Johnson, 2004; Romero 2009). Johnson (2004) argues that because non-citizens do not have the same constitutional protections as do citizens, the “political process will [continue to] penalize them” (p. 90). In addition to policy, the media also play a significant role in influencing public attitudes toward immigrants.

The public reaction to immigration is often largely and negatively influenced due to negative media depictions of immigrants. Sobczak and other scholars (2010) argue that public attitudes do not necessarily follow research. Espenshade (1995) states, “…the public perception about the nature and consequences of illegal immigration may differ substantially from what the research literature suggests” (p. 196). For example, nativists portray undocumented workers present in the U.S. as “…freeloaders who evade taxes while draining social services” (Rincón, 2008, p. 6). Portes and Rumbaut (2006) posit that Americans generally imagine contemporary immigrants as coming from the Third World and harbor the belief that “…immigrants themselves are uniformly poor and uneducated. Their move is commonly portrayed as a one-way escape from hunger, want, and persecution…” (p. 13).

No matter how the public’s image of contemporary immigrants fits the reality, many children who immigrate without legal documentation have no choice in the matter.
I want to first draw attention to research that has addressed education for immigrant children in the U.S. writ large, and then look at the subpopulation of undocumented children in the United States. I then follow with what the law says about undocumented students’ rights to access education and examine how research has explored issues surrounding the education of undocumented students aside from the legal perspective. Finally, I argue more research is necessary to understand other factors affecting the education of undocumented students, in particular ICE activity on or near a school’s campus, and how educators make sense of that activity and its repercussions.

*The Education of Immigrant Children*

Much of the research literature has looked at the educational achievement of immigrant children and aspects influencing their achievement such as facility with English, educational opportunities, and academic engagement (Rumberger & Gándara, 2004). Some researchers have examined how the academic performance of foreign-born immigrant youth compares with their American counterparts (Fry, 2007; Schwartz & Stiefel, 2006). Other researchers examine how immigrant children assimilate into U.S. culture by scrutinizing their modes of incorporation, the effects on their well being, and how assimilation theories may or may not explain their academic trajectories and prospects of social mobility (Gans, 1992; Greenman & Xie, 2007; Kao & Tienda, 1995; Portes & Fernández-Kelly, 2008; Portes & Zhou, 1993; White & Glick, 2009; Zhou, 1997). Scholars have also explored how ethnic communities and social structures (Zhou & Bankston, 1998; Zhou & Kim, 2006), schools, and students’ background characteristics factor into immigrant children’s education and its relationship to student
academic outcomes and social mobility (Hao & Pong, 2008). Notably, research also explores how immigrant status affects patterns of enrollment, persistence in high school, and college attendance (Conway, 2009; Fry, 2003; Keller & Tillman, 2008; Oropesa & Landale, 2009; Perreira, Harris, & Lee, 2006).

In terms of undocumented students’ education, the most prominent, news-making item has revolved around political debates over the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. Several attempts have been made to pass the DREAM Act to no avail. DREAM Act legislation, if passed, would open undocumented students’ access to federal financial aid and would allow undocumented immigrant children brought to the U.S. to apply for conditional residency status with potential for permanent residence status, or legalized status. In addition, individual states would be allowed to grant in-state tuition and provide financial aid (Batalova & McHugh, 2010; National Immigration Law Center, 2010).

Research shows that, overall, the economic impact of legal and illegal immigration combined cannot be claimed as detrimental to the fiscal well being of the United States. Rather, the economic impact of immigration shows some positive effects. Immigration can even benefit U.S. natives by increasing income and productivity (Peri, 2010; The U.S. Council of Economic Advisors, 2007). However, organizations such as the ultra-conservative, nonprofit organization, Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), link illegal immigration to huge state budget deficits. FAIR also protests the cost of providing education for undocumented children. The cost of education for undocumented children is another subject under intense debate. FAIR argues K-12 educational expenses for immigrant children— including children who are U.S. citizens
but were born to undocumented persons—costs states $28.6 billion (Martin, 2005). FAIR also makes dubious claims that non-English speakers in schools cost “…taxpayers’ hard-earned contributions”…and are a “…hindrance to the overall learning environment” (Martin, 2005).

Lastly, it is important to note that undocumented children are indistinguishable from documented children in several respects. Undocumented children cannot automatically be perceived as immigrants or as undocumented. Many undocumented children grow up alongside their American peers in schools without knowledge of their undocumented status. They learn to take on American values and identities (Abrego, 2006; Gonzales, 2009).

Undocumented Students in the United States

As of March 2009, it was estimated that 5.1 million children, or 7% of children in the U.S. under the age of 18, are the progeny of unauthorized immigrants (Passel & Taylor, 2010). Passel and Taylor (2010) of the Pew Research Center state that, of the 5.1 million children born to undocumented immigrants, approximately 4 million of these children were born in the U.S., making them citizens, though a parent is undocumented. The remaining 1.1 million children were born outside the U.S. to parents who entered the U.S. without authorization, meaning both the child and parents are undocumented (Passel & Taylor, 2010).

In terms of schooling, Passel and Cohn (2009) estimated in an earlier report that in terms of schooling, 1.6 million undocumented children are enrolled in U.S. primary and secondary schools. Other sources estimate 1.5 million undocumented children are
school-aged (Immigration Policy Center, 2010; Martin, 2005). If estimates for children who are U.S. citizens but whose parents are unauthorized are combined with estimates of undocumented children, 6.8% of U.S. schoolchildren enrolled in grades K-12 are children of unauthorized immigrants (Passel & Cohn, 2009). Children of undocumented immigrants are much more likely to be enrolled in school in certain parts of the U.S. They are primarily enrolled in Arizona, Texas, California, Nevada, and Colorado (Martin, 2005; Passel & Cohn, 2009).

There is a great deal of complexity involved in the legal, ethical, historical, socioeconomic, and political factors affecting the education for undocumented students. I now address how the law views the education of undocumented children. Following that, I explore how immigration law enforcement intersects with the education of undocumented children, and how this potentially creates unique, ethical dilemmas for the schools and the people responsible to educate them. I maintain more research is necessary on this front because this issue goes beyond how the education of undocumented students is affected by ICE activity. ICE activity also affects documented students, school climate, and school relationships with the community.

**Education for Undocumented Children in the United States**

Research on both sides of the debate over education for undocumented students demonstrates that economic and legal policies severely hinder the educational and therefore occupational prospects of undocumented children in the United States. Vigorous national argument as to whether the barriers to undocumented students’ educational advancement should remain in place or be removed is prevalent. All children
in the United States, regardless of legal status, however, are entitled to a free, public K-12 education by virtue of the Supreme Court’s decision in Plyler v. Doe (1982).

*Plyler* determined that undocumented persons deserve equal protection under the Fourteenth Amendment, and that this protection “…extends to anyone, citizen or stranger, who is subject to laws of state and reaches into every corner of state’s territory” (*Plyler*, 1982). The Court emphasized the crucial role education plays in one’s life chances when they reasoned, “The inestimable toll of deprivation of basic education on the social, economic, intellectual, and psychological well-being of the individual, and the obstacle it poses to individual achievement, makes it most difficult to reconcile cost or principle of status-based denial of basic education…” (*Plyler*, 1982). Again, in the *Plyler* decision, the Supreme Court held that undocumented immigrant children could claim equal protection under legislation that intended to prevent a social or economic caste-like system in the United States.

More important, the Court claimed in *Plyler* that denying any population access to public education has more severe repercussions than would prohibiting access to other governmental benefits. Undocumented children deserve equal protection under the law, and they cannot be punished for their parents’ decision to come to the United States without authorization. The Court also argued that education is of vital U.S. national and state interest in order to “[maintain] the fabric of our society and [sustain] our political and cultural heritage. However, undocumented students face significant legal and financial obstacles that prevent them from continuing their education beyond secondary school. Currently, only 65,00 or so undocumented students make it through high school and graduate (Immigration Policy Center, 2008; National Immigration Law Center,
2010). Although these obstacles are not easily surmounted, educators’ attitudes toward education for undocumented students may prove critical to ensure these students receive an education.

**Educator Attitudes Toward Undocumented Students**

It was reasonable to expect educators who participated in this study and those belonging to larger national organizations may share similar views on education for undocumented students. As previously stated, public attitudes toward immigrants vacillate depending on the state of the U.S. economy and fears over increased competition for jobs, among other factors. However, within circles of education, there exists strong support for undocumented students’ access to education. Notably, the National Education Association (NEA), the largest labor union in the country—and a professional association with 3.2 million members from all professional capacities in education—has issued statements supporting education for undocumented students (NEA, 2011; 2009). NEA President Dennis Van Roekel spoke for the Association by remarking that “America’s classrooms are changing, and we need to change too. We must strengthen our school districts and the services they can provide to undocumented students” (NEA, 2009).

School boards have already begun requesting guidelines on legal issues involving undocumented students in schools (Borkowski & Soronen, 2009). Recognizing that the spotlight on undocumented students’ enrollment in public schools is unlikely to fade anytime soon, the NEA partnered with the National School Board Association (NSBA), another highly influential education organization, to produce a report addressing the legal issues involving undocumented students school districts may be forced to address. A total
of sixteen national educational organizations signed on to support the report, which was sent to every school district in the country (NEA, 2009; Borkowski & Soronen, 2009). The report addressed school districts’ rights, as well as the rights of undocumented students, in the face of ICE interest in a school or their activity on school property. As the next section will illustrate, schools are already well acquainted with the presence of law enforcement agents.

**Law Enforcement in U.S. Schools**

As law enforcement expands in schools and becomes more common, the prospect of immigration authorities on school campuses becomes less far-fetched. The research literature speaks to the increasingly normalized presence of law enforcement at schools. Law enforcement agents are in schools because of concerns about student drug and alcohol use and school shootings and their threat to maintaining a safe school environment (Beger, 2002; Lambert & McGinty, 2002; Yamaguchi, O’Malley, & Johnston, 2004). Author Randall Beger maintains, “…our nation’s courts are granting police and school officials *more* authority to conduct searches of students” (2002, p. 119). Although ICE activity on school grounds is not common, and ICE states their policy is to avoid enforcement at school, the school doors are open to law enforcement, and ICE has conducted operations on school property. Further, education lawyers Borkowski and Soronen (2009) posit ICE could interview students on school grounds. School districts would have to let ICE do so because of the Immigration and Naturalization Act (INA), which grants immigration agents the power to question persons about their legal status—school grounds notwithstanding (Borkowski & Sornen, 2009). In sum, there is potential
for greater ICE presence on or near school property, and there are few safeguards districts can put in place to reduce that possibility.

**Conclusion**

U.S. immigration policy and whether undocumented immigrants have the right to access public services like education is a hotly contested, controversial, and highly debated topic. As the literature in this chapter demonstrates, immigration policies and the rights of undocumented immigrants should concern schools and educators. Schools and educators will be unable to shy away from based on the growing population of immigrant students, which also includes a population of students who are undocumented, as the debate over immigration policy and undocumented immigrants’ access to social services becomes more and more politicized.

Current federal law stipulates that schools are to educate any child that walks the doors of the school building under *Plyler* (1982), including children whose legal status in the country is precarious. However, ICE activity near school property—and policies that seek to determine the legal status of students or families—can jeopardize undocumented students’ access to education and force educators into new situations where they must reflect critically on their legal and ethical responsibilities to undocumented students. Immigration policies toward undocumented people shift as do how those policies are enforced. The literature reveals that the nation’s school doors are now more open to the presence of law enforcement than ever. Therefore, this study seeks to fulfill a gap in the literature about how educators make sense of education for undocumented students, how
they respond to ICE activity, and how they determine in whose best interests they will act.
Chapter 3—CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

This study aimed to understand how educators made sense of laws, policies, and messages related to the educational rights of undocumented students when ICE activity occurs near a school’s campus. The research questions in the study sought to capture educators’ thought processes as they made decisions about how to respond, and also inquired whether educators’ decisions were influenced by considerations like their professional or personal codes of ethics, or their views of their legal and ethical obligations toward undocumented students. The study further questioned whether educators’ decisions to act were shaped by their perceptions of what would be in their best interests, the interests of the school, or the best interests of their students. The purpose of this chapter is to explain the conceptual framework I used to uncover how research participants viewed the context of ICE activity near school grounds, made sense of it, what provoked them to respond, and how they perceived the outcomes of their decisions.

Fittingly, I used sensemaking theory as the guiding construct in my effort to document how elementary school educators, administrators, school counselors, and other school personnel in one school in Northern California processed, reacted to, and ultimately made sense of ICE activity close to school ground. Sensemaking theory was a theoretical tool that allowed me to uncover the processes educators in one school went through to make sense of and create an understanding of their environment or an event. To understand how participants made sense of ICE activity, I worked with school staff to learn how they framed their understanding of the issue of education for undocumented
students and how they comprehended ICE activity in the context of its impact on the school environment. Ultimately, I sought to learn how participants’ sensemaking of ICE activity shaped their decision making, and whether they perceived a legal or ethical dilemma in how to respond.

In the next section, I introduce the research literature on sensemaking theory. In the section after sensemaking, I present Stefkovich’s (2006) Best Interests (BI) of the Student model, a model that incorporates multiple ethical paradigms for educators to use as a way to think through their decision making process in ethical dilemmas. The model intends to guide educators to ethical decisions that are child-centered in ethically complex circumstances. Both sensemaking theory and the Best Interests model were necessary to the study in order to 1.) examine how educators made sense of ICE activity near school property, and; 2.) determine whether participants perceived a legal or ethical dilemma about how to respond, as evidenced by how educators decided in whose best interests to act.

Table 3.1 presents a visual representation of the conceptual framework guiding this study. Briefly, the first step for an educator experiencing a new situation or a change in their environment is to gain cognizance of the situation. The educator then seeks to grasp the situation or event using preexisting beliefs and other external cues. Once the educator has processed the situation, she then reaches a decision point. Arguably, an educator will choose to act or not based on how she made sense of the situation. Decisions can be constrained by factors such as the level autonomy a person has to make decisions. For example, a school principal would have more authority to make decisions on behalf of the school than would, say, and office clerk due to the expectations of what
their professional roles entail. However, all participants in a school may act based on what they consider to be in their own best interests, the interests of their school, or in the interests of their students. The decisions an educator makes then results in certain outcomes. These outcomes will then shape how an educator made sense of the entire context of ICE activity near school property as sensemaking is an iterative process, which I describe in the next section.
Fig. 3.1: Factors Potentially Influencing Educators’ Sensemaking in Responding to ICE Activity

- **Conception of “Best Interests” & Ethical Stance:**
  - Professional ethical codes (justice, care, critique)
  - Personal ethical codes

- **Legal Obligations:**
  - *Plyler v. Doe*
  - Compliance with ICE

- **School Factors:**
  - Location/pop. of students served (legal status, SES)
  - Community ties
  - School/District policy
  - School climate/pressure
  - Work relationships
  - Professional affiliation

- **Personal Factors:**
  - Background/Experience
  - Attitudes about immigrants
  - Perception of decision making ability

- **Sensemaking**

- **Decision**

- **Action/Inaction**

- **Outcome(s)**

- **Constraint(s) on decision making**
Building and overlapping with the description above to some extent, several theoretical propositions were underlying the research questions in the study that contributed to the conceptual framing of this study. The theoretical propositions stated that

1. Educators abide by professional codes and standards and personal codes of behavior as well as legal rulings like *Plyler* (1982) to educate undocumented students. However, by law, educators must also comply and cooperate with ICE if ICE comes on or near school property. Therefore, educators’ obligations potentially compete with each other, and an educator will need to make sense and potentially reconcile these conflicting policies, laws, or messages.

2. When ICE comes on or near school property, an educator makes a decision about how to respond. An educator may then feel placed in a legal or ethical dilemma about how to respond if she perceives she has conflicting legal or ethical obligations. The educator then makes a decision about how to respond. However, an educators’ decision may be constrained by the extent of the educator’s autonomy to act. The decision, either acted upon or not, can reflect in whose best interests the educator acts.

3. An educator’s sensemaking of ICE activity on school property manifests itself in the educator’s decision, and this decision leads to outcomes. An educator can then reflect on the outcomes of this decision, which in turn influences the educator’s sensemaking of the entire context surrounding ICE activity near the school, as sensemaking is an iterative process.
In the next section, I focus first on sensemaking theory and how scholars have defined this theory in the research literature. I then explain the Best Interests model in greater detail. Finally, I discuss how sensemaking theory and the Best Interests model were integrated together in this study.

**Sensemaking Theory**

Sensemaking derives from sociological theory, and it is a theoretical lens used to capture the evolving process of how a person’s perception of his environment is filtered through preexisting beliefs, knowledge, and experiences (Weick, 1995). This filtering process informs how people “…make meaning of new information or events they encounter” (Coburn & Talbert, 2006, p. 471). Humans are receptive to their environments. They construct and ground their interpretations of the context in which they find themselves by actively and continuously making sense of it (Spillane et al., 2002). They have to recognize and choose new information from within their environment and place it into “preexisting cognitive frameworks,” make sense of it and formulate interpretations about its meaning before deciding whether further action is needed (Coburn, 2005, p. 478).

Sensemaking theorists seek to understand how people make meaning, insert stimuli into their frames of reference, react to, and ascribe meaning to events that interrupt or upset their expectations, like surprises (Weick, 1995). In result, people come to have an increasingly clear sense of a situation, but this process can also happen retroactively. This means that the outcomes of a situation themselves later help clarify and lend an explanation to an event. This additional clarification is important to note, because it has the power to change the meaning a person attributes to the event or decision that was
made. Weick (1995) notes, however, that sensemaking is not synonymous with interpretation, though interpretation is part of the sensemaking process. One distinction is that people are agents who produce the very environment or situation they are trying to make sense out of, and sensemaking involves more focus on the *process* of making sense (Weick, 1995).

The process of sensemaking is oftentimes collective and involves social interaction (Spillane et al., 2002). Coburn and Talbert (2006) posit that cultural norms shape individual beliefs by creating boundaries and a framework for the kinds of actions or decisions an individual can take. Coburn (2005) situates teachers’ sensemaking in the school context, in particular how teachers make sense of instructional policy. She draws upon the body of sensemaking literature to argue that teachers’ preexisting knowledge and practices affect their understanding of new policy messages and subsequent policy implementation. because teachers are “interpreting, adapting, or transforming policy messages…” (p. 477). They may or may not act based on their connection to the policy message (Coburn, 2005).

Educators’ work environment also affects their sensemaking. Coburn’s (2005) study demonstrated how teachers and administrators in California made sense of multiple state policy messages about reading instruction. One key way teachers constructed shared understandings was by interacting with each other in formal and informal contexts, negotiating their respective approaches and interpretations, and then reaching consensus. Throughout this process, teachers connected the “new structure for reading instruction to their preexisting knowledge and understanding (p. 491).
Indeed, the school environment has the power to mediate teachers’ understanding and changing perceptions of policies (Spillane et al., 2002). Teachers’ work environments are dynamic, but their agency and actions are circumscribed by norms and social context. Spillane et al. (2002) argue, “Explanations and actions are enabled and constrained by perceptions of social appropriateness and collective meaning” (p. 733). In addition, school leaders mediate the type and amount of information from which a teacher or other school staff can make sense. School leaders have greater access to policy messages because of their professional role (Coburn, 2005). For example, school principals can exert influence over the social process of teachers’ sensemaking by setting the conditions for sensemaking. They are empowered to open or limit teachers’ access to policy messages.

In particular, school administrators/principals can shape the sensemaking process by engaging in it with teachers, thereby fostering the creation of a shared understanding (Coburn, 2005). Coburn’s (2005) study demonstrated how two principals actively framed how reading instruction practice should be carried out. Notably, the principals focused teachers’ attention on particular aspects of reform and away from others, set the boundaries for teachers’ sensemaking by virtue of their own understanding of approaches to reading, and created the “overarching interpretative frame” from which teachers could make sense of their situation and way forward (p. 494).

Therefore, teachers’ sensemaking of policy messages is heavily influenced by their involvement in their school community—notably by school leadership that includes leaders in official and unofficial capacities—despite the fact that they are exposed to policy messages through communication avenues like the media, policy directives, and
other sources (Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Even so, teachers maintain some autonomy because school leaders rely on teachers’ knowledge and support of the school agenda (Spillane et al., 2002).

The main purpose of this study was to learn how educators made sense of the impact of ICE activity on the education of undocumented children and how they negotiated that process. One essential aspect of the study was to see how teachers reacted to the varying pressures and supports they are subjected to as they made sense under these circumstances. In other words, the key idea undergirding this investigation was to learn how educators perceived this activity, decided how they would or would not act, and then made sense of the outcomes of their decisions. The secondary purpose of this study was to examine whether educators placed the best interests of their students at the center of their decision making. The Best Interests model (Stefkovich, 2006) guided me toward areas or categories that enabled me to explain how educators made sense of ICE activity close to their school as well as how the issue of ICE activity near school property was framed by various actors.

Models for Educators’ Decision Making in Ethical Dilemmas

Multiple Ethical Paradigms and the Best Interests of the Student Model

Over the years, scholars have developed different constructs for educational leaders to use to think through their decision making process when confronted with ethical dilemmas. Two of the better known models include the Multiple Ethical Paradigms (MEP) framework (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005) and the Best Interests (BI) model (Stefkovich, 2006). The MEP framework was innovative in its approach to ethical
decision making because it envisioned the best interests of the student as the heart of educators’ decision making processes in ethically difficult circumstances (Stefkovich, 2006). Later, in the BI model, Stefkovich used the same ethical paradigms, but further honed the concept of “best interests of the student.” However, both constructs conceptualize the various ethical components that factor into an educator’s decision making when proceeding with one decision versus an alternative decision.

The MEP framework gives structure to the BI model, so I will first explain the MEP framework. Then, I describe the BI model, and show how it can be applied to educators’ ethical decision making. Finally, I discuss how testing whether the BI model applies to educators making sense of their roles as educators both individually and collectively in the context of ICE activity close to the school, potentially conflicting policies, and educators’ responsibility for students in their care, and how the application of the BI model contributed to the study.

The Multiple Ethical Paradigmatic Framework

The MEP framework, first articulated by Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), is comprised of four ethical paradigms that include the ethics of justice, care, critique, and an ethic of the profession. These paradigms intend to guide educators to ethical decisions in the best interests of their students. With this framework, the authors merged several ethical frameworks together into one complete model where each ethical paradigm works in complement with the others. The MEP conceptualization of ethical paradigms specifically adds to the literature on educational decision making by introducing the ethic of the profession and offering it as a stand-alone paradigm. I now give a brief explanation
of each of the four components comprising the MEP framework and their relation to the issues under examination in this study.

The *ethic of justice* is concerned with how society makes sense of and comes to terms with concepts like fairness and equity. Laws exist to ensure that what society agrees to be fair and equitable is upheld. The ethic of justice is influenced by philosophical positions that equate ethics with justice. Philosophical theories of the social contract, whereby individual rights are placed in relation to the good of society, comprise one important aspect of this ethic. For this study, the legal case *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) is an example of the application of the ethic of justice at work. *Plyler* is a prime example of the ethic of justice because it was enacted as a means to guarantee all members of society access to education. Undoubtedly, many Americans disagree that undocumented students should be able to attend taxpayer-funded schools. However, the Supreme Court determined education is of vital national and state interest; society as whole would be negatively affected if certain populations in the U.S. were denied access to education.

The *ethic of care* emphasizes the centrality of relationship in the ethical decision making process. Compassion and empathy are two key values necessary to inform caregivers’ decisions. Therefore, ethical decisions take into account how those decisions will impact the care receiver. However, the relationship between the caregiver and care receiver is considered interdependent. In other words, there is an aspect of mutuality. Stefkovich (2006) explains the genesis of the ethic of care, noting that scholar Nel Noddings’ work advanced the scholarly literature and the development of the ethic of care. In addition, Stefkovich asserts educational scholar Lynn Beck contributes to the ethic of care by arguing that a key component of this ethic is that educators view all
human beings as intrinsically valuable. Finally, Stefkovich acknowledges how Kathleen Sernak (1998) encourages school leaders to balance their power with care.

The ethic of critique challenges educators to question the dynamics of power relationships, acting to improve the social conditions of U.S. society by working to emancipate and empower marginalized people. This study takes the position that children—especially undocumented children—are among the most vulnerable members of society. They have little voice in their treatment and how immigration activities impact their lives. Raising their voices can have direct, serious consequences. Paolo Freire (1993) states that education is at heart a political act. The hope is that if educators question societal imbalances in educational privileges, political and social transformation will result. Stefkovich (2006) shows how the ethic of critique applies to educators’ ethical decision-making process. Educators can question how and why laws and the enforcement of laws are applied unevenly to different groups or cultures. This questioning process raises consciousness and lifts people from a culture of silence. Educators have strength because of their professional capacity to connect with students, parents, and the broader community.

The ethic of the profession includes the other three paradigms. This ethic urges educators to reflect on standardized professional codes. The ethic of the profession, for Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005), means educators “consider the moral aspects unique to the profession” of teaching (p. 19). Educators are to compare professional codes with their personal ethical viewpoints. As educators become cognizant of discrepancies between professional codes and their personal codes of ethics, they are enabled to approach ethical dilemmas with increased conscientiousness of the reasoning behind their
decisions. The next step for educators is to then integrate their personal with professional codes of ethics. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) assert integration can occur if decisions are based on student needs. For example, educators, in spite of their personal attitudes about immigration and undocumented students, are obligated to ensure all children, regardless of legal status, have access to K-12 education because of the ruling in *Plyler* (1982).

Scholars debate amongst themselves whether another paradigm for ethical decision making in education belongs to the MEP model. Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) acknowledge other educational experts have supported the *ethic of community* as another stand-alone paradigm. Other scholars stress it is essential for educators to reflect on how their decisions will affect their ties to the community, rather than to individuals only, because they have obligations to the community. Shapiro and Stefkovich argue, however, that an ethic of community does not constitute a fifth paradigm for ethical educational decision making. They contend that, although educators should recognize their obligations to the community and its impact on school-community relationships, an ethic of community belongs to and is subsumed within the ethic of the profession.

**The Best Interests of the Student Model**

The BI model, developed by Stefkovich (2006), derives from her collaboration with Shapiro on the MEP framework. The BI model took the four ethical paradigms of the MEP framework, and put an added twist on it. Similar to the MEP framework, the BI model also supports educators taking a strongly student-centered approach to decision making in ethical dilemmas. It emphasizes that the three ethics of justice, care, and
critique are encapsulated within the ethic of the profession. At the heart of the entire model lies the “best interests of the student.”

The earlier MEP framework did not provide a clear definition of the best interest of the student, however. Consequently, Stefkovich (2006) added to the body of literature on ethical decision making in education by providing a definition for the term by borrowing from its legal usage. After grounding the best interests concept in legal definitions, Stefkovich argued that educators who make ethically complex decisions should also take the 3 “Rs” into account in addition to the four ethical paradigms to ensure their decisions remain student-centered. The 3 Rs include thinking about students’ rights and students’ responsibility for their actions in relation to their rights and those of others. Educators also have responsibility to teach students how to discharge their rights responsibly. The third R advocates for respectful relationships between educators and students as well as between students. Lastly, Stefkovich used legal cases involving educators and schools to demonstrate the model’s application, whereas the original MEP framework did not directly confront legal issues facing schools. This distinction makes the BI model more applicable to the context of the proposed study.

*Integrating Sensemaking Theory and the Best Interests Model*

The BI model is a tacit part of educators’ sensemaking process (See Figure 3.1) in ethical dilemmas, though arguably, educators do not think about their sensemaking process in terms of the explicit ethical paradigms captured in the BI model—which was true in this study. For instance, an educator can be aware he has to abide by standardized, professional codes of behavior, but he may be unable to name a caring disposition as
embodying the ethic of care. In this study, the ethical paradigms implicitly belonged to and shaped how educators thought about and reason their way to a decision in ethically complex circumstances. Therefore, the BI model was already well integrated into research participants’ sensemaking processes of ICE activity close to school property.

Most important, the BI model was used to help me identify possible components of educators’ sensemaking. Specifically, I was able to break educators’ sensemaking processes into concepts that aligned with the model’s paradigms. For example, I saw that participants’ decisions were more heavily influenced by ethical considerations stemming from their personal backgrounds than by district policies. Related, this study simultaneously used the BI model construct as a way to test the model’s paradigms in the context of educators making sense of their experiences with ICE. The study used the model to learn how educators placed those experiences in relation to what they perceived is in their best interests and the best interests of their students and the school in light of their legal and professional obligations. Further, though I looked to see how educators made sense of an ethical dilemma, I also wanted to find whether there were aspects of educators’ sensemaking in this context that were not captured by the model’s paradigms. Testing the BI model in this study, then, was intended to potentially open new understandings as to how educators made sense of their experiences in a specific context likely to become more common for educators in some parts of the country.

Lastly, the BI model and other frameworks for ethical decision making in education are written for educational leaders. Admittedly, policies are neither intended for, nor can they be applied evenly to varying professional roles in a school. Integrating the BI model as a part of educators’ sensemaking process in the context of this study was
intended to also reveal whether multiple actors in one school shared similar approaches to ethical decision making, encouraged others to share their approach, as well as unearth the means by which a person or people influence others in spite of varying professional roles and official obligations.
Chapter 4—METHODS

Introduction

This chapter explains how I made decisions about the design of the study, followed through with those decisions in the research field, and approached analyzing the data. Accordingly, I describe my choice of methodology, site selection and participant recruitment, as well as the methods I used to collect data and analyze data. Finally, I discuss how I addressed threats to validity and reliability, and the limitations of the study and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Methodology

Case Study

The research questions and the proposed field of study drove the study design and the research methods. This study used embedded case study methodology to best address the research questions. Broadly speaking, a case study is “A detailed examination of one setting, a single subject, a single depository of documents, or a particular event” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 271). The case study method was appropriate for this study as, according to Yin (2009), the case study method is suitable for studies that ask “how” or “why” research questions. The case study method is also used to scrutinize “…contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context” in greater depth, where the researcher has minimal influence over the events or behaviors (Yin, 2009, p. 2), which was true for my study. Stake (as cited in Merriam et al., 2002) posits that case studies are a “choice of what is to be studied” (p. 178), and agrees with Yin that a case is circumscribed (i.e. what Yin calls a “bounded system”). A case “…has a finite quality
about it in either terms of time…space…and/or components comprising the case…” and involves topics that focus on specifics rather than generalities (Merriam et al., 2002, p. 178). This is true of my study as well.

In general, case studies employ a research design that resembles a funnel (Bogden & Biklen, 2007), which also applied to the design of this study. I moved from looking at the broader context of immigration and undocumented immigration to the narrower context of how educators make sense of Immigration and Custom Enforcement’s (ICE) actions near school and its impact. I then examined how the sociopolitical climate, as manifest through ICE activity, has affected or continues to affect the population of a single school.

Case study inquiries also use theory to inform data gathering and subsequent data analysis, and they involve “…more variables of interest than data points…” (Yin, 2009, p.18). This means that the case study inquiry method requires the investigator to collect evidence from several sources to triangulate data and demonstrate that results corroborate each other across multiple sources. I collected data using a variety of sources, including interviews, documents, and observations and shadowing.

I selected to perform what Yin (2009) refers to as a “revelatory case.” I used a single-case study design, because my study had the potential to reveal information about a situation or event that was formerly unknown. At a basic level, this type of case study is “…worth conducting because the descriptive information alone will be revelatory” (Yin, 2009, p. 49). As I discuss below, I purposefully chose to study one specific elementary school based on its context (Merriam et al., 2002). More important, I had “…access to a situation previously inaccessible to scientific observation” (Yin, 2009, p. 49) due to the
nature of my research questions and the context of my study. The value in accessing a situation that was formerly inaccessible is that the descriptive information alone, in and of itself, can uncover new knowledge.

The “embedded” aspect of the research design signifies that this case encompassed different units of analysis, but all were contained within the same contextual conditions (Yin, 2009). Specifically, I looked to analyze the school as a single unit, because it adheres to school and district policies, and it also adheres to state laws. Therefore, the actions of school representatives are done collectively in the name of the school. Each staff person I interviewed in the school was considered an individual unit of analysis. I anticipated the need to analyze data at a group level as research on sensemaking that shows how a person may be more likely to create shared understanding with others who occupy a similar professional role. Participants, however, did not reveal that they purposely sought to discuss ICE activity or the implications of such activity with others in the same professional role or other markers like gender, age, or the amount of time employed at the school. Based on the results of the study, neither did I find it necessary to classify participants according to groups of those who felt an ethical conflict, or those who recognized an ethical dilemma but felt no conflict, and those who had a reaction but did not identify an ethical conflict. Instead, the fourteen individuals who participated in the study each represent one unit of analysis. I also analyzed these fourteen participants and placed them in relation to how the school, as a whole collection of actors, responded to ICE activity near school property.
Site Selection

I selected one school in Northern California, which I gave the pseudonym “Aurora,” as the study site. I selected Aurora Elementary, a primary school, as opposed to a junior high or high school, for several reasons. First, in an elementary school, the onus is primarily on school staff to make ethical decisions to keep children and the school environment safe. In other words, educators in an elementary school have greater professional oversight and personal responsibility for their students, because the children are perceived to be young, less capable, and less empowered to make decisions for themselves that are in their best interests. Educators therefore tend to have more latitude with elementary school students than with older students. Second, elementary school staff arguably need to have a closer connection with students’ parents. A closer connection with a student’s family is common because, again, young children are more dependent on the multiple adults in their lives for guidance inside and outside of school.

Aurora Elementary was a revelatory case, because it experienced ICE activity near school property. Aurora was one of four elementary schools in a city in Northern California where ICE’s presence was noted in 2008 (Martinez, 2008). Specifically, ICE agents parked vehicles close to the school campus. Therefore, Aurora school personnel, school children, and the community whose neighborhoods surround the school had direct knowledge of ICE activity. As such, Aurora staff could provide insider knowledge of these events and its impact, because they had to make decisions about how to handle

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2 The city’s name has been removed to prevent identification of the study site and research participants. The city name has also been removed from documents related to the city school board and city officials.
ICE’s presence, respond to anxious community members and parents, and simultaneously ensure the well being of schoolchildren.

Aurora Elementary was a good site choice for this study because it reflects a particular Northern Californian city’s history as a well-known immigrant destination. Historically, this city’s schools have served a racially and economically diverse body of students. The diverse body of students at Aurora includes immigrant populations and students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In the 2009-10 school year, Aurora enrolled 338 students in grades K-5, and approximately 86% of the student body is Latino. White children comprise 10% of the student body, and 2% of the students are African American. Approximately 4% of the students are special needs students. An overwhelming 94.8% of Aurora students receive free or reduced lunch (2009-2010 Annual School Scorecard). In other words, nearly all of Aurora’s students come from families with limited financial resources.

Aurora offers Dual Language instruction in both Spanish and English. Dual language means that curriculum is taught in Spanish from grades K-2 and in English from grades 3-5. Nearly 93% of Aurora’s students are English Language Learners (ELLs) (2009-2010 Annual School Scorecard). This is an increase of 6.8% in the number of ELL students the schools serve, up from 85.8% in the 2008-2009 school year (2008-2009 Annual School Scorecard). The city school board has not approximated how many students in its public schools are undocumented, but the Board estimated in early 2008 that nearly a third of all students in the city’s public schools are ELLs (City Office of the Board of Education, 2008), which I used as a proxy to identify the likelihood undocumented students are in the student body. Based on this information, it was
probable that Aurora, too, has undocumented students. Although information about the number of undocumented students was not made explicit in official documents, research participants later confirmed that Aurora serves undocumented families and “newcomer” immigrants who are likely to be undocumented.

Aurora also was an appropriate study site because of its symbolic position as a place for political discourse on immigration enforcement. Aurora figured prominently in the spotlight on ICE activity in Northern California; it served as the location where city officials chose to speak out against the federal agency’s actions near public schools (Gonzalez, 2008; Martinez, 2008). Although the city is designated as a City of Refuge and as a “sanctuary city,” which means that the city has put policies in place to ensure city government agencies and officials do not participate in enforcing immigration law (Arnoldy, 2007), the city has been the site of ICE workforce raids and searches for unauthorized immigrants. Research participants confirmed this information during interviews. For example, Aurora received an email from the city’s district office that “advised staff not to facilitate any immigration enforcement actions” (Martinez, 2008). The then-mayor of the city made statements admonishing ICE that its actions were “inappropriate” and “unnecessary,” and hurried to Aurora to join concerned parents and community members who had assembled at the school. While there, he stressed that children were in school to be educated, not harassed (Martinez, 2008). Arguably, such statements by the mayor and other city officials helped pit city officials against federal officials in a power struggle over how illegal immigration matters are settled—and who has the right to choose the means by which they are settled.
The city school district also made statements on the issue of ICE activity in their city’s schools. In January 2008, the City Board of Education passed Resolution No. 0708-0139, entitled “City Board of Education Commitment to the Education of All Immigrant Children.” First, the Board recognized many immigrants of varying legal status reside and work in the city, and that the city’s status includes an ordinance banning the use of city resources to help federal immigration authorities enforce immigration law or distribute information about city residents’ immigrant status unless ordered by a federal or state statute or other legal proclamation (City Unified School District Office of the Board of Education, 2008). The Board’s statement emphasized that, although school staff acted in accordance with district rules and regulations, the Board wanted to reiterate that district policy supports public education for undocumented children and children from immigrant families, consistent with the *Plyler* (1982) ruling. Without additional legal obligation, school personnel must abide by district policy stipulating equal educational treatment of all children.

The resolution also listed boundaries and rules for district personnel interaction with ICE. The Board specifically noted ICE raids in the city and surrounding areas detrimentally impacted school children and their families. The Board stated the raids “…caused immigrant communities to fear sending their children to school and leaving their homes; even for needed medical services” (City Office of the Board of Education, 2008). In terms of undocumented students’ education, the Board expressed rising anxiety in the immigrant communities, and that ICE activity potentially has a “chilling effect” on undocumented students’ educational rights. The Board also explicitly addressed the boundaries between federal immigration authority and the city’s authority. All together,
these reasons contributed to making Aurora a good case to study educators’ perceptions of education for undocumented students and their reactions to ICE activity.

**Sampling Procedures**

**Sampling Strategy**

Several years have passed since ICE appeared in this Northern California city. Therefore I created space for school staff at the study site to reflect on their experiences of ICE activity near Aurora to understand their views of this event. I asked participants to relay the sequence of events of ICE activity in 2008, to recount their initial reactions and walk me through the decisions they made in result, and describe whether they would make the same decisions again if ICE reappeared near Aurora. I sought personal insights in order to supplement both official and unofficial documents.

The sampling procedure was purposeful, and I used a snowball sampling to identify potential participants. I then requested that each person identify other potential candidates for interviews (Bodgen & Biklen, 2007). I intended to sample between 12-15 participants, and the target sample was to include school staff in a variety of professional roles, including at least one school administrator, several teachers, a school counselor, and school support staff. My final sample included fourteen participants in a number of professional capacities, as the table 4.1 illustrates.
Table 4.1 Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School Role</th>
<th>Years at Aurora</th>
<th>Personal connection to immigration</th>
<th>Present at school in 2008 for ICE activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javier</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Teacher (kinder)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher (2\textsuperscript{nd})</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher (5\textsuperscript{th})</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher (3\textsuperscript{rd})</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Y(1 parent)</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Intervention specialist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>School psychologist</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Security officer (role for 17)</td>
<td>(role for 17)</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Community liaison</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Resource specialist</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariposa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual office clerk</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Former ESL teacher/community activist</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Community organizer/activist</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total:</strong> 14</td>
<td>F= 10</td>
<td>M= 4</td>
<td>Administrator =1</td>
<td>Average years: 8.6</td>
<td>N = 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Specialists = 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y = 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers = 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support staff = 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>External support = 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Participant Selection Criteria**

In terms of research participant criteria, I primarily sought research participants who were employed at Aurora Elementary during the events of 2008. However, I also conducted
interviews with staff who were not present (i.e. employees away from school on the day of the event) or not employed at the school at that time. I kept the possibility open to interview staff not present at Aurora in 2008 as I believed those research participants could offer comparable or contrasting perspectives to those who were physically present. For example, staff who were not at the school on the day of the events might have potentially perceived ICE activity near school as less threatening that those at school had direct experience responding to that circumstance. Another possibility I wanted to explore with staff who were not employed at Aurora in 2008 but had heard about this incident were perspectives on the event that demonstrated the influence of the culture of the school or the perspectives of their colleagues.

Related, I did not discriminate between research participants based on the number of years they worked at the school. I took this approach as conducting interviews with school employees with varying years of experience in education would conceivably reveal differences between the sensemaking and decision making processes of an educator with more years of experience versus someone with fewer years of experience. I expected it might expose whether some educators had more autonomy in their decision making and influence over their colleagues based on their professional experience. Though I sought Aurora staff with a range of years of experience in education, I did not look for differences among staff based on gender. I used such selection criteria to help me ascertain if there are wide-ranging or similar perspectives on the broad issue of education for undocumented students within the school.

I explored the ethnic/racial background of my participants as well as their personal connection to or history of immigration. Aurora schoolchildren are
predominantly Latina/o. Therefore, my questions probed whether interviewees identified with students based on shared ethnic/racial background, cultural heritage, or socioeconomic status. Although I cannot make generalizations out of the findings, these selection criteria provided me with a more complete sense of the school context and climate and allowed me to tailor the interview questions to better fit each individual’s unique personal context.

**Participant and Research Site Access**

To obtain access to research participants, I contacted a personal acquaintance of mine who is a former elementary school teacher with extensive contacts in the school district. This person was to serve as my key informant. The key informant put me in touch with a contact of hers who serves as the head of the school district’s community engagement division. The director of the department expressed her willingness to speak with me, but then became unresponsive after multiple attempts at contact. I then pursued gaining access to participants via another route.

Unexpectedly, I obtained access to research participants through my contact in the school district’s Department of Research, Assessment, and Data (RAD). The RAD department reviews and vets applications for external research in the district, the equivalent of the school district’s IRB process. My contact from the RAD department spoke in passing to the principal of Aurora about my research and communicated that I would get in touch with her, thus expediting my entré with Aurora’s primary gatekeeper.
Participant recruitment

After receiving approval from the district’s research committee, I called Aurora’s principal, Linda. Linda confirmed that she had received reports of ICE near school property in 2008, and that this event changed the course of the school’s usual daily activities in significant ways. Linda offered to include a synopsis of my research and my contact information in her weekly newsletter to her staff (See Appendix I), which I sent to her. Linda also suggested that I take ten minutes at the start of a staff professional development meeting to introduce myself and my research. Once I arrived at the research site in California, I spent the promised ten minutes at the staff meeting explaining my background, the general purpose of my research, and what participant involvement would entail. I also described my plans and methods to retain research participant anonymity and how I envisioned using the research findings. Following the introduction, I placed recruitment flyers in staff mailboxes and in the staff lunchroom.

Aurora’s principal, Linda, helped me foster the relationships critical to open access to Aurora. The subject matter of ICE and education for undocumented children is sensitive from both a legal and personal standpoint. Therefore, an introduction by Aurora’s primary gatekeeper enabled me to earn the trust of school staff quickly and easily. In addition to using flyers to recruit participants, I accustomed staff to my presence by sitting in the school library and staff lunchroom to gain access to potential participants. I did this to make myself available so staff could easily speak with me. In keeping with the research sampling procedure, I asked each participant to recommend other staff possibly open to participating in the study. This procedure proved successful.
On multiple occasions research participants provided me with the names of colleague or personally introduced me to a colleague.

*Data Collection*

I collected data at the research site in Northern California in early/mid-fall of 2011 over five weeks, or approximately 25 days, after receiving IRB approval from The Pennsylvania State University. Though I originally intended to collect data before I was physically present on the West Coast to better prepare me for my site visit and better pinpoint my interview participants through technology like Skype, I was unable to proceed as later than I expected. Thus, when I finally received approval, I had a very short window of time between receiving approval and obtaining the principal’s permission to conduct research at Aurora. Once I arrived at the research site, however, I collected data in the same manner I had anticipated. It was a straightforward process for me to recruit research participants and to secure interviews with them. I also had the full permission of Aurora’s principal to conduct internal and external observations of the school environment and local neighborhood as well as to collect documents.

*Data Collection and Research Methods*

*Data Collection*

In total, I conducted interviews with fourteen research participants over the course of five weeks. I also shadowed and observed research participants as well as the school’s internal and external environments. I also collected documents for analysis. By using multiple
research methods, I triangulated my data. I describe below how I collected data using each method.

**Interviews**

I conducted fourteen formal, semi-structured interviews with research participants as the primary method to collect data, which is consistent with the case study method (Yin, 2009). In each meeting, I took handwritten field notes and also used a recording device to help later with data analysis. I used a topical protocol to give direction to the interviews and provide both my participants and me a degree of flexibility and a guide for our discussion (See Appendix F). I was able to speak to school staff in a variety of professional positions as I had intended, and all school staff who agreed to participate in my study receive an informed consent form (See Appendix H).

Each interview lasted between forty-five minutes and an hour and a half. I initially expected I would need to interview each research participant in person twice, but once in the field, I did not feel it was necessary. The purpose of the first interview was to develop rapport with interviewees and enable me to build greater trust with the interviewee. I anticipated in the first interview I would gain more personal information about the participant and begin asking about the participant’s perspectives on ICE. By the second interview then, I should have developed enough rapport with my participants to receive candid answers, and descriptions of their thought processes about ICE activities near Aurora school property as illustrated through examples. Yet, I found that the participants at Aurora Elementary spoke candidly with me upon our first meeting and
willingly spoke about their perspectives on the topics at hand (an issue I will address in the section on the study limitations sections).

In part, I believe Aurora participants spoke candidly to me within the interview both because I had made myself a daily presence within the school, and because participants seemed to hold definite opinions about education for undocumented students and the events of 2008. I spent several hours each day sitting in the Aurora staff room and/or library, so staff became accustomed to seeing me in these spaces where they also spend a good deal of time. I smiled at school staff and initiated informal conversations with them (e.g. I asked them what their role at the school is or made comments about the students’ liveliness or energy) to make myself approachable. Further, as I was a stranger to the campus, I also believe staff made an effort to learn about me and why I had come to Aurora. Once staff learned I wished to discuss an issue related to how educators maintain educational access for undocumented students, staff spoke with me because my research focus was relevant to them as the Aurora school population includes undocumented students.

I did not perceive in my research participants’ words or body language that I should hesitate to ask questions about their views on issues of a sensitive nature: education for undocumented students, impressions of and experience with ICE activity, and how both impact school climate and relationships. I also paid special attention to the physical location where I conducted the interviews, offering interviewees the option that we speak a more neutral location, such as a quiet coffee shop instead of on school property. No participant chose to meet with me away from school grounds. Therefore, all interviews took place at Aurora either during breaks in the school day or after the school
day ended. One way to account for participants’ choice to meet on school grounds is that their views on education for undocumented students and ICE activity near school grounds echoed the views of Aurora’s principal and those of their work colleagues. Therefore, participants arguably did not see reason to speak with me in a more private location where their participation in the study or their perspectives could be more closely concealed beyond my guarantees to protect participants’ identities or their views.

Once the interview began, the overarching purpose was to provide me with a sense of the context surrounding Aurora Elementary, the school staff, and their perspectives on undocumented students and ICE activity near the school in 2008. If the research participant was employed in 2008 during ICE workplace raids or when ICE appeared near school property, I requested the participant to chronologically narrate his or her recollection of these events. I asked how she remembered experiencing these events and making sense of them. I also inquired whether participants noticed ICE agents and what reaction this caused in them. Through the interviewing process, I proactively asked interviewees for examples to illustrate their thinking, beliefs, and how they acted out those beliefs. Due to the time lapse between my interviews and ICE activity near Aurora in 2008, I ask the interviewee if he or she was cognizant of a discrepancy or similarity in how he or she currently makes sense of past events versus how he or she made sense of events during or shortly after the events occurred (e.g. whether the participant would take the same course of action were ICE to be near school again). I asked interviewees who did not experience ICE activity what they would have done hypothetically.
Ultimately, in result of the first interview, participants helped me hone my research questions and identify other interviewees to provide me with rich descriptions of their sensemaking processes. As I will make clear in more detail in the findings section, I reached data saturation with the research participants and documents. Research participants echoed each other’s perspectives on education for undocumented students, their views on their roles and obligations in response to ICE activity near Aurora, and in their recollections of the steps the school took upon learning ICE was in the school’s vicinity.

Observations and Shadowing

To add richness and depth to the data captured in the interviews, I supplemented the data I gathered in the interviews by conducting observations and shadowing. I continued collecting data for this study by spending several days observing and taking field notes of the school environment, surrounding areas, and neighborhood to gain a sense of the context influencing my study. I also observed several meetings, both at the school and in the community. Finally, I shadowed a few research participants by spending time in their classrooms and following them through a portion of the school day. I used these methods as way to provide me with perspective on the relationships among the administrator and teachers and staff and how decisions are made at Aurora. Coburn’s (2005) study revealed, with sensemaking theory, that access to observe patterns of social interaction is crucial, such as in conversations, because it is in these interactions that understandings are created, negotiated, and shared. Therefore, it was important that I have access to both the formal and informal contexts where social interactions occur. I
was able to make observations of the social interactions and hear conversations between Aurora’s principal and school staff and among school staff by sitting in Aurora’s front office, library, and staff room and by walking through the Aurora school building.

**Internal School Observations**

I sat quietly and observed the internal Aurora environment on a daily basis for four weeks. I spent several hours each day, ranging from three to four hours, watching and taking notes of the interactions among school staff, between staff and Aurora families, and between teachers and students. Most often I sat in either the school’s library, in the staff lunchroom, or in the front office to make observations and take notes. I chose these three locations because they are the key high-traffic areas within the school.

During the observations of the internal school context, I focused my attention on issues like the manner in which school staff interacted with one another. The purpose was to determine whether the relationships among staff seemed close, friendly, and informal or more rigid and formal. By examining staff relationships, I reasoned such observations would lend clues as to whether staff were likely to share perspectives on undocumented students and ICE activity, arguably leading them to act in concert in relation to an ethically challenging situation. In addition, I had the opportunity to witness staff interaction with Aurora’s principal, Linda, to get a sense of her leadership and decision making style and authority as school head.

Both the front office and library proved to be good locations to observe school staff interact with Aurora families, the front office in particular. Families streamed into the front office throughout the day, from before the start of the day around 8 a.m. until
the end of instruction at roughly 2 p.m. Most often, mothers with very young children would come into the office to interface with support staff, which enables me to support accounts of staff familiarity with community members. These observations also helped me ascertain, at least in part, the strength of the relationships and connections between the school and the community it serves. Though participants like the school counselor and resource participants indicated in interviews that staff help families with social services like filling out Medic-Aid forms, I did not observe staff engaged in such tasks.

My observations of the library were best suited to acquaint school staff with my presence, and the library later served as a site where I conducted interviews. The library was also a place to watch for Aurora parents’ involvement in the school. For example, I watched to see if parents lingered in the library to look at books and speak with students, or whether parents came into the library with a teacher and the teacher’s class. According to the librarian, the school library is open for parents to use, and parents would walk through the library with children, occasionally speaking to the librarian or other staff present. I also saw parent volunteers come into the libraries with teachers.

The staff lunch room was most useful to observe staff interactions and to recruit research participants. I could also see the front office from the lunch room, which enabled me to observe Aurora parents and staff without intimidating them with my presence as a researcher/stranger. In addition to witnessing, listening to, and occasionally engaging in conversations with research participants, I was able to speak informally with school staff not involved in the study who shed light on their experiences in the district or on Aurora’s context, such as the academic performance of students or its status as a school in Program Improvement Year 5 (2009-2010 Annual School Scorecard).
Though I had the opportunity to observe a sizeable portion of Aurora school staff, I chose to officially observe and shadow three research participants: Javier, Luz, and Iris (all names are pseudonyms), each of whom teaches. Javier and Luz were not present at Aurora on the day in 2008 when ICE activity was reported, therefore this enabled me to see how their sensemaking processes may have been influenced by others who were present. Javier teaches kindergarten and emigrated to the U.S as an adult to work in a U.S. school. Javier was employed at Aurora in 2008, though he was not present at the school on the day ICE activity was reported. However, Javier had heard from colleagues about the incident. He wanted to share his thoughts with me on what it is like to work in Aurora, his impressions of the school climate and the community, his thoughts on education for undocumented students, and whether ICE activity near a public school is ethical. Luz teaches second grade, and she was not employed at Aurora in 2008. She is the daughter of immigrant parents, who were political refugees at one point. Luz has a Master’s in journalism, and she has a particular interest in U.S. foreign policy and immigration.

Both Javier and Luz enabled me to amplify the views of participants with histories of immigration. Through Luz, who did not work at Aurora in 2008, I learned that other staff had passed the story of ICE coming near Aurora down to those who were not employed at that time. With Luz I could also see whether some participants had some knowledge about U.S. immigration possibly and the Plyler (1982) ruling—and therefore whether they would perceive an ethical dilemma if ICE conducted an operation near the school again.
I also shadowed Iris, who was at Aurora on that day. She had vivid reflections and perspective that she wanted to share regarding the event. Therefore, Iris was a participant who could relate the sequence of decisions she made that day and how she made sense of ICE reports. Like other participants at the school in 2008, Iris could explain whether she would make the same decisions again after having time to reflect on the event.

Together, Javier, Luz, and Iris were among the most candid of the participants and willing agreed to let me observe them at work in the classroom. I observed and shadowed Iris and Javier for a half day and observed and shadowed Luz for one full day. I formally observed three participants to learn about the day-to-day operation and rhythms of the school day at Aurora. For example, as Aurora is a dual-language school, half of the school day is conducted in Spanish and the other half in English from grades K-2. I could observe Luz and Javier switching between Spanish and English instruction throughout the day. Iris, on the other hand, teaches in English only. For all three participants, I examined how staff responded to student questions or needs, and observed teachers’ teaching methods. I could also ask the teachers about how they communicated with parents and learn more specifically about parental school involvement. Above all, the purpose of the observations was to give me a sense of what it is like for staff to work within Aurora and the demands and responsibilities participants carry. Closely observing these teachers allowed me to do that as did my other observations. I did not spend more time formally shadowing research participants, because I was able to see how staff interacted with each other in my daily, less formalized observations.

In addition to observing and shadowing staff, I observed two meetings on the Aurora campus. The first meeting was Aurora’s Back-to-School night. The meeting was
held in the cafeteria and lasted a half hour. The cafeteria was full of Aurora parents and Aurora students. Linda welcomed the Aurora families and introduced Aurora’s teachers to the school community. While attending this event, I observed the behaviors and interactions among families and noted the large turnout of parents or family members coming to learn about the school and the teachers.

The second meeting I attended lasted one hour and was led by Emmanuel, the community organizer, who is heavily involved in Aurora affairs and the neighboring community. The meeting was for parents of Aurora school children. The overarching purpose of the meetings was to develop closer school-community relations by encouraging greater parent involvement at the school (e.g. Emmanuel stressed that parents should consider volunteering in their child’s classroom). Emmanuel holds meetings similar to the one I attended with Linda’s permission and sometimes in conjunction with her. This meeting also gave me context for the school-community relationship, the strength of that relationship, and how that relationship is being built and sustained. Further, observing this meeting gave me a sense of the values espoused by the school and community members. By observing this meeting, I saw how the school attempts to build parental school involvement, and that the vast majority of attendants represented are from the Latino community.

After each day of observation and shadowing, I wrote memos reflecting my impressions of the school climate and culture, conversations with school staff, and whether I saw patterns in my participants’ behavior or views. The memos serve as important contributions to the data analysis process as do the field notes (See Appendix C).
External School Observations

I observed the exterior school environment and the neighborhoods surrounding Aurora to examine the context surrounding the school to learn about how that context might influence either the school-community relationship of the school climate. For example, I presumed that if the school had a close relationship with the community, staff at the school could potentially be more likely to perceive an ethical dilemma if ICE requested cooperation from the school in an investigation. Related, I anticipated gaining broader or new perspectives on ICE activity in the area from observing or speaking with community members and could take cues from their reaction to me if they perceived me as an outsider to that community. Therefore, I went to local meeting spots and stores located within walking distance from the school, as the physical surroundings of the school demonstrate the socioeconomic conditions and demographics of the area. Observations of the external school environment were intended to tell me more about the school, its actors, and the role Aurora plays in the community. Such observations add rich descriptions to the study and contribute to the context for the study.

I spent several hours walking around Aurora neighborhoods to get a feel for the community in which Aurora is located. I observed the recycling center next to the school, which is enclosed by tall, chain link fences with barbed wire winding around the top of the fence. Full, black plastic trash bags often lie out for several days on the sidewalk directly in front of the school. Automotive repair shops and rundown-looking local business are common on the main thoroughfare behind the school, as are businesses advertising “Checks for Cash.” The streets closest to Aurora contain single-story houses
painted in bright colors like pink, turquoise, and yellow. Most houses have chain link fences enclosing their front yards, many of which appeared neat and tidy. The nearby convenient store has black bars to protect glass windows. Several research participants indicated there is gang activity and prostitution in the area, and groups of adults hang out on local street corners with no apparent purpose. I did not see groups milling about, but that is probably in part due to the hours during which I made observations. I became generally aware of neighborhood residents tending their property and one man I saw multiple times whom I believe is homeless based on his state of dress and behavior.

Residents appeared to be either Latino or African American. I felt people staring at me as I walked through neighborhoods and into the convenient store, because it is probably uncommon for white women with blond hair to be walking through neighborhoods in that section of the city. I think it was clear I was an outsider to the community, but I did not perceive this fact resulted in my having to overcome obstacles in data collection. In addition to walking around local neighborhoods and businesses, I walked around Aurora school property to take photos of the school’s exterior and make observations. For example, I captured on film with my camera the tall blue metal fence that keeps the school enclosed, but has gates that open so that staff can park their cars in the schools parking lot. I also took pictures of brightly colored murals painted on the school walls. I walked onto the school playground and by the back entrance to the school where food is delivered to make further observations to collect more data about Aurora’s environment. Though I was free to take photos of the school exterior for evidence, I was unable to reconcile how close ICE came to the school in actuality and use evidence like a photo to demonstrate proximity. Research participants offered very different accounts of
how proximate ICE came to school property. These photographs are not included within this study as they were intended to inform my understanding of the context surrounding the school only, and thus I did not seek IRB permission to use the photos as official documents in the study.

Unexpectedly, I had the opportunity to attend and quietly observe a community meeting about ICE activity in the city while in California. The objective of the meeting was to bring local community members together to discuss how ICE operates, U.S. Department of Homeland Security programs, and how local organizations can work together to let undocumented people to know their rights in the face of ICE activity. In result of having observed this meeting, I can better speak to the context for citywide efforts to discuss the impact of ICE’s presence in city communities. I also observed how local community members perceive the presence and activity of federal immigration agents in the city and collected several documents at this meeting, which I discuss in the following section.

Documents

A variety of documents contribute richness and depth to the research findings. I searched local newspapers for news items related to ICE in Northern California, and items that deepen my understanding of the context surrounding Aurora and its attendant neighborhoods. These kinds of documents have helped me gauge the local political climate on immigration issues in the city. A thorough search for these documents was necessary to better enable me to understand the extent and strength of community support, or lack of support, for immigrants or undocumented persons. These documents
were intended to further inform the study about influences on educators’ sense of their professional role as it relates to illegal immigration.

From the local community organizer, Emmanuel, I obtained an agenda from the parent meeting he led. I also asked that Aurora’s principal share with me any documented communication that she sent to parents after the ICE incident in 2008. She complied with my request and sent me the letter she circulated through the school community. I also secured a published article that a former Aurora staffer wrote in reaction to ICE activity that describes the effects ICE had on the school climate. Yet another document I collected of significance is the “red card,” which undocumented community members carry. The red card has English on one side and Spanish on the other, and it contains a basic outline of an undocumented person’s Constitutional rights and what an undocumented person could say to an ICE officer to claim his rights if confronted. Other documents that I collected included brochures from the school that detail school programs and programs providing services, like how people can sign up for home Internet service. I also retained newsletters the principal wrote to Aurora parents.

Data Analysis

Review of Sensemaking Theory and the BI Model and their Application to the Study

To address the three research questions in the study, I drew principally on sensemaking theory and the Best Interests (BI) model as starting points for data analysis. In this next section, I briefly review sensemaking theory and the BI model, and how they were applied in the study, which examined how educators perceived immigration enforcement activity near school property. I continue with a description of how I further analyzed data
in this embedded case study, drawing on the works of Yin (2009) and Miles and Huberman (1984) as guides to help discover emerging themes and patterns in the data.

Again, sensemaking theory focuses on the process through which people continually ground their interpretations of an event into some context (Spillane et al., 2002). According to Meryl Louis (in Weick, 1995), surprises or “discrepant events” can “trigger a need for an explanation” (p. 5), thus initiating the sensemaking process. In this study, unexpected reports of ICE activity near Aurora’s campus reached the school in early May 2008, creating a need for school staff to make sense of and interpret a new situation. Sensemaking theory argues that people have “filters” in place that influence their perceptions of their environment or understanding of an event. Such filters are constructed from people’s preexisting beliefs, knowledge, expectations, and/or experiences that act as “stimuli” people then use to build a framework to ascribe meaning to and interpret that situation or event (Weick, 1995). The meaning assigned to the event then shapes whether a person decides to take further action (Coburn, 2005).

Sensemaking is an iterative process. Consistent with this theoretical framework, the meaning a person attributes to an event becomes increasingly clarified in hindsight; reflecting on the situation’s outcomes helps modify how a person later makes sense of the entire event. For example, Aurora staff sheltered undocumented adults in the school and reassured children the school would make sure they and their parents were safe. Staff overwhelmingly said, four years after the incident with ICE, that they would make the exact same decisions again.

The sensemaking process happens both individually and collectively (Spillane, 2002; Weick, 1995)—and this proved to be true in the case of how participants made
sense of ICE coming near Aurora. Similar to Coburn and Talbert’s (2006) view that cultural norms (e.g. norms in the work environment) create boundaries for people’s sensemaking, which influences their subsequent decisions, I found that cultural norms were embedded in the Aurora context. Cultural norms existed in how staff interacted with and served the local community, viewed education for undocumented children, and therefore how they later reflected on their roles and decisions related to ICE activity near school.

Coburn’s (2005) study demonstrated that school administrators/principals in particular can exert influence and control over teachers’ sensemaking by mediating teachers’ exposure to and level of access to policy messages. School staff revealed that Linda directly and indirectly shaped their sensemaking of the incident in 2008. For example, based on her professional status as principal, Linda was the designated authority in the school responsible to communicate with the school district about the reports of ICE. She then had authority to interpret the district’s message and decide what to communicate to school staff about the situation. Linda made the decision that parents of Aurora children should be contacted and apprised of what was happening, and to involve school staff in this process, thus increasing the likelihood that the school administrator and school staff formed a shared understanding of what reports of ICE near school property should mean to staff and for the school.

Although Linda was clearly instrumental in how Aurora school staff made sense of their situation, participants also showed that, in their decision making process, they were concerned—both individually and collectively, to do what was in the best interests of the student. Again, the Best Interests of the Student (BI) model conceptualizes a
framework for how educators might reflect on their thought processes in an ethically complex situation to arrive at a decision that is in the best interest of the child. The model, which builds on Shapiro and Stefkovich’s Multiple Ethical Paradigms (2005), is comprised of four complementary ethical paradigms that include the ethics of *justice*, *care*, *critique*, and an *ethic of the profession*. The ethic of the profession includes the other three paradigms and has at its center the best interests of the student. I used the model to help me identify components of school staff’s sensemaking and to test the model. Although I did not expect Aurora staff to think about their sensemaking process in terms of the explicit ethical paradigms posited in the BI model, I anticipated and found that the model helped me identify the implicit aspects of how school staff made sense of ICE activity near school to reason their way through their decisions in 2008—and that participants largely revealed that the best interests of Aurora schoolchildren—and the community—were at the forefront of their minds in their decision making.

With the passage of several years since this incident, school staff demonstrated that Linda’s sensemaking of the 2008 incident continues to influence their own sensemaking. As I describe in the following chapter, some participants stated they would rely on Linda’s judgment if ICE activity were to reoccur near Aurora. Others made assumptions that they would enact the same procedures Linda called for in 2008. In both cases, research participants revealed little to no specific knowledge about either district or school policies governing education for undocumented students or policies intending to protect these students’ educational rights.

*Data analysis at the school and individual levels*
The units of analysis for this embedded case study were at both the school level and at the individual level. Each educator is an individual case, though all contribute to make a whole case as to how Aurora has grappled with issues around undocumented immigration, undocumented students and their families, and ICE. I recorded each interview with a digital recorder and discreetly took fieldnotes during each interview. Afterward, I wrote a memo for each interview I conducted to capture my thoughts and impressions of the participant and his or her narration of events, the interview process, and any factors that influenced the interviewing process (See Appendix B).

Data analysis began with transcribing the interviews. I then followed up with the interviewees via email to make sure the transcription and subsequent interpretations were reliable. Afterward, I used NVivo 9, a qualitative research software program, to analyze the content of the transcripts and organize my data. As one overarching analytic strategy, Yin (2009) suggests letting the case study’s theoretical propositions guide the analysis, because doing so helps focus the researcher’s attention to relevant data. Yin states this broad strategy is used particularly for studies asking “how” or “why” research questions, and I used this strategy to undergird this study’s theoretical basis of sensemaking and use of the Best Interests (BI) model.

Yin (2009) asserts that pattern matching is a primary analytic approach for case studies, so I also looked for themes and patterns that threaded throughout and across each interview. According to Yin, pattern matching can enhance the study’s internal validity if evidence demonstrates patterns where the data converge. Therefore, I used an open coding schematic from the grounded theory qualitative tradition for data analysis to “[break] data apart and [delineate] concepts to stand for blocks of raw data” (Corbin &
Strauss, 2008, p.195). Through open coding, I gave a name or code word to either an idea in a line, sentence or within a paragraph contained in a transcript to represent a concept (Merriam et al., 2002). I then engaged in axial coding. In axial coding, I examined my initial categories gathered from the data to see how and whether concepts related to one another (Merriam et al., 2002) and fit them into a more central theme or themes. For example, I created categories like “school outreach-relationship building” and “school as a microcosm for community” (See Appendix D).

For continued data analysis, I applied the analytical approach used by Coburn and Talbert (2006) in their study on how individuals in urban school districts made sense of practices supported through evidence. Similarly, I looked for patterns across research participants to see how their perceptions of ICE activity and their “best interests” decisions converged or diverged. I built a matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1984) (see Appendix E for modified example) as I identified patterns/categories and then placed individuals or groups of individuals within the matrix. Coburn and Talbert organized their matrix according to “organizational level, division, roles and responsibility, and professional affiliation” (p. 474), and though the context of my study is different than the authors’, this schema helped me organize my data in a practical way.

Another data analysis pattern matching strategy Yin (2009) recommends for revelatory case studies is to build explanations about the case. Explanation building entails “[stipulating] a presumed set of causal links” about a phenomenon, “or ‘how’ or ‘why’ it happened,” (p. 141). This study specifically addresses how educators make sense of potential for ethical conflicts related to issues stemming from education for undocumented students. In the context of this study, these causal links can produce broad
insights into educators’ sensemaking processes in ethical dilemmas. Building explanations for these links may later contribute to discussions on immigration or school policy. For example, a number of the research participants have personal histories of immigration in their family, which sometimes included stories of family members emigrating to the U.S. without authorization. Therefore, arguably, a participant who did not perceive an ethical dilemma during ICE activity near school property could be attributed to a participant’s sympathy toward undocumented students.

Understandably, the process of building explanations is iterative. According to Yin, this process requires the researcher to make propositions to account for behaviors or policies, re-examine evidence and revise propositions, compare the details of the case against each other and against the revised proposition until an acceptable explanation is reached. Yin (2009) states it is also necessary for the researcher to consider other plausible or rival explanations. The process of building an explanation, therefore, was gradual. My data analysis was complete when I reached data saturation with both the interviews and documents, meaning that no new themes or patterns emerged in the data, and that no new information or additional categories could be devised.

**Validity and Reliability**

**Validity**

The primary strategy I used to guarantee internal validity for the study was by triangulating of my data. Triangulating data means that I collected data from multiple sources as evidence to contribute to the research findings (Merriam et al., 2002). According to Maxwell (2005), triangulation entails “… collecting information from a
diverse range of individuals and settings, using a variety of methods….” (p. 112). Again, the research methods I employed included conducting interviews, observing and shadowing research participants, and collecting documents. My research methods also included collecting a variety of documents and interviewing multiple people with different perspectives on the research questions.

To further ensure the validity of my findings, I asked both colleagues and members of my doctoral committee to perform peer review checks by reviewing the collected data. Peer review checks ensured that reviewers of the study saw a clear audit trail in my data collection procedures, including my interview protocol and in the reduction and interpretation of interview data. I also performed member checks with my interview participants to strengthen the study’s validity. Participants were presented with the opportunity to see transcripts, analysis of the findings, and to offer comments and feedback. Finally, the researcher is the primary instrument in collecting data. The researcher’s positionality can influence interpretation of data in the topic under study (Merriam et al., 2002). To address concerns about potential researcher bias, I wrote a memo to critically reflect on how my values and assumptions might come to bear on the study. In this memo, I specifically reflected on my educational privilege, views of undocumented immigrants, and the role of education in society.

Reliability

Reliability, according to Merriam et al. (2002), suggests that others should be able to agree that the results of the study are dependable and consistent with the data that was collected. Reliability in this sense is more important than another understanding of the
term “reliability”: the extent to which external observers could replicate the study’s findings. Triangulating data by using multiple research methods contributes to producing a reliable study, however one key way to increase the reliability of a study is through creating what Yin (2009) calls a “chain of evidence” (p. 122). The chain of evidence consists of all the steps the researcher took to link the study’s research questions to the conclusions that were ultimately drawn from the data. Yin (2009) states that this chain, or trail, works in a bi-directional manner. As the researcher for this study, then, I should be able to point to specific data or evidence to clearly support my conclusions.

In keeping with Merriam et al.’s (2002) strategy to enhance a study’s reliability, and similar to Yin’s idea of a chain of evidence, the reliability of my study is strengthened further through ensuring my study has a clear audit trail. In order to have a clear audit trail, a researcher should be able to describe how data was collected, the decision making process behind data use, and how categories were developed. The primary method used to maintain a transparent audit trail was through writing memos. In the memos, I wrote down my thoughts, reflections on, and questions about my research participants, any obstacles I encountered while collecting data, and how I grappled with my data to draw forth research findings (See Appendix B). The audit trail is visible in any documents I collected related to issues concerning immigration or undocumented persons. These documents included, for example, information contained in school newsletters pertaining to undocumented adults and students.

Study Limitations
Specific limitations to the study shaped the data that was collected and analyzed, and how the findings were later interpreted. These limitations can affect the validity of the study. For example, the proposed study site is located in Northern California. Generally speaking, California is a politically liberal state with a racially/ethnically and socioeconomically diverse population. These characteristics, among others, may have colored my research participants’ perspectives and other sources of evidence (i.e., local media coverage of events) differently than if the study had been conducted in a more conservative city without refuge status, or at a school where undocumented students are not part of the student body or local community.

The choice of research method also influenced the generalizeability of the research findings. Because the study is an embedded case study, study findings cannot forthwith be applied to other schools or populations of educators who have experienced ICE at their school. For example, a study conducted in Arizona—a state where there is strong contention over the state’s right to enforce immigration policy—would look dramatically different. Therefore, the findings that resulted from my investigation at Aurora Elementary can speak only to the specific context of one elementary school in Northern California. However, according to Yin (2009), case studies, like experiments, “…are generalizeable to theoretical propositions” (p. 15). As such, the case study method allows my study to potentially expand the understanding of sensemaking theory as it pertains to the field of education and education for undocumented students.

A few other limitations to the study must also be noted. I sought to explore a topic that is highly sensitive on several fronts: undocumented children, ICE, federal activities, and politics. My sense was that people were very forthcoming with the information they
were willing to share, but participants may have held back their true opinions unbeknownst to me. It is possible my positionality as a white, middle-class, highly educated female may have hindered how people reacted to me and whether they related to me or felt they could trust me with sensitive information. Again, I did not sense that my positionality proved to be obstacle in data collection. On the contrary, my positionality as a researcher may have proved beneficial as evidenced by several participants directly stating that they believed the research topic I pursued is worthwhile, and they would like to see the findings distributed.

Another consideration I kept in mind while collecting data was that I chose an elementary school as the study setting, and in result I conducted research near very young children. Arguably, school staff could have been cautious to have me, a stranger, on school grounds and interacting with people or making observations. I expected Aurora staff would be more cautious in light of the school’s history. Therefore, I took behavioral cues from school staff and asked them how I might best interact with adults and children at the school. Specifically, I asked the extent to which staff were comfortable with my interaction with children, though I did not interview children. Yet, ultimately, the principal and staff let me know that I was free to interact with students if I chose to, and did not express concerns about my presence as a researcher in the school.

**Ethical Considerations**

Unauthorized immigration is a lightening-rod topic. Therefore, the legal and/or professional ramifications for educators who agreed to participate in the proposed study required precaution. Certain revelations might have the power to make the participant liable. Hypothetically, I expected during the course of conversation, an educator may
reveal he/she acted contrary to school policy or law. Consequently, I stressed to potential interviewees in person and in the written consent form that any information shared with me would be kept strictly confidential.

Following IRB guidelines, each participant was assured he/she would receive a pseudonym in interview transcripts or other documents (i.e. memos) I wrote. I also emphasized to interview participants that any information shared with me would not be disclosed to ICE, work colleagues, superiors, district officials, or city officials. All documents are kept in a private location known only to the researcher.

Lastly, I also took my bias as a researcher in my investigation into account and how it might have influenced the study findings. Based on my readings on various state policies that inhibit undocumented students’ access to higher education, as well as the effects of ICE on local communities, I take a political position that could be characterized as pro-education for undocumented students in all aspects. However, as a researcher, my concern was that my interviewees expressed their opinions without compunction and with minimal researcher influence. Consequently, I only shared details of my personal political stance with my research participants if they inquired.
Chapter 5—SEQUENCE OF EVENTS AND PARTICIPANT DECISIONS

Introduction

In the next several chapters, I present the findings from my study, which sought to understand how educators in one elementary school in Northern California, Aurora, made sense of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity near school property in 2008. The study asked whether school staff perceived competing legal and ethical responsibilities upon learning about ICE activity; whether staff felt placed in a legal or ethical dilemma in terms of how to respond; how staff came to make decisions about what to do; and, finally, how staff later made sense of their decisions and viewed the entire situation in retrospect. Before I present the findings from the study, the reader must first have context for what participants and other sources of evidence reported happened at Aurora in 2008 when ICE activity occurred near school property. Therefore, in this chapter I provide context for the findings which includes a timeline of events as well as the decisions participants made in result of ICE activity so that the reader can see how the findings later address the research questions. I also briefly summarize the most salient research findings before devoting the subsequent three chapters to answering each research question one by one and discussing the findings in greater depth in chapters six, seven, and eight, which demonstrate that school grounds are more than simply symbolic ground for immigration debate. I now provide a chronology of the sequence of events that took place in 2008 prior to and following reports of ICE activity. I pieced together a timeline and sequence of events by comparing research participants’ accounts of what happened as told to me in my interviews with them as well as any information I gleaned
through documents like the school newsletter the principal sent out to Aurora families after the incident.

**Sequence of Events and Decisions Related to ICE Activity Near Aurora**

“*Predictability is not something we get a lot of around here...*” (Jill, p. 1)

The story of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity near Aurora school grounds in 2008 and the repercussions it had on the sensemaking and decisions of school staff is complex. Notably, at the time of this writing, four years have passed since these events took place. I will demonstrate that participants’ accounts of what happened differed to some extent, but as the research findings show, participants’ sensemaking of and decisions to respond to ICE mostly converged. In order to construct a general timeline of events and the context for participants’ sensemaking, I looked for areas where the majority of the participants’ accounts corroborated each other’s recollections of what occurred. For example, I noted how frequently participants reported they heard ICE was in the school neighborhood in the morning. I also rely heavily on the testimony of Aurora’s school principal, Linda (See Appendix A for list of research participants and their school roles). I rely on Linda prominently as she is the key figure who had the power and authority by virtue of her role to make decisions about how the school and school staff learned about reports of ICE and subsequently responded to those reports. The following sections present a chronology and description of the major events and decisions related to ICE activity near Aurora in 2008. Briefly,

1. In January of 2008, the City School Board passes a resolution stating the school district’s stance on education for undocumented students and immigrant children.
2. In May 2008, rumors spread throughout the local community and Aurora that ICE vans were spotted in the neighborhood where Aurora is located. Reports place ICE’s proximity within a few blocks of the school. School staff try to calm student and community fears.

3. Aurora goes into a form of “lockdown” mode where parents and students are kept inside the school. The principal, Linda, calls the district’s legal department for advice and confers with two other principals about the steps she will take.

4. School staff and parents call families to communicate that ICE vans were seen in the neighborhood and that ICE is not on Aurora’s campus. Parents are told they can send an alternative person to pick their child up from the school.

5. The city mayor and his staff, the media, and a school board member arrive at Aurora, adding to the ongoing flurry of activity at the school.

6. The school environment quickly returns to normal the day following ICE’s presence near the school. Aurora then hosts a meeting for community members to meet with immigration lawyers a few days later. Representatives from ICE attend the meeting.

7. ICE follows up with the school to clarify the event, but simultaneously expresses that the school should have known ICE was conducting an operation in the area.

Chronology and Description of Events and Participant Decisions

1. In January of 2008, the City School Board passes a resolution stating the school district’s stance on education for undocumented students and immigrant children.

The school board resolution reiterated the district’s commitment to providing a K-12 education for all students in the district regardless of their legal status stemmed from a 2007 incident with ICE. Purportedly, a student’s mother was led onto the grounds of a school in the district so she could see her child to school before ICE detained her for questioning away from the school’s campus. The school board resolution states that district policy strives to meet the simultaneous goals of providing a safe learning environment for all students in the district with minimal disruption in students’ education
while also cooperating with law enforcement agencies—including ICE—as required by law. The resolution specifically mentions that the 1982 Supreme Court decision *Plyler v. Doe* guarantees undocumented children a free, public education, and that the student population in the district consists of 28% of English Language Learners, a proxy that signals that district schools educate undocumented students. The resolution further noted that the city and school district stand “in solidarity” with immigrant organizations, and that ICE raids in Northern California cause immigrant families to fear leaving home or take their children to school. Four months after the school board passes its resolution, reports circulate that ICE activity takes place near school grounds again in at least two school districts.

2. *In early May 2008, rumors spread throughout the local community and Aurora that ICE vans are spotted in the neighborhood where Aurora is located. Reports place ICE’s proximity within a few blocks of the school. School staff try to calm student and community fears.*

Participants remembered receiving reports that ICE vans were seen in the vicinity of the school neighborhood at various points in the day. Linda, Aurora’s principal, and the school intervention specialist, Tom, recalled school parents coming into the school “before the regular school day picked up,” telling him ICE vans were parked near the school. Linda remembered an “influx of people that came to our campus when they heard that ICE was in the neighborhood.” Specifically, Linda stated that parents came into the school with their children in the morning, saying that ICE vans were parked down the street. The parents asked Linda, “Can we hang out here in the parent room?” and appeared nervous that the ICE vans were not leaving the neighborhood. Parents then told
Linda “We’re not going to go back out,” which set in motion a chain of decisions I describe shortly.

Others school staff like Felicia, a resource specialist, and Jill, a school counselor, believed that rumors of ICE activity did not reach the school until sometime in the afternoon. Felicia recalled an “odd afternoon,” and thought the school was close to dismissing students for the day. Jill, meanwhile, stated she sensed a “buzz in the hallway” that went up and down the school that ICE vans were driving in the neighborhood in the afternoon, though she acknowledged school staff would report ICE’s alleged presence occurred at various times in the school day.

Though participants’ recollections of the start of the rumors about ICE’s presence near Aurora varied, all participants agreed that word rapidly spread throughout the school. Tom stated “And it had already spread, you know, by mid-morning, just the anxiety….and then it kind of infected the school. There were kids who were just in tears and worrying that they’d never see certain people again, and a very high level of anxiety.” Tom said that, “When people showed up [at Aurora], they had it all over their face. People were really anxious.” Rosa, who was an attendance secretary in 2008 but now occupies the role of community liaison, stated, “So I did have a lot of parents tell me they weren’t bringing their kids to school, because immigration was in such-and-such an area. So they [parents] were afraid they would get stopped or they [ICE] would come into their houses, so they were not bringing their kids to school. The school security officer, Officer Gates, explained that the flurry of activity in the school picked up as the day went on. He said, “You know you could just see it, people were coming in, the parents were running in, and the word got out real fast. It was the domino effect.” Jill, the school
counselor, said community members did not show outward signs of panic. Instead, she said, people acted hurriedly, like “ok, let’s go, let’s go,” but more than anything, “People...were just kind of ‘get business done.’” Tom, however, said that knowledge of ICE’s presence in the school’s vicinity “sparked all this fear.” Participants primarily conveyed that it was the students who felt anxious on behalf of potentially vulnerable parents once they realized immigration enforcement was in the nearby area.

Rumors as to ICE’s proximity to the school varied to a degree, but participants’ accounts corroborated each other in that ICE vans were spotted or were believed to be within a few blocks from the school. Linda and Tom, Javier, a kindergarten teacher not present at the school on the day but who heard of the incident the day after, and Olivia, who was an ESL instructor at the time, noted that ICE vans were seen either a few blocks down the street that parallels Aurora or on nearby streets running perpendicular to the school. Emmanuel, a community organizer intimately involved in the Aurora school community, claimed to have seen ICE vehicles one block away from the school grounds, and that the vehicles turned onto the street where Aurora is located. Sandra, a fifth grade teacher, said that when her students came to school they knew something was going on; they told Sandra they had seen the “immigration car around the neighborhood,” which they call “La migra” in Spanish. The students claimed, “La migra is around.”

As some students knew about the situation with ICE, teachers took steps to calm children’s fears. For example, Sandra said that she sat on a classroom rug to have a conversation with her students and reassure them they would be safe in school as would be their parents if they came to Aurora. Felicia’s students expressed worry their parents were in jeopardy of being picked up by ICE. Felicia said, “the kids just really wanted,
immediately to just talk to their mom or whoever was at home, just to make sure they were ok, and that they weren’t walking around.” Consequently, Felicia allowed her students to call their parents. Iris, a third grade teacher, noted that her class learned about ICE activity while trying to catch a glimpse of the then-city mayor, who came to Aurora. Iris took her class to the front of the school and heard one of her students “freaking out,” saying “they’re here, they’re here, they’re here.” Iris then stopped everything to ask what was happening, and students told her “the mig...the immigr...ah!!” Iris quickly took her students back to their class to talk about what happened. Iris said she “Let them know as long as they’re with me, they’re safe. I am here for you. The school is here for you. The school will help your families. Don’t worry.”

3. *Aurora goes into a form of “lockdown” mode where parents and students are kept inside the school. The principal, Linda, calls the district’s legal department for advice and confers with two other principals about the steps she will take.*

Once the parents of Aurora students told Linda they heard ICE was in the neighborhood and refused to leave the school building, Linda took a series of actions. The chronology of the specific actions Linda took and the decisions she made remains somewhat unclear in the re-telling. What is clear is that Linda made concrete decisions that reveal her sensemaking of the situation, which I will discuss later in the chapter six. Linda allowed the parents to stay in the building, and put the school into a de facto “lockdown.” In a lockdown situation, the principal uses a code phrase to communicate with school staff if she suspects that violence in the neighborhood could affect the school and place either staff or students in harm’s way. If she states this phrase over the school's public announcement system, teachers are supposed to lock their doors, turn off their lights, and keep children inside the classroom. Nobody is allowed inside the school
building either, and the principal and school security office patrol hallways and school grounds until the situation is resolved. The principal then uses a second phrase to signal to teachers and school staff that there is no longer a threat.

In 2008, the school lockdown was unofficial as Linda never stated she communicated over the school’s PA system to school staff. Felicia, the resource specialist, recalls that either the principal or teachers told her that the school was on “lockdown because of ICE.” Sandra said she stayed with her students in the classroom that day. Linda sheltered the adults in the school, and no children were allowed outside the school. Officer Gates and Linda’s own father worked to control who could come into Aurora. Officer Gates explained that his job that day “was to make sure the perimeter [of the school grounds] was safe, everyone was safe,” and to see that strangers didn’t use the opportunity to put students at risk for kidnapping.

Aurora and another K-5 elementary school share the same campus. This second school has its own principal and staff. Linda and the principal of this school conferred how to proceed with the reports of ICE activity. Linda also reported that she received a call at some point from another principal in the district confronted with reports of ICE activity near her school. The other principal inquired, “What’s going on over there? Because something’s happening over here. And we’re not sure…how we’re goanna respond.” The three principals discussed what decisions they to make so that they could act in concert and “do the same thing,” according to Linda.
4. School staff and parents call families to relate reports that ICE vans were seen in the neighborhood and that ICE is not on Aurora’s campus. Parents are told they can send an alternative person to pick a child up from the school.

Linda said that when parents expressed their unwillingness to leave Aurora that she called the school district’s legal department for advice. She was told that the legal department was not supposed to do anything, but that Linda could choose to call families “as a courtesy” to tell them ICE vans were in the neighborhood. Linda then asked the community organizer, Emmanuel, and school staff like Jill to call Aurora families. According to Linda, families were told “As a courtesy we’re calling to let you know [about reports of ICE in the neighborhood]. You might want to send somebody else to come pick [a child up] if you’re not a documented person,” and that the school would keep the child in the school until somebody could pick her up. Jill echoed Linda’s account, saying she too was “in the office with office staff calling families and telling them to stay home. Or to send someone else to come pick up their kids, and one that they knew that was here legally.”

Families were told that ICE was not on Aurora’s campus. Linda said informing families that ICE was not on school grounds was “a huge thing because people were like “Are they on the campus?!” Linda tried to alleviate fears by replying, “No, they’re not on the campus, but we do want you to know that they are on this particular street, and they’ve been in the neighborhood.” Notably, as parents came into the school, they were also asked to stay and phone other parents. Linda stated that she asked Emmanuel to facilitate having parents call other parents. On his way to the schools, Emmanuel fielded calls from concerned parents. He counseled them, “If you don’t have documents, stay in
the school, ok? They [ICE] can’t get inside the school.” In her conversations with the families who were worried about picking a child up from school, Rosa, the community liaison, told parents “[ICE] is not gonna come to your house, and if you know that they’re in this area, just go around. Take another route.”

School staff kept records of the names of people who families stated would retrieve the child that day. Staff also checked students’ emergency cards to see that a child was picked up and sent home with a trustworthy family contact. Not all families could easily find an alternative adult to pick their child up from school. Some families told Linda or staff “we’re not going to be able to come right away. Can someone just hold onto them [the child]? We’re going to find somebody to come pick them up. You know, if [the school] can’t, then we’ll just come. We’ll just risk it.” The school complied with families’ requests to keep children in the school. Students who were not picked up immediately by the end of the school day were walked to either the school cafeteria or auditorium. Students watched a movie while they waited for an adult to come. The resource specialist, Felicia, who allowed her students to call their parents, drove her students home. Upon her return, she inquired at the front office if other students needed a ride home. No other students needed a ride home, so Felicia stayed in the office awhile longer and then left. She was the only Aurora staff person to take this action.

5. *The city mayor and his staff, the media, and a school board member arrive at Aurora, adding to the ongoing flurry of activity at the school.*

Participant accounts vary as to whether the mayor and his staff, media, and a school board member appeared at Aurora on the day ICE activity was reported near the school, or if they appeared the following day. Linda, however, recalled everyone coming
to Aurora in the middle of the day on the day of the event itself. Iris’ account corroborates that of Linda. Iris is the teacher whose students “freaked out” on their way to see the mayor, because they had some sense of reports about ICE—and therefore officials and media likely came to Aurora the same day. Emmanuel also indicated the mayor and media went to Aurora the day of the event. However, Felicia and Officer Gates recalled that officials and media visited the school the following day.

Although Linda and Officer Gates place the arrival of politicians and media at different points in time, Aurora school staff share similar views on how outsiders influenced the school environment and staff efforts to ensure students’ safety and the security of the school grounds. Linda was unsure why so many people came to Aurora or how they learned about the incident. She thought at the time, “I don’t understand, you know, what it is that this incident is calling for the mayor and city council to come down to my campus. My board member was here. Everyone got a phone call, and everybody showed up. And they were like, ‘we’re supporting you.’” Linda wondered, “Supporting me in what? You’re actually taking away the time that I’m supposed to be in the lunchroom, with students.” In other words, Linda recalled having to also handle the presence of additional people at Aurora as a “nuisance.” Unbeknownst to the principal, Emmanuel, the community organizer, revealed in his interview that he called the mayor and city council to draw attention to the fact that ICE activity was occurring near school property. Emmanuel explained his thought was, “Let’s go to the mayor, let’s call everybody.” It is unclear whether Emmanuel called the media as well, but he believed that by spreading knowledge of the situation, “when everybody came over here [sic], they start protecting the school.”
As I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter, the then-mayor of the city used the opportunity of ICE activity near Aurora to make political statements to the media about the incident. The mayor called ICE activity near public school property “the ugly side of government,” “inappropriate,” and “unnecessary,” and stressed that children are in school to be educated and not harassed (Martinez, 2008). Linda and the principal of the school neighboring Aurora agreed to thank the mayor, etcetera, but also tried to show that they were very busy trying to make their respective campuses secure. Linda’s mother, who was in the front office keeping track of which adults were picking up students, later informed Linda that the mayor and other city officials waited for Linda for awhile and then left. Interestingly, Linda did not bring up the school board member’s role on the day of this event. Rather, she only talked about school board involvement when the school later hosted a meeting for community members to meet with immigration lawyers to learn their legal rights if confronted with immigration enforcement.

As a result of the increased activity at Aurora, Linda was concerned for people’s safety. Again, she asked her father to help keep people off the campus by placing him “at the front gate as security officer….Because there were so many people, and I didn’t want, I didn’t want media here on campus just everywhere.” Officer Gates stated his impression of the day was one of “chaos” with a “media circus,” and he struggled to keep members of the media from entering the school. He said that other school staff helped him prevent people from getting into Aurora. On the one hand, he expressed he specifically had a problem “with a few of the reporters trying to get through. You know, trying to interview the kids and stuff like that.” Notably, Officer Gates was the sole study participant to reveal that adults in the school—presumably parents—actually attempted to let media
come inside the school, which made his job more difficult. He reported, “I’m sitting there trying to help them [people inside the school] and protect the kids and make sure these reporters ain’t bombarding our school, and I got people opening up doors all over the place; they just let reporters sneak in, you know.” Linda also relayed her knowledge that media got into the school at some point, but did not report members of the media trying to either talk to students or converse with Aurora parents.

6. The school environment quickly returns to normal the day following ICE’s presence near the school. Aurora then hosts a meeting for community members to meet with immigration lawyers. Representatives from ICE attend the meeting.

All of the research participants agreed that the school environment, reactions, and fears related to immigration enforcement quickly died down. Tom described Aurora’s return to normalcy as “calm after the storm,” and Jill imagined there was “still a sense of unrest” at the school but had no specific memory of a longer-term aftermath. Felicia remarked that after helping students process what happened, the school had little choice but to return to a semblance of normalcy. Felicia stated one of the reasons the school had to return to its normal operations was due to pressure on the school to get back to student standardized testing, which had started just prior to the ICE incident. She said, “I’m sure kids were worried. I’m sure kids had a hard time sleeping, and then they had to come back the next day and do standardized testing. So it’s awful, you know.” Linda confirmed in a newsletter sent to parents that Aurora was indeed in a testing period at the time of the ICE incident. Iris, on the other hand, attributed the school’s return to a regular school day to her students’ resiliency combined with her own efforts to have her classroom operate in its usual fashion. Iris believed children in her classroom “were stressed out for a little
while. But I just kept it business as usual. Kids are incredibly resilient. These kids especially are incredibly resilient.”

Linda spent the next few days clarifying for community members what had happened. She reiterated that ICE did not come onto Aurora’s campus, particularly as “It [the ICE incident] was still very much a part of people’s fears.” She took at least two concrete actions to clarify what happened and alleviate fear. First, she sent a newsletter to Aurora families acknowledging that school parents reported seeing ICE near school, and that this was “upsetting and confusing for some families.” She then outlined the actions she, Aurora staff, and parents took, such as calling families and keeping children safe, and reassuring families that immigration cannot come onto school grounds.

Linda and Emmanuel also arranged for community members to meet with immigration lawyers in an “impromptu workshop,” in Linda’s words, in the Aurora school cafeteria. Notably, Linda stated that the school board member assigned to the district in which Aurora is located initially did not support the follow up meeting between the community and immigration lawyers. After Linda restated her case to the board member and reminded the board member that “these are your constituents here,” the board member told Linda, “ok, if you want to do it that way, that’s fine.” Linda contacted her brother, a lawyer, who spoke to colleagues who practice immigration law. The immigration lawyers agreed to come to Aurora to explain immigration law and people’s rights are in a situation where they are vulnerable to immigration law enforcement.

Emmanuel stated several immigration organizations and some Catholic charities were present at the meeting, which he remembered lasting between four and five hours.
Emmanuel helped coordinate the Catholic churches’ presence. It is unclear whether families in the community contacted their churches for advice or help after hearing reports about ICE in the neighborhood, prompting church involvement, or whether Emmanuel invited church representatives to the meeting to become better informed about their undocumented parishioners’ legal rights.

At the meeting, Linda remembered the lawyers “talked to people [and] offered their services, and then families stayed and got the help that they needed.” The meeting was held at the start of the day, probably on a weekday as students were in classrooms during the meeting. The meeting was very well attended. According to Linda, “The room was packed. It was like…even people standing on the sides.” Both Emmanuel and Linda indicated that families showed they felt some relief after attending the workshop to gain information about what to do if approached by ICE.

7. **ICE follows up with the school to clarify the event but simultaneously expresses that the school should have known ICE was conducting an operation in the area.**

Linda stated that representatives from ICE attended the meeting, at least “for a little bit.” Emmanuel, on the other hand, claimed that ICE offered to meet with the community and hold a workshop of their own, but the ICE’s overtures toward the community were summarily rejected. In Emmanuel’s words, immigrants and undocumented people responded “Hell no” to the offer, and Emmanuel explained to ICE that, “For the community, you are like a terrorist,” and that the community perceives ICE as “very scary.”

Linda also had a phone call with ICE in the days following ICE activity near the school, a call that Linda remembers Emmanuel might have arranged. In the conversation,
the ICE agent stated to Linda that activity near Aurora was unintentional. ICE never planned to come onto the school’s campus, and ICE “can’t just pick up random people.” The ICE agent explained they were looking for two specific people who had broken the law and were “repeat offenders.” The agent further articulated that ICE was not conducting an immigration raid. Prior to the incident at Aurora, and in their retelling of the 2008 event four years later, Linda and Felicia recalled hearing of increased activity in the local neighborhood and also recounted they believed ICE had specifically conducted a raid at a nearby factory and other raids. The most salient aspect of Linda’s conversation with ICE, however, was that the ICE agent indicated that Linda could simply have called ICE to learn of their activities to learn how it would potentially affect the school. Linda’s response to this statement was disbelief, and she likened it to being chastised. She said, “I just though it was funny that they said ‘you should have called us, we could have clarified all of this for you. Maybe, ok. ‘I guess in the moment I didn’t think to call you guys.’ And it kind of felt like a little bit of a scolding after that. Like ‘Oh, you’re being so silly.” Linda stated that ICE’s explanation lacked apologetic elements, saying, “there was no ‘we did not intend to scare people at the school or in the community.’” Instead, Linda said,

“The one thing that made me laugh was ‘You should have called us.’ I was like, ‘You can just pick up the phone and call ICE? And then I would get somebody on the phone that would just tell me, Oh, we’re just there in the neighborhood to pick up some person that broke the law, not there to just do a raid.’ Like you would actually tell me this information?” The person was like ‘Yes, we would tell you.’ It’s just like, ‘That’s strange.’
But I remember like laughing at that, like ‘Oh you can just call us, we could have clarified all of this for you.’ It’s, like, really? Yeah.”

With the sequence of events, participant decisions, political actors’ involvement in the situation and ICE’s response to the school about the incident, the reader now has context in which to place the research findings. As stated earlier, this chapter closes below with an overview of the some of the most relevant—and unanticipated—research findings. In chapters six, seven, and eight, I use evidence to show in greater detail how I derived the findings for each research question posed in this study.

**Summary of the Research Findings**

As I anticipated, the study of how Aurora school staff responded to and acted upon reports of ICE activity near the school grounds demonstrated that school grounds are more than simply symbolic ground for the immigration debate. The study findings reveal several unexpected surprises. Most surprising, Aurora’s school principal, Linda, had a lot of autonomy to make decisions about how to handle reports of ICE activity near school property. That the school principal had autonomy was surprising given the fact the school district explicitly reaffirmed its commitment to educating all children, including undocumented students, several months prior to ICE coming near campus. Moreover, Aurora is located in a city that designated itself a “City of Refuge” and as a “sanctuary city”—and yet, despite policies and political statements from presumably powerful political figures, the principal of Aurora arguably had the most power to decide what to do in a situation where federal immigration enforcement challenged the school’s day-to-day operations. As I exemplify with evidence in the next chapter, allowing the principal a
wide berth to make decisions raises the question as city and district support to back their policies regarding undocumented immigrants. However, even though Linda acted as a “street level bureaucrat” (Shulman, 1983), her actions did align with the principles of district policy. Because her actions were consistent with district policy and she has a good relationship with the district based on past interactions, it is uncertain whether Linda would have retained autonomy in her decision making had the district perceived Linda demonstrates poor judgment, would not act in the best interests of her school and students, or would contradict district policy.

A second surprising finding was that the data did not show that school staff perceived they were confronted with a legal or ethical dilemma in responding to reports of ICE activity near school property in their decision making. Overwhelmingly, participants demonstrated little to no policy knowledge, which meant that they could not perceive a context where legal, district, or school policies would conflict with each other. Participants had little to no knowledge of legislative decisions such as that of Plyler (1982), which guarantees undocumented children the right to a free, public K-12 education. Further, participants were largely unaware of both district policies related to issues affecting education for undocumented children or position on immigration enforcement near a school. Rather, participants demonstrated general awareness they could not take a student’s legal status into consideration in the classroom, meaning a teacher expected to treat the student the same way as any other student with either documented or U.S.-citizen status. In the event ICE comes near Aurora again, participants were unsure whether there are school policies in place with instructions about how the school would respond.
Further, in the context of ICE activity near the school, participants overwhelmingly perceived that their foremost obligation was to keep schoolchildren safe, and they were able to accomplish this in 2008. Participants expressed that their role at the school is to educate students and not be concerned with a student’s legal status. The implication of participants’ thoughts on their responsibilities and obligations is that they did not perceive they were placed in an ethical dilemma when ICE came close to Aurora. Participants stated that they would trust Aurora’s principal, Linda, and her judgment to make decisions should ICE come near the school again—which participants believed is likely as ICE still operates within the city. Participants’ trust in Linda arguably shielded participants from sensing either a legal or ethical dilemma. Participants made assumptions that school would follow the same procedures it used in 2008, even though Linda stated she did not think it would be necessary for the school to take the same steps. Linda said she might follow a different procedure if she learned ICE activity was taking place close to the school, because ICE assured her in the days following the 2008 incident they were not targeting the school. Further, Linda indicated she was confident her community members had greater awareness of their rights if confronted by immigration enforcement. In the next chapter I explicate these research findings and others with evidence.
Chapter 6—MAKING SENSE OF LAW, POLICIES, AND MESSAGES

Introduction

In the first research question, I inquired how educators make sense of laws, messages or policies about undocumented students when these laws or policies conflict with each other. I asked

1. How do educators who work with undocumented students make sense of laws or messages regarding ICE and school policy toward undocumented students when these laws, messages, or policies conflict with one another?

Again, the assumptions underlying this research question were that educators abide by professional codes and standards and personal codes of behavior as well as legal rulings like Plyler (1982) to educate undocumented students. However, by law, educators must also comply and cooperate with ICE if ICE comes on or near school property. Therefore, educators’ obligations potentially compete with each other, and an educator will need to make sense and potentially reconcile these conflicting policies, laws, or messages. How, then, did research participants make sense of the overall policy structures?

Essentially, research participants revealed they perceived no conflict among the different laws, policies, or messages related to undocumented students or possible interaction with ICE. Instead, participants relied on their professional and personal codes of ethics in making decisions about how to respond to ICE activity, which I discuss later in chapter eight. In this chapter, I show from the data that the key reason that participants
did not sense a conflict in policies or messages is that, in large part, participants either
directly stated that they had no legal, district, or school policy awareness or showed that
their knowledge of policies were vague or incorrect. One participant, Luz, who was not
employed at Aurora in 2008, was the only participant to explicitly show direct knowledge
of the *Plyler* ruling, for example. Some participants indicated they desired to know more
about certain policies. The few participants who did have some policy knowledge either
had extra exposure to or had pursued learning about immigration policy. Key findings in
this chapter include

1. School staff demonstrated little to no individual or collective legal
   awareness as it relates to undocumented students’ educational rights or
   policies related to ICE activity on or near the school’s campus.

2. School staff demonstrated little to no individual or collective knowledge
   of district or school polices related to ICE activity near the school’s
   campus.

3. Although some school staff expressed desire or curiosity for more school
   policy knowledge related to how the school would respond to future ICE
   activity, no participants actively sought policy knowledge. Instead,
   participants were more concerned to minimize the effects of local
   neighborhood violence on students and the school environment.

There are several explanations possible as to why participants demonstrated little policy
awareness at the federal, district, and school levels as it relates to protecting
undocumented students’ educational rights. First, in the context of ICE activity near
school property, participants viewed it as their primary responsibility to protect all
children and look after students’ physical and mental well being, irrespective of a students’ legal status. Second, participants perceived that the purpose of the school is to educate any child who walks through the school doors, which was based on some knowledge of district policy combined with personal codes of ethics. Participants expressed that they perceived their responsibilities are to educate students, not help enforce immigration law. Third, 2008, the school went to lockdown mode after hearing reports of ICE vans in the neighborhood. The lockdown procedure was a procedure familiar to participants in situations where it is unclear if students’ safety is in jeopardy. Participants did not know how close ICE would come to the school, and thus going into lockdown mode was a safe, tried-and-true response for them. Fourth, and relatedly, the principal, Linda, issued the call for lockdown mode, and thus she most likely acted as a buffer for participants to focus on children’s safety as opposed to participants questioning whether there were other, specific policies to guide their actions. Fifth, participants did not express explicit awareness that the Plyler ruling guarantees undocumented students’ educational rights. However, it is possible that the city and community in which Aurora is located each have such a strong, pro-immigrant stance and clearly support undocumented immigrants’ access to social services, and staff did not perceive they would have to react to policies, or conceive that the actions of ICE could inhibit undocumented students’ educational access. In this chapter I explicate participants’ levels of policy awareness and explore how and why participants demonstrated minimal policy knowledge. I also examine how staff policy awareness influenced their sensemaking of ICE activity near school property in 2008 and their decisions about how to respond.
Legal Policy Awareness

Minimal to No Awareness of Undocumented Students’ Educational Rights

When responding to questions about their thoughts and actions upon learning that ICE activity was taking place within several blocks of Aurora’s campus, no participants—with the exception of the principal and a teacher not employed at the school in 2008—stated that immigration enforcement near school property jeopardizes or violates undocumented students’ legal educational rights. Participants did not challenge the legality or ethics of ICE activity near Aurora by citing the 1982 Supreme Court ruling *Plyler v. Doe*, which guarantees all students a free, public education regardless of their legal status. Ultimately, participants did not display they had a legal framework on which to draw to inform their sensemaking to question or confront the issues posed by ICE activity near the campus. Instead, participants relied largely on their personal codes of ethics, which included the belief that all children have a right to education, and their beliefs that they are at the school to educate students and not enforce immigration law. Participants further acted in line with professional codes of ethics—which aligned with their own personal ethical codes—to try and keep children from being harmed.

Does ICE Activity Circumvent *Plyler v. Doe*?

Although participants did not cite *Plyler* (1982), some participants like Tom, an intervention specialist, and Sandra, a 5th grade teacher, implicitly suggested that ICE activity could circumvent *Plyler* by causing parents to try to take their children out school for fear of ICE. Tom claimed, “…word [of ICE] spread through the community really quickly. And people were just showing up in droves, you know, sporadically throughout
the day wanting to yank their child out of school.” Sandra expressed a similar perspective, saying “You know, a lot of parents wanted to come and get their kids and leave. Leave and hide.” Rosa, who currently acts as Aurora’s community liaison but who served as the school’s attendance secretary in 2008 said, “I did have a lot of parents tell me they weren’t bringing their kids to school, because immigration was in such-and-such an area. They were afraid they would get stopped or they would come into their houses, so they were not bringing their kids to school.” Yet, school staff did not explicitly relate that undocumented students’ legal right to educational access was threatened as a consequence of ICE activity. Related, therefore, participants did not specifically exhibit the ethic of justice, focusing on rights and law, in their sensemaking of the situation.

Access to Education and a Better Life are Human Rights and is Practical

Rather than arguing that ICE activity could interfere with the Plyler ruling, participants, in describing their views on education for undocumented students, referred most commonly back to their personal beliefs—personal codes of ethics—that education is a universal human right. Participants stated that not only is education a human right at the K-12 level, but it is also a person’s right to have equal access to postsecondary education—including education for undocumented immigrants. Participants appeared to speak freely on this topic for a number of reasons. First, many of the participants had personal histories of immigration in their families, and therefore had firsthand knowledge of and were sympathetic to the struggles undocumented immigrants go through to obtain steady jobs that provide enough financial support to cover families’ basic needs. Other participants at Aurora interacted with undocumented families on a professional basis and
learned how undocumented families struggle economically and occupation ally, and have witnessed the impact those struggles can have on students. Therefore, participants believed that educational access is critical so people have enough to eat and a place to live, and so that society does not have to incur other social costs like increased violence, gang activity, and incarcerations in result of an uneducated population with few occupational prospects.

Second, the culture of the school lent itself to participants supporting undocumented families and children, and therefore participants’ willingness to speak about the right of every child to have access to education. Arguably, the school culture at Aurora is one that Linda’s leadership has helped create. Under Linda’s leadership, the school helps connect the community to social services like Medi-Cal and takes other steps to help undocumented immigrants such as translating documents from English into Spanish. Third, several participants stated that Linda puts trust in her staff and teachers, and that they have a good relationship with her. That participants perceive a good, close relationship with the principal means that participants probably had few concerns about expressing their candid views on the topic of education for undocumented students.

Felicia, a school resource specialist, explained her position on education for undocumented people, saying, “I think they should be educated as any other kid. I just don’t see, I just don’t see like why not? It’s just, ‘teach them’… I just don’t see any restrictions, even…restrictions going into a 4-year university. I just think kids have a right to learn, you know? If we want them to succeed, we’ve got to push them. Yeah. We shouldn’t close the door on any kid. Ever.” Felicia did not make a connection though, between her views on undocumented students’ access to education and the idea that the
enforcement of immigration law could affect the school’s ability to keep their doors open to serve students of varying legal status. Neither did she link her perspective to the concept that ICE could influence whether undocumented students would even choose or be able to come through the school doors. In addition, Felicia did not indicate awareness that federal law intends to protect these students’ rights to an education.

Other participants like Rosa, the community liaison, justified and made sense of her position on education for undocumented students by couching it in her personal belief that everyone has a right to pursue a better life. Having access to educational opportunities is the main path to secure a better life. Rosa said, “I just think they have a right to learn as much as anybody else who’s documented or undocumented.” Rosa believes undocumented people have educational rights “because they came from their countries to get a better opportunity. [To] live better. I think in their countries they wouldn’t have the same opportunities.” Emmanuel, too, expressed a similar belief. Olivia, a former ESL teacher at Aurora concurred, stating, “I believe that education is the pathway to good jobs and feeling like you have a meaningful life. I think education is so key, and yet we deny it.”

The majority of research participants, including Javier, Felicia, Linda, Mariposa, Luz, Sandra, and Olivia, as might be expected, expressed empathy toward undocumented children, who have no control over their legal status. When asked about her views on education for undocumented children, Olivia responded, “A lot of young people came when they were two or three years old. They don’t really know their homeland. They grew up here sort of as, quote unquote, American citizens in a way. And now that they’re trying to move forward with their lives, they can’t.” Participants made sense of education
for undocumented students by stating that they considered ensuring these children an education is in the best interests of the child.

In the quote in the preceding paragraph, Olivia took the position that undocumented children have a right to education, because they are acculturated to the U.S. and indistinguishable from American citizens. Her sensemaking did not involve calling for more policy knowledge. Olivia in particular was skeptical of U.S. immigration policy and distrusted how the government enforces the law against undocumented immigrants. In response, she called for removing blame from children for their undocumented status and for undocumented children to be treated like any other child. Like other participants, Olivia suggested that equal treatment for children is just and valuable, even though she did not have specific knowledge of the Plyler ruling. Olivia also made sense of the importance of access to education in that education opens paths to a more meaningful life—education leads to a better life. Sandra also hinted that her perception is tied to an ethic of justice by pushing the idea that the U.S. has a history as a nation of immigrants. Sandra believed that closing the school doors to undocumented immigrant children now, in light of U.S. history, is unjust.

“I do think education is for all. It doesn’t matter. Because the United States was …all those Europeans came, right? They moved here to the United States. They made schools, and they got educated. We have not only Mexicans, but the United States is like a melting pot of people from everywhere. So I do education for everyone. I’m pro-education. Doesn’t matter if you have papers or not, because it’s not their [the children’s] fault. They’re children.”
In this quote, Sandra criticized denying undocumented children education, saying it unfairly punishes them based on their legal status. Olivia and Sandra both exhibit the ethic of critique in challenging the fairness of singling out undocumented children (particularly Mexicans, in Sandra’s case), and argue that long-held national values (e.g. welcoming immigrants) are being applied differently for this population, a population that is marginalized with little power or voice. Participants believed and cared deeply that all children have the right to education in spite of their lack of specific policy knowledge related to undocumented students’ legal rights.

Olivia also linked denying students education to elevated levels of frustration and social consequences like gang activity, saying that without education, “They’re stymied. When you look at why are there so many Latino gang members….” Olivia’s connection between an uneducated or minimally education population its negative consequences for society also resonated with Iris, a 3rd grade teacher. For Iris, keeping access to education for all children is a pragmatic response. A more educated population is desirable as it benefits her personally and it also benefits society. Iris exclaimed part of her drive to educate all students regardless of legal status was to help prevent social ills. She said, “I would rather have an informed group of people, regardless of where they’re from. I don’t need…if these kids weren’t getting an education, what are they gonna do? They’re gonna end up on the streets, it’s going to increase crime, it’s going to perpetuate this downward spiral. My job is to stop that and to show that they have opportunities as people, regardless of where you’re from.”
Sandra, too, pointed out that society would eventually bear costs for not providing education for undocumented students, saying, “If we don’t educate them now, then in the future, we are going to have to provide for them.” Both Iris and Sandra demonstrated the ethic of justice and a utilitarian philosophy by questioning the long-term impact that denying education to a particular population could have on society.

Olivia, Iris, and Sandra question and critique limited education, saying it will impact societal conditions. They argue that a population that is already marginalized will become even more marginalized. Iris, in the quote above, as well as Sandra, imply that they are not only critical of limiting education for undocumented students, but that they are willing to take action to make a difference. These participants exhibit the ethic of critique, which challenges educators not only to question unfair practices and the uneven application of laws, but to also act to emancipate and empower marginalized people.

**Explicit or Some Legal Policy Awareness**

Notably, a 2nd grade teacher, Luz, and Linda, the principal, were the only participants to suggest specific exposure to legal policies regarding undocumented students’ educational access. Luz, who was not employed at Aurora in 2008 when ICE came near the school, demonstrated knowledge of *Plyler* (1982) policy awareness.

“I remember when I was in that law school class that came up because there was a law, the case law about, you know, one of the states some years back, many years back, they wanted to exclude immigrant children because it’s a public service and they don’t pay taxes, and all the same arguments you still hear. But the arguments against doing that was if you
do that you’re going to create a whole class of people who are uneducated and will just be like a different class…”

Luz learned about national and state immigration policies while completing a Master’s thesis in journalism and was very critical of U.S. foreign policy in Latin America. In the course of her studies, Luz observed court hearings where the court was deciding whether or not to deport undocumented people and she also interviewed undocumented children who came to the U.S. unaccompanied by an adult. Her background knowledge and curiosity about ICE activity near Aurora in 2008 is what led her to participate in the research study. Luz was not working at Aurora when reports of ICE near school property came out, but her educational background and experience enabled her to relate that she has knowledge that undocumented children have legal rights to an education. She said, “I think they have the same right as any other student in this state. The law says they do…” Luz’ knowledge raises the question as to whether she would find a way to use her legal knowledge if ICE activity were to recur near the school again. As I show later, though, like nearly all other research participants, Luz was unaware of school policies about handling reports of ICE.

Like all other research participants, Linda never directly named the Plyler ruling or suggested that ICE activity near Aurora’s campus might interfere with undocumented students’ educational rights. She did, however, make sense of her views on these students’ rights based on more than personal opinion, emotions like empathy, or from a sense of social justice and fairness. One reason for this difference between Linda’s policy knowledge and that of her staff was that Linda received some training about education for undocumented students in a principal leadership course. So, even though she did not state
"Plyler by name, Linda had increased exposure to (or reminding of) educational codes and education law because of her professional role.

“I think that was where we learned that. Because I didn’t know much about education and law and just like ed codes and stuff. And it might have even been in that class that we went through some of that legislation. And you know, it’s not something that I think of like, ‘Oh, you’re an undocumented student coming through our school’ it’s just like, ‘whoever’s here are the kids that we’re supposed to support and make sure get a quality education.’”"

Linda also recalled during her interview that at some point she had learned about California legislation regarding undocumented students. Though her memory about legislation was vague and most likely concerned undocumented students’ access to higher education, Linda still had a legal framework she could draw on to discuss undocumented students’ educational rights and to act out the ethic of justice. In addition, Linda presumably has more frequent contact with the school district due to her role as school principal and thus could potentially be reminded that schools in the district have a legal obligation to serve undocumented children, not just an ethical or moral obligation. Her contact with the district could have overshadowed other participants’ explicit or implicit awareness of the ethic of justice as embodied in Plyler (1982).

The extent of one other participant’s awareness of federal law like Plyler or California state legislation related to undocumented students’ educational access remains unclear. The community organizer, Emmanuel, spoke in general terms about federal policy, suggesting that federal law prohibits ICE from “approaching close to schools.”
Emmanuel helped organize the Aurora community workshop with immigration lawyers, so he presumably gained knowledge in that training session. Emmanuel has also stayed active in the city’s immigrant community, and it is likely that through his personal interactions with undocumented immigrants that he recognizes and understands struggles associated with legal status.

Tom, the school intervention specialist, Jill, the school counselor, Rosa, and Felicia all revealed knowledge of issues concerning visas for undocumented families. They also expressed some awareness and impressions of U.S. immigration policy, as did Olivia, who stated U.S. immigration policy is “screwed up.” However, none of these participants specifically related national immigration policy or the complex way the country issues visas to immigrants back to the topic of undocumented students’ education.

No participants other than Linda and Emmanuel claimed to have attended the immigration workshop hosted at the school in the days following the incident with ICE. Linda was at the workshop for a small amount of time, though Emmanuel suggested he stayed for the entire four to five hours. Most likely it was the timing of the workshop that accounts for the lack of staff attending this workshop, as Linda implied the workshop was held on a school day. That teachers and other school staff were not able to attend this workshop along with Aurora families and community members means that there was a missed opportunity, then, for school staff to gain explicit policy knowledge.
District and School Policy

District and School Policies Related to Undocumented Students

Similar to research participants’ lack of legal policy awareness regarding education for undocumented children, participants also had minimal knowledge of district and school policies. As noted earlier, participants believed that district and school policies obliged them to educate all students at the school, without consideration for a students’ legal status. Throughout the course of their interviews, research participants expressed they knew they could not take undocumented students’ legal status into account when providing them with education. However, the findings did not show specific circumstances had caused them to think about situations that might inhibit them from educating undocumented students, and thus district or policy knowledge was not salient for them. Participants had never needed to know district or school policies related to protecting undocumented students’ educational rights, because teachers had always been able to fulfill their professional and personal obligations, and participants did not specifically refer to policies as a foundation for their actions. As noted earlier, participants reasoned there are practical explanations for why all students should have access to education (e.g. everyone deserves the chance at a better life), and that children cannot be denied education because they have no control over their legal status. Yet, participants did not relate that their opinions and or actions followed through on district or school policy.

Lastly, there was no evidence to show that Linda, the school principal, intentionally buffered staff and teachers from more explicit district or school-level policy knowledge related to protecting undocumented students’ educational rights. The main
reason Linda could not buffer staff on this issue is that she was also unaware that the school board had passed a resolution months prior to ICE activity stating the district feared that ICE activity close to schools circumvents undocumented students’ educational rights under *Plyler*. She stated that she does not always know all of the school board’s resolutions. Further, prior to 2008, Linda had never had to think through how reports of ICE activity in the school’s vicinity might affect the school, students, and community. Linda, like the other participants, was only certain that she was legally obligated to educate all students enrolled at Aurora.

After the incident with ICE in 2008, Linda tried to create awareness in school staff about school policies concerning undocumented students’ educational rights by sending an email to her staff about how the school responded to ICE activity. However, participants later indicated in their interviews that they did not know about school policies and made assumptions about those policies or indicated they would rely on Linda to make decisions if ICE came near school property again. It remains unclear why participants were unaware of district policies related to protecting undocumented students’ educational rights, and whether there was a breakdown in communication between the district and school or between school leadership and school staff. The following sections provide evidence about participants’ levels of awareness about undocumented students’ educational rights and reasons for their levels of policy awareness. This study proposes that districts, school leadership and school staff, will all need to take increased responsibility to learn about and communicate with each other about federal, state, and school district policies concerning undocumented students and the effects that immigration policy and ICE activity can have on schools.
**District Policies**

In conversation, school staff did not bring up the school district unless they were specifically asked about either their impressions of the district or the relationship between the district and the school. The only participant, other than Linda, who responded that she had some knowledge about school district policies regarding undocumented students, was Iris. However, her knowledge of district policy was not fully accurate. She suggested, “you are supposed to acknowledge the status, but at school we’re just told to just let it go.” In other words, Iris recognized that as a teacher she was responsible to educate any student without a concern for the student’s legal status—but she simultaneously indicated that the school is supposed to actively know the legal status of its population.

Participants who did speak about the district gave the impression that the school and staff’s connection to the district is not a close one, but this kind of relationship is not problematic. Participants were more focused on what was happening at the school level than district-wide, as is likely typical behavior in large school districts. In this sense, participants were more concentrated on the academic and personal lives of their students and local community than what was happening more broadly throughout the district. School staff showed more concern about issues directly affecting their students back in 2008 and four years after the ICE incident (e.g. making sure students had enough food to eat). Rather than showing interest in or knowledge of district or school policy, participants’ sensemaking of the issues affecting the school context was guided by thoughts and actions that embody an ethic of care. Participants often expressed concern and care for students’ physical and mental well being. For example, school staff talked
about making visits to students’ homes at the beginning of the school year. After seeing the living conditions of some students, a teacher might then provide a student with an extra snack or allow a student to lay down for a small nap before re-joining her class in academic work.

In Felicia and Iris’ minds, the district is kept at arm’s length, to be called upon if needed—and this might be a two-way street. Felicia, a resource specialist at Aurora, implied that district support is not always trustworthy. School staff tended to rely on each other first rather than going to the district to resolve issues, and they seemed content to keep it that way. Speaking about the district, Felicia said,

“I just feel like they’re [the district] very distant. I really love working here. I’m happy here. But I think in terms of the relationship with the district it gets kind of murky. I guess I’ve learned to stand on my own to feet. I try not to depend on them for too much. I don’t really have many interactions with district personnel. I do have an area supervisor, but I just call him when I need to….He’s good, he calls me. But I just really, I handle my own stuff here, and if I need help, I call.”

Iris directly expressed an adversarial relationship with the district, stating

“I think though as teachers, if we weren’t so, in a way, disrespected by the school district [in terms of] monetary compensation. We haven’t been paid…We haven’t had a raise in basically over ten years. It’s a little frustrating. But we keep being asked to do more and more stuff, and there’s no necessarily increase. So, it makes me wonder why I continue to do this…so there must be something that keeps me here. It’s the kids.”
Mariposa, the bilingual office clerk, also said that she has little contact with the district, though she did not offer a reason why or speculate about having minimal contact with them. When asked about her interactions and contact with the district, she said, “With the district? I speak to certain people just depending on like, if it’s people that are in charge with the sub system. Just over the phone. That’s it. Not really.” For the few school staff who did speak about the relationship with the district, it could be argued that school staff dispositions toward the school could indirectly affect their awareness of district policy. As school staff, it may not be expected that staff have reason to frequently communicate with the district, but attitudes could potentially influence the attention a staff person pays to district statements, like the board resolution that was previously mentioned. In addition, as ICE activity near Aurora has not recurred, it is possible the district has not had to re-issue statements or send reminders to school related to making sure schools accept children of varying legal status.

Another possible reason for participants’ level of district policy awareness is that Linda may serve as a gatekeeper for the kind of district policies and messages school staff receive, choosing the ones she believes are most salient. As principal, Linda has more cause to contact district departments (e.g. seeking budget help or help with personnel matters). Linda, as expected, has awareness of district policies and said she has a lot of experience working with them. Though she has finds some departments more helpful than others, Linda explained she can normally find someone to answer her questions. As noted in an earlier section, she recognizes district policy in terms of accepting students regardless of legal status into the school. However, Linda said she is not always cognizant of board resolutions. Linda was not sure she knew prior to the
situation with ICE in 2008 that the board made statements that district schools would serve undocumented children, or that she knew they passed a resolution following ICE activity in the district. She stated,

“I don’t always know the board resolutions that come up in board meetings. We didn’t get any emails about all the stuff that was decided. But I remember getting it after? Or I don’t know if it was a meeting after that. The way I’m thinking it happened is we had a number of incidents around schools. We were calling for help. It’s like, what do we do? And then the board got wind of it and then said, ‘this is how were’ going to handle it’ and then made this board resolution. That’s how I’m thinking about it logically, but I don’t know if it existed before the incidents actually happened.”

Again, knowledge of district policies related to education for undocumented students or future incidents with ICE have not been pressing on the minds of Aurora participants. Even Linda described with uncertainty what the board stated district policy is about ICE activity near school. As noted earlier, the board passed a resolution in January 2008 after an incident where ICE escorted a mother onto school grounds the prior year. Reports of ICE activity near Aurora came into the school in the spring of 2008. Therefore the resolution to which Linda likely refers was passed prior to her having to make sense of and decide how she and Aurora staff would respond to the situation with ICE. Linda did, however, accurately recall that incidents concerning ICE activity sparked the district to take action. Notably, Linda uses the pronoun “we” to tie her school’s experience with ICE to the experiences of other schools in the district, suggesting that ICE activity
created a shared experience—and perhaps shared/collective sensemaking among principals that prompted district attention and consequent action.

Linda’s fuzzy recollection of the timing of the district issuing policy, though, is unsurprising given that several years have passed since the incident, and Linda has not had to revisit district policy about ICE-related school responses. Though Linda may influence the messages her staff receive about district policy, it seems unlikely she has seen further need to communicate policies to her staff about undocumented students or handling reports of ICE. With minimal district policy awareness at the administrative and staff levels at Aurora, participants consequently were unable to sense any policy conflict.

School Policies/Policies Related to ICE

When asked about school-level policies related to education for undocumented students and policies about how the school would respond to another occurrence of ICE activity, participants stated they did not know if school policies were in place. Therefore, participants could not sense a conflict among policies. Again, while participants like Iris and Sandra knew they could not let a students’ legal status affect whom they educated, they did not identify specific national, district, or school policies. The same was true for participants’ knowledge of school procedures should reports of ICE activity near Aurora’s campus happen again. Instead, participants made assumptions about what the school would do or stated they would rely on the principal to make decisions.

Relying on Assumptions for Future Behavior on Past Decisions and Procedures
Instead of referring to school procedures, participants assumed they and the school would take the same course of action they had in 2008 if ICE activity reoccurred close to Aurora. That participants assumed they would make the same decisions and follow the same procedures in a second incident with ICE is consistent with the sensemaking literature, which theorizes that a person’s previous experiences, expectations, and knowledge influence sensemaking of an event (Weick, 1995). Further, participants did not reflect that the outcomes of their decisions or Linda’s decisions related to ICE in 2008 were poor. Therefore, participants would see little reason to make alternative decisions if a similar situation were to happen again. Collectively and individually, participants had no cause to consider making alternative decisions (Weick, 1995) relative to future ICE activity. For example, when asked if she knew what the school would do if another ICE operation took place near Aurora, Iris responded, “…it would be a lockdown situation. We wouldn’t let anybody leave.” Luz, who was not employed at Aurora in 2008, also assumed the school would go into a lockdown situation. She said,

“We’ve had talks about lockdowns, but it’s always in the context of something violent. Potential violence. But I imagine that that’s what they [administrators] would do. It would be a lockdown situation if that happened. No one’s talked to us about an immigration-specific incident or anything like that, in the area.”

Luz made sense of a potential incident with ICE by drawing on her preexisting knowledge of previous school responses to situations that created fear for the safety of children or the school environment. Luz’ comment also revealed that school policies
about responding to ICE have either not been communicated or have been communicated in a way that participants remember. Rosa, the community liaison, said she was not informed about future school procedures. Paz, the school librarian also claimed to not know school policy related to ICE. When she was asked if she would know what to do, Sandra, a 5th grade teacher, said, “No, I don’t know anything about what to do. But if they come close, I just keep my kids inside the classroom.” In other words, Sandra did not have explicit school policy awareness and also suggested she would act as though the school should go into lockdown mode. Felicia, the resource specialist, made a similar statement, responding, “just that day, we kind of just follow the lockdown policy.” Felicia remembers the school going into lockdown in 2008 (e.g. “just that day”) and made sense of her previous experience to inform her beliefs concerning future school action (“we kind of just follow the lockdown policy”).

Though not all participants explicitly declared the school would go into lockdown mode, all participants believe that the school is safe zone for children. Therefore, it is likely that if staff perceived that ICE activity caused students to fear in the past, and their instinct was to protect the students by keeping them inside the school and inside the classroom, they would take the same course of action. As Officer Gates sees it, his role is to “Protect and love all the kids. I know my job.” Officer Gates’ primary job, and the policy he would follow, is to secure the campus.

That school staff made assumptions that the school would automatically go into lockdown mode is particularly notable as Linda is unsure a lockdown would be necessary if she again learned of ICE near the school campus. Linda explained that, first, she calls for the school to go into a lockdown when she hears something violent may be happening
in the neighborhood. Second, she decided in 2008 to help host a workshop for community members to meet with immigration lawyers to learn their rights if confronted by ICE. Linda stated, “I don’t think we would handle that the same way I don’t know if we would need to do that [follow similar procedures] anymore given what we know now. Like parents do have rights, and what they can say and do if anything is happening.” Therefore, in a future incident, she may not decide to secure the school grounds (with the help of staff like Officer Gates) with families inside or call the families of Aurora children. Ultimately then, staff assumptions about how the school would react to ICE activity are potentially incorrect. They would rely on past procedures, which were familiar to them, to guide their future decision making in the future.

Relying on Administrator Judgment for Future Behavior

Even more telling than participants’ assumptions that the school would go into lockdown mode is that participants also stated they would rely on Linda’s judgment to make decisions. In addition to relying on past procedures, participants indicated they would rely on one person to make decisions is ICE comes close to the school again. That participants would look to the principal to lead the decision making process is consistent with the conceptual framework in this study, which recognizes participants’ decisions in that responding to ICE activity may be directly or indirectly restricted. It follows, however, that if participants rely on Linda’s judgment, they knowingly constrain their decision making. In constraining their decision making, participants also limit their agency in the outcomes of a potentially ethically complex situation. In retrospect, participants were satisfied with their decisions in 2008. Participant satisfaction with the
outcomes of the school’s response to ICE in 2008 influences how participants would make sense of possible future behavior and their expectations for future action. Participants would not see a need to seek alternative courses of action. In other words, if staff did not make assumptions about how the school would respond to new reports of ICE, they would likely depend again on Linda’s sensemaking and decisions.

Coburn’s 2005 study showed that principals and school administrators can influence teachers’ sensemaking by mediating teachers’ exposure to and level of access to policy messages. At Aurora, school staff willingly allowed the principal to mediate their knowledge of school procedures and policy and their sensemaking of the events of 2008. School staff willingness to rely on Linda’s judgment stems from the trust they have in her. Through observations of principal-staff interactions, the relationship between the principal and staff appeared comfortable and relaxed. Each person listened attentively to the other. At one staff meeting, I observed Linda hugging one staff member. She also laughed and smiled frequently, as her staff responded in kind. This trust has likely built up over the years, considering Linda’s long tenure at the school, as evidenced by the fact that school has had low staff turnover as well.

Jill, the school counselor, when asked what she would do if ICE came near Aurora again said, “I think I would just default to [Linda], because I trust her judgment in those situations, so whatever she decided to do is what I…I would just follow her lead.” Participants like Tom, the intervention specialist, respect Linda’s decision making, saying that she always “displays good leadership [in] challenges” and is “pragmatic.” He says Linda “is emotionally controlled, and she addresses the fears and other issues directly.”
Tom also approved Linda’s reaction to reports of ICE in 2008 and credited her with the school’s quick return to normalcy, saying

“She doesn’t really believe that ICE is evil, but she validates the feelings that people had. She seems to have a very sane, balanced, multifaceted point of view. And whenever she addresses those things, it’s always in a way that doesn’t heighten any of those, you know, those reactive feelings.”

If participants like Tom perceive that the principal has demonstrated consistently strong leadership over the years and made sound decisions in 2008, then it is logical that school staff willingly increase Linda’s agency to make decisions on their behalf and behalf of the school. Officer Gates explained he would do anything Linda and the principal of the other school sharing Aurora’s campus ask of him. He said, “…they’re in control here. But I respect them and anything they ask me to do, I do for them…” Thus, if ICE came near Aurora again, Officer Gates would follow up on Linda’s sensemaking of the situation and a request for further action—and potentially rely less on stated school policy.

Neighborhood Context Trumps Fears about ICE

As stated earlier, some participants like Luz and Paz, expressed curiosity to learn about school policies related to ICE activity in the Aurora neighborhood, but they did not actively pursue policy knowledge. All thirteen research participants (excluding Linda, who has some policy knowledge) believe that ICE activity near Aurora’s campus could recur. Tom, Sandra, Jill, Iris, and Officer Gates, Olivia, and Luz mentioned that ICE
activity near school property could happen due to either the current political climate around undocumented immigration or based on the fact that Aurora families have indicated they have some history of dealing with ICE. However, all participants suggested they do not think at all about ICE operating near the school again or think about it only rarely when a student brings the issue up (e.g. in a counseling session).

As Tom describes it, fears of ICE coming near the school again are “nebulous.” The reason these fears are nebulous is because school staff are preoccupied with more immediate concerns. One logical explanation why ICE is not at the forefront of participants’ minds is that the school is a site to educate young people. Felicia, in an earlier comment in this chapter, said that the school was starting standardized testing in 2008 when the incident with ICE happened. She said that the school had to return to its normal day-to-day operations in part because of the pressures schools face to have their students perform well on tests. Iris also reiterated several times that she staunchly believes her role at the school is to educate children and instill in students the desire to learn. During the interview with Iris, which took place in her classroom, we were interrupted several times by students coming into the classroom to borrow books or ask questions, demonstrating that she lives out her beliefs.

The second reason immigration enforcement is not an immediate concern for Aurora staff is because their attention is concentrated on mitigating the effects of local neighborhood violence on the school environment and students. Staff reported noticing increased gang activity, prostitution, and drug activity since 2008, which not only was the year ICE came close to Aurora but was also the year the United States economy collapsed. Linda spoke about the hardships Aurora families, students, and thus the school,
have faced over the last four years. She described how a student’s father was shot and killed, the effect it had on the school, and how this event prompted her to reflect. She said,

“And I didn’t really get it in the beginning, like ‘this is just free food’ but then I realize, like, this is pretty much what people are eating throughout the day. I should say students are eating throughout the day. And so, you’re already in an area that’s stricken by poverty, and then you have these incidents of violence that are happening, like theft, breaking into houses, you know, trying to steal and, I think that was the incident with that father. He was held up and struggled with the person, and the person shot him. Or when you already have poverty and then you have people who are trying to take from people who are already living in poverty, it’s just a very stressful sort of atmosphere.”

Javier, a kindergarten teacher, also spoke about how death and violence has hit the school hard in the past year, trumping concerns about ICE activity. Javier explained,

“We’ve been hit twice within a month, so the brother of one kid got killed, and a father of one kid got killed. And this is a small school. And we have less than 300 students. And that’s, I think, a high percentage, having two related members to the school killed in one month.”

Sandra, a 5th grade teacher, meanwhile noted the effect the presence of gangs in the school neighborhood has on Aurora students as well as staff, saying

“We have a lot of gangs. Gangs is the major problem. Gangs with drugs…I’ve been here 15 years, and in that corner over there, they’ve been
selling drugs for the 15 years. The police come, and they keep on selling
drugs. And at the liquor store over there, I don’t go that way. So it’s very
dangerous. Kids here, they’re exposed to so much. At so early age. And
what they’re surrounded, to be able to make it here, it’s hard.”

Conclusion

In dealing with the repercussions of death, gang activity, and violence in the local
neighborhood as noted above, participants have been more concerned to exhibit an ethic
of care for students related to these issues rather than making sense of ICE activity, past
or future. Again, participants demonstrated little policy knowledge about education for
undocumented students or policies related to school procedures to respond to ICE. In
conclusion, there are at least three plausible explanations for research participants’
general level of policy awareness. Briefly

1. School staff rely on their own assumptions or on Aurora’s
principal to communicate district and school policies and therefore
do not perceive a compelling need for either individual or
collective policy awareness.

2. ICE activity near the school campus has not reoccurred. School
staff have therefore had little reason to seek knowledge of or a
reminder of district and school policies related to undocumented
students’ education or the school’s response if ICE comes near
Aurora’s campus again.
3. Concerns about keeping students safe from the effects of local violence trump participants’ concerns about recurring ICE activity. School staff are more concerned about policies and messages related to keeping the school environment safe.

Logically, research participants could not sense a conflict in policies related undocumented students’ educational rights as they were unaware of or possibly did not reveal knowledge of the *Plyler* ruling. Instead, Aurora school staff largely based their views around their personal beliefs that education is a human right, undocumented children deserve empathy, and are not responsible for their legal status, and that negative consequences manifest in society when a sub-population in the United States has limited access to education. Ironically, the Supreme Court majority ruling in favor of the plaintiffs in the *Plyler* ruling used similar rationales to those Aurora staff used. What does appear to be the case, however, is that Aurora staff have a shared understanding that they will educate any child that comes through Aurora’s school doors and will try to act in the best interests of the child.
Chapter 7—IN WHOSE BEST INTEREST?

Introduction

The first research question in the study asked how educators make sense of laws, messages or policies about undocumented students when these laws or policies conflict with each other. However, the findings showed that participants did not perceive conflict among policies as they demonstrated a general lack of policy awareness. In the second research question, I asked how school staff at Aurora made sense of what was in their best interests, the best interests of the school, and the best interests of the students when immigration laws or policies contradict each other. Although participants did not sense a conflict among policies or messages related to ICE activity near school property, they still demonstrated through their sensemaking and decisions in whose best interests they acted in 2008. Therefore, the research question did not change once participants communicated they did not perceive themselves to be in a legal or ethical dilemma. I inquired

2. How do educators who work with undocumented students make sense of their own best interests, the best interests of their school, and the best interests of the students when their school has experienced ICE activity?

The question above was built on the premise that educators have varied legal and ethical obligations that they consider when deciding how to respond to reports of ICE activity near school. As I will show in this chapter, Aurora’s principal, Linda, had power to determine in whose “best interests” to act, and she chose to act in the interests of her
students and local community. For this reason, Linda’s voice is privileged in this chapter. Upon calling the school district’s legal department to learn how to respond to reports of ICE, the department told Linda she could call Aurora families “as a courtesy,” even though the district had previously rebuked ICE for activity near schools. The city’s then-mayor came to Aurora’s campus, but staff perceived this act was based on political motivations alone. The actions of the school district and city officials raises the question as to the level and type of support the district and city can or will offer in circumstances where ICE potentially challenges undocumented students’ right to an education—and whether the school would want district or city involvement in this situation. The presence of city officials at Aurora does show, however, that schools are more than symbolic ground in the immigration debate, a key argument of this study. I discuss district and city support in greater detail in this chapter.

I had posited that school staff could feel placed in a legal or ethical dilemma about their response to ICE. The principal, Linda, did not perceive potentially competing legal or ethical responsibilities, and with the district enabling her decision making, she had school staff and parents call the families of Aurora students. However, like Linda, participants did not perceive a legal or ethical dilemma in 2008. Again, participants exhibited minimal to no policy knowledge as it related to either undocumented students’ educational rights or ICE-related policies—and therefore, without policy awareness at the school, district, or national level, staff could not and did not perceive a legal or ethical dilemma. Although no participant indicated they would be in a dilemma when responding to ICE activity, all participants felt strongly that ICE activity near a school is highly
unethical, and they would make the same decisions they did in 2008 should ICE come near Aurora’s campus again. Key findings in this chapter include

1. Aurora’s school principal had autonomy to make decisions in response to ICE activity even though district and city policies advocate for undocumented students’ education and immigrants’ rights. Other actors influenced but did not constrain Linda’s decision making, and she determined in whose best interests the school would act when handling reports about ICE.

2. School staff perceived the arrival of city officials on Aurora’s campus as actions that politicized the school grounds. School staff perceived that city officials’ involvement was primarily political and did not help the school. Rather, participants sensed that the presence of city officials made it more difficult for staff to keep the school secure—challenging the idea that city officials acted with the best interests of the school in mind. Whether the school wants support from the city and/or district is questionable, but city officials’ actions may have benefitted schools in the long run as there have been no reports of ICE activity near schools since 2008.

3. Though Aurora staff did not perceive a legal or ethical dilemma when responding to reports of ICE, staff viewed the school as a safe zone and acted in the best interests of the student by mitigating their fears and assuring them the school would keep them safe. Staff made sense of ICE activity near school property as
unethical as it disrupts student learning and causes fear. Therefore, it is in the school’s best interests to keep the school clear of ICE activity.

4. Staff generally believed undocumented people can make contributions to society and should not be subjected to immigration law enforcement, but staff did not fully negate the federal government’s right to enforce immigration law.

**Principal Autonomy and Sensemaking of the Response to ICE**

_The school district gives Aurora’s principal autonomy_

In 2008, Aurora school parents alerted Linda to ICE activity in the neighborhood when they came into the school with their children in the morning. At first, parents asked Linda if they could stay in the parents’ room at the school for awhile but then told her they were scared to go back outside. As more reports reached Linda, she had to assess the situation. In the sensemaking literature, surprises or interruptions to the environment can initiate sensemaking. This was the first time Linda had to make sense of ICE activity near the school’s campus and decide what to do, so Linda began processing and trying to make sense of new circumstances. She said, “we didn’t really have any sort of plan in place. I just never thought that at a school you would need to plan for [that].” Linda expressed uncertainty about what to do and indicated she was unsure how much power ICE had to enforce immigration law. She also expressed concern for the undocumented people in the Aurora community; Linda was thinking beyond the impact this event would have on her students. She said,
“People started to say ‘they [ICE] haven’t left and we’re nervous to leave.’

We didn’t know how to respond, and the capability of that sort of law
agency being down the street and their ability to pick up whomever they…
anyone they suspected as not being legal. It was just so many people that
that would impact, that we were just like, ‘Ok, what do we do?’”

The next step Linda took was to call the district’s legal department. According to Linda,
the legal department told her “we’re not supposed to do anything, but as a courtesy we
[Aurora staff] could call families and tell them that there are [ICE] vans in the
neighborhood.” That Linda would have the power and autonomy to decide whether or not
to inform families or to take other actions is surprising considering that the school district
had made statements clearly supporting undocumented students’ access to district
schools.

The school district, as noted in the 2008 school board resolution responding to
previous ICE activity on a school’s campus, reiterated the Plyler (1982) ruling which
guarantees undocumented students’ educational rights. The resolution also noted that
federal enforcement of immigration law can have a “chilling effect” on students’ rights
and school attendance. The district further stated their policy is to provide a safe,
uninterrupted learning environment for all students, and that ICE activity causes families
to fear sending their children to school. In the resolution, the board re-affirmed its
“commitment to the education of all immigrant children.” The board claimed the school
district stands in solidarity with immigrant community organizations and the city’s
position as a “city of refuge.” The school board passed its resolution in January 2008,
prior to ICE activity near Aurora’s campus. Yet, when reports of ICE activity near
schools resurfaced again in the spring, the district handed Linda primary responsibility to make decisions about what she would do on behalf of her school.

It is unclear why Linda had the level of autonomy that she did to make decisions to respond to ICE. It is possible that Linda was granted authority by the district’s legal department based on the legal department’s knowledge of her history of decision making, and therefore had confidence that she would exhibit sound judgment. Potentially, the department could have responded differently and with more specific instructions to Linda if they had concerns she would not act in the best interests of her students, or if city laws were superseded by the federal government’s right to act, which then in turn prevented the school district from acting. The extent of Linda’s authority and the motives of the district’s legal department cannot be fully examined with the evidence in this study. However, Linda had discretion to make decisions to respond to ICE that affected both the school and the school community, and she did not express that she perceived constraints on her decision making. Linda chose of her own volition to confer with two other principals to make parallel decisions to respond to ICE, which means that the principals helped shape her sensemaking of the context of ICE near Aurora’s campus.

In the wake of the incident with ICE, Linda suggested that district support remained doubtful. In her words, the district media person inquired if Linda wanted to make statements to the media about the impact of ICE activity near Aurora. Linda revealed that she was unclear of the district’s position on the incident, saying

“I remember our district media person. I now know him a little bit more, but then when he came to the campus he was like ‘So, are you going to go and talk to the media?’ I’m like ‘Isn’t that your job? Why should I talk to
them…You’re the media person.’ I don’t, I was like ‘No, I didn’t plan to be up in front of everybody around this issue, and I don’t know what the district stance is, so that’s really for you to do,’ because there were media outside too.”

Linda’s overall impression of the district’s response to ICE activity near school property was that it was unhelpful. However, the district’s exact stance on this issue of ICE activity cannot be fully examined, because the study did not include interviews with representatives from the school district. What information can be gleaned about the district’s response to ICE activity near public schools comes from newspaper articles. These articles give some support to Linda’s belief that the district has some, but limited ability, to prevent ICE from operating near schools. For example, a newspaper article from 2008 contains district officials’ take on and response to the incident. Officials stated they were “hesitant to communicate with parents,” but they emailed all school staff to reassure them the district was committed to educating all children—and that staff could not help “facilitate any immigration enforcement actions” (Martinez, 2008). However, the newspaper included statements that the district recognized ICE activity distracted students while they were taking standardized tests. More important than acknowledging the impact ICE has on student testing, which implies ICE can circumvent the education undocumented students receive, was a district person stating, “They [ICE] are targeting schools and we are watching them do it” (Martinez, 2008). In other words, district officials recognized that ICE activity interfered with student learning, and also intimated the district believed ICE would specifically conduct operations near school grounds—but has little power to do anything about it. In another report, the district indicated that their
school police would be on the schools’ campuses on the day after ICE activity near schools (O’Brien & Murphy, 2008), but it is unclear if the police had much power to prevent ICE from coming onto school grounds. It is more likely that promising schools the presence of school police was symbolic in nature and meant to present a united front to ICE to show that their presence was unwelcome—even if the district, as indicated in official’s statements, had to tolerate ICE activity. Therefore the extent of the district’s power to prevent immigration officials from coming on or near school property should immigration officials present more of a challenge and come closer to schools remains questionable. In those circumstances, Linda, as Aurora’s principal, would likely not have as much autonomy to make decisions on behalf of her school. It is probable the district police would have to work with local police authorities and the city to confront federal authorities. Whatever the district’s level of authority to prevent ICE from coming on school grounds, the district probably benefitted from the arrival of city officials onto Aurora’s campus, who made political statements to specifically emphasize the city’s position against immigration enforcement at schools and remark on other city laws that provide “refuge” and “sanctuary” for undocumented immigrants.

As I will discuss later in this chapter, politicians helped politicize ICE activity near public schools. However, as I demonstrate in the next section, Linda did not just receive autonomy from the school district to make decisions on behalf of Aurora. She proactively sought to exert her autonomy to influence the school district’s sensemaking of what was in her school’s best interests.
Aurora’s principal exerts autonomy

In Linda’s mind, hosting a workshop on immigrants’ rights in the days following ICE activity near the school was in the best interests of the local community. Together with Emmanuel, the community organizer, Linda arranged for community members to meet with immigration lawyers in the Aurora cafeteria to learn about their rights. Linda realized for the first time how vulnerable and scared people in the Aurora community felt due to their undocumented status, saying “that day I did remember, like ‘wow, people are terrified. And I’m understanding why now.’ I’m understanding why ICE being in the neighborhood could be such a thing that happens. Not until you really interact with people that are in such fear that they could be picked up…It’s like “ok, now I get it.”

Prior to the 2008 incident with ICE, Linda was aware that Aurora served an undocumented population. She was aware of some of their struggles based on their undocumented status (e.g. the school community liaison helps parents access social services by helping them fill out Medi-Cal forms). However, it wasn’t until the incident with ICE that Linda recognized and understood the depth of community fears of their vulnerability to deportation—and its far-ranging consequences, such as family members being separated from one another. In the past, Linda was very focused on responding to Aurora families’ needs (e.g. “I do like to collect information about families in general. Just so we know how to kind of orient our school and orient the services that we have.”). Linda’s knowledge of the community and their concerns—which directly affect Aurora students—reached a new level of awareness in 2008, and Linda reacted with empathy to her perception of community members’ fears. Linda exhibited the ethic of care and the ethic of critique in her actions. First, Linda took action to allay those fears by enabling
community members to become better informed of their rights in the face of immigration enforcement by holding the workshop in Aurora’s cafeteria. Her efforts (with those of Emmanuel, the community organizer) worked. She said, “I just remember the families feeling more at ease that they had information. They knew kind of like what to do if anything, if they were approached or anything like that.”

Linda empowered community members to claim their rights by providing them with access to learn about immigration law in a workshop at the school and their legal rights if confronted by ICE. She simultaneously shifted responsibility from her shoulders and Aurora staff’s shoulders to the community to make future decisions about how to respond to ICE. For example, Linda said that she would not necessarily follow the same procedures she followed in 2008 if ICE came near campus again; the school would not automatically go into a form of lockdown mode. Linda stated, “I don’t know if we would need to do that anymore given what we know now. Like parents do have rights, and what they can say and do if anything is happening.” In Linda’s mind, lockdowns should be reserved for concerns about violence in the neighborhood, and she did not perceive that ICE activity would jeopardize her students’ physical safety. She also stated that if ICE actually tried to come onto campus she would make phone calls to learn whether she would have to allow them onto school grounds.

As mentioned earlier, Aurora staff were not aware of school procedures should ICE activity in Aurora reoccur—assuming the school would go into lockdown mode again or stating that Linda’s judgment and directions would suffice. Linda thus retains her influence over the sensemaking processes and future decisions of school staff. In this
way, Linda also retains and possibly enhances her autonomy to decide what is in the best interests of the school.

Linda had autonomy, but she was not alone in her sensemaking of the district’s response to reports of ICE activity and decision making thereafter. As I describe in the next section, Linda spoke with two other principals in the district—one of whom is the principal of a school sharing Aurora’s campus and another who is principal at a school off-site. The three principals collectively decided how to respond and then carry out the agreed-upon procedures at their respective schools.

Linda also used her beliefs as to what would be in the best interests of her school and local community to influence the district board member’s understanding of what was in the school community’s best interest. Shedding further doubt on district support for schools responding to ICE, Linda did not perceive the school board person assigned to Aurora was supportive of her efforts in the days following the ICE incident. Linda used her autonomy and influence to make sure the follow up workshop took place. She successfully persuaded her board member to agree that the community could benefit from a workshop with immigration lawyers after the board member balked at the idea. Linda and the community organizer arranged to host a follow up workshop for Aurora families and community members to meet with immigration lawyers to learn about the legal rights, but Linda perceived resistance. She said,

“In the she [the board member] was not very supportive, like she didn’t want us to have the follow up workshop and stuff, and even I felt like she was somewhat anti-immigrant in her statements, and she just didn’t understand. It’s like, ‘These are you constituents here. They may not vote
for you, but they are the people that are here that you’re supposed to be in
service of’ and so I kind of, when she said a couple of things, I just kind of
looked at her and just re-stated what I was hoping that we could do, then
she was like, ‘Ok, if you want to do it that way, that’s fine.’”

Linda’s strategy entailed using political rationale to convince the board member that the
workshop was also in the board member’s (and potentially the district’s) best interests.
Linda successfully exerted her autonomy to press the issue of a school-hosted workshop,
and she suggested that she has used her political savvy with the district in the past:

“For the most part in terms of district support, I feel like I get a lot of
support. When I call a department and need something, I’ll get a response.
It might not be what I always want to hear, but I do get a response…and I
think maybe because I have been in the district so long, I’ve known a lot
of these people for a number of years. So when you have relationships
with people, that’s always the best way to get the service that you need.
It’s like I know who to call. And if they don’t give me the answer that I
need, sometimes I just call somebody else so that way I can get the
response that I need. So in a way, you have to be kind of savvy in terms of
using your resources.”

Linda, as stated above, generally perceives that the school district is responsive to
her requests and needs. She has formed relationships with staff at the district level and is
well acquainted with the appropriate district contacts to address various concerns. Yet,
Linda actively seeks autonomy from the district (e.g. “And if they don’t give me the
answer that I need, sometimes I just call somebody else so that way I can get the response
that I need…”). The district has also told Linda in the past that she “knows [her] community best.” In addressing Linda’s questions, the district has told her, “this is what we suggest that [you] do. But you know your community best. You can decide if you’re going to do it this way or that way.” The legal department suggested Linda could call school families in 2008, which she did, but the fact that the legal department said they were not supposed to do anything was surprising in light of the district and city’s stance on undocumented immigration and the educational rights of undocumented students.

One question is whether Linda would have wanted more support from the district. If so, what might that support have looked like? The district’s response to Linda may indicate that it is district practice for school heads to maintain wide-ranging authority to make decisions on behalf of their schools. Aurora is located in a large, urban district, and the district cannot oversee all the day-to-day decisions principals make. However, ICE coming near school property was by no means a regular occurrence. Arguably, Linda’s level of autonomy in 2008 signifies that she made decisions to contest immigration enforcement not just on behalf of Aurora, but also on behalf of the district. With ICE activity near the school, Aurora became more than symbolic ground for the immigration debate. In this situation, in spite of the fact that Linda has autonomy within her school and some at the district level, the district placed the onus on the school principal to uphold the school district’s position. In placing the responsibility for decision making on the shoulders of the school principal to autonomously handle reports of ICE, the district’s support for undocumented immigrants and their children’s educational rights appears questionable. Further, it was Linda’s choice to confer with two fellow principals to make sense of what was in the best interests of the schools. Therefore, to what extent does the
district have the power and will to protect undocumented students’ rights? The district’s response to Linda also raises the question as to whether the district followed through on their resolution in 2008—based on previous ICE activity in the district—by anticipating ICE activity with a plan or strategy should ICE once again come near public schools.

**Principals’ Shared Sensemaking and Decision Making**

Although the school district gave Linda autonomy in her decision making, other principals influenced Linda’s sensemaking of the situation with ICE and her subsequent decisions. Linda recalled receiving a phone call from another principal in the district who inquired if Linda’s school had heard reports of ICE activity in the neighborhood, saying, “what’s going on over there? Because something’s happening over here. And we’re not sure, how we’re gonna respond.” Linda and the principal of the school that shares Aurora’s campus consulted with this third principal. She said, “When we figured out what we were gonna do, we were gonna do the same thing.” Linda had autonomy from the school district to act on behalf of Aurora, and she chose to negotiate her sensemaking of ICE activity and its potential repercussions with others in the same professional capacity.

That Linda would consult with colleagues is consistent with sensemaking literature in that sensemaking involves social interaction and finding socially appropriate responses for actions. Social interaction enables people to create a shared understanding of an event or situation. As Spillane et al. (2002) argued, “Explanations and actions are enabled and constrained by perceptions of social appropriateness and collective meaning” (p. 733). Linda’s decision to seek help and advice from colleagues ties in to the
sensemaking literature in that the principals tried to come to an agreement so their decisions and actions would converge (Weick, 1995). Together, the three principals determined what was in the best interests of their schools, and they agreed that uniformity in their decision making was the socially appropriate response to communicate the schools’ position around ICE activity close to school property.

**Principal Influence over the Sensemaking of School Staff**

In discussing the situation and their decisions with each other, the three principals also set boundaries and context for school staff understanding about the meaning and consequences of ICE activity near school. School principals can exert influence over the social processes of teachers’ sensemaking (and school staff) by setting the conditions for sensemaking, and open or limit teachers’ access to policy messages (Coburn, 2005). Coburn and Talbert’s (2006) study demonstrated that cultural norms shape individuals’ sensemaking, creating the framework for the kinds of actions or decisions an individual can take. Linda communicated to her staff that the school should go into a semblance of “lockdown” mode, and that both staff and families would alert Aurora parents about reports of ICE. Linda had her staff clarify that ICE was not on Aurora’s campus, but families could send an alternative person to pick a child up from school that day. School staff later checked the identification of people taking a child from the school. The impetus in Linda’s decision making was to keep children as safe as possible. Linda perceived the best way to do so was to call for a lockdown, and her staff helped enact her decisions without resistance.
Lockdown mode signifies that children are kept inside the school building, in their classroom with the classroom doors locked and the lights off. No adults are allowed to enter the building without express permission after the school security officer or other staff understand a person’s purpose for coming to the school. On one hand, with a lockdown mode, anyone inside the building is better protected from potential violence. On the other hand, Linda’s decision to call lockdown mode with adults in the building in 2008 may have created the expectation in Aurora families (or staff) that adults too can seek protection for legal authorities at the school. By creating the impression that families can avoid authorities by coming to the school, Linda may have inadvertently opened the school for doors for further law enforcement at the school. Presumably, if law enforcement agents believe the school would shelter a person suspected of a crime, agents would have more reason to try and come into Aurora’s building.

I described in the previous chapter how participants assumed that if ICE activity were to reoccur near the school, the school would go into lockdown mode. Coburn drew upon the sensemaking literature in her 2005 study to argue that teachers’ preexisting knowledge and practices affect their understanding of new policy messages and subsequent policy implementation. When responding to the 2008 incident with ICE, Linda set a precedent for school and staff responses and procedures regarding ICE. Participants expressed that they did not and do not have knowledge of school policy related to ICE, but they trust Linda’s judgment. Coburn’s study suggested that teachers may or may not act based on their connection to the policy message (Coburn, 2005). As mentioned in the previous chapter, Jill, the school counselor stated that if ICE activity were to reoccur, “I think I would just default to the principal, because I trust her judgment
in those situations, so I would, whatever she decided to do is what I… I would just follow her lead.” Participants would use the “cultural norm” that Linda set for them. Linda, with the help of other school principals, shaped how school staff understood and connected to the policy message: Participants would use their preexisting knowledge from their 2008 experience (e.g. the school goes into lockdown mode) to make decisions or would wait for cues from Linda to enact a decision.

**Tenuous or Valuable City Support?**

In addition to the district’s position that immigration law enforcement creates tension in communities and jeopardizes undocumented students’ educational rights, the city also had a clear stance that it is pro-immigrant. The city, located in Northern California, is a “City of Refuge” and a “sanctuary city,” for undocumented immigrants. Because it is a “sanctuary”, it prohibits the use of personnel and resources to help the federal government enforce immigration law. After learning of reports that ICE appeared near Aurora’s campus, city politicians went to Aurora’s campus, made political statements to politicize the situation and left. Some school staff questioned the extent and timing of city support.

School staff perceived the arrival of local politicians—and media—as a political act that made it more challenging for the school to ensure student safety. Though some school staff were skeptical of the city’s response and did not appreciate it in the moment, the value of city officials’ involvement by making statements challenging federal immigration enforcement is uncertain. Some participants perceived that city officials’ presence at Aurora indicated solidarity with the school in that immigration enforcement
near schools has negative consequences for students. Therefore, school staff’s sensemaking varied in terms of whether city officials’ presence at Aurora was worthwhile or an obstacle to keeping the school secure. Notably, however, although community members and research participants reported increased sightings of ICE in the city over the past year (2012, at the time of this writing)—there have no more reports of ICE activity near district schools since 2008. Whether city involvement to politicize the school grounds at Aurora was valuable or not is the focus of the next section.

**Politicizing the School Grounds**

Linda had broad autonomy to make decisions about what was in the best interests of the school, students, and community members (e.g. permitting adults to stay in the school building), and she exerted influence over staff sensemaking of the situation. However, Linda did not have complete control over school staffs’ actual and perceived response to ICE. Linda asked the school security officer, Officer Gates, to help secure the school grounds. She asked school staff (Rosa and Jill) to call families and tell them they could send an alternative person to pick a child up from school. Linda also requested that the local community organizer, Emmanuel, ask parents already in the school to call Aurora families. Officer Gates and other school staff were further responsible to check that the person a family sent to pick up a child was on the child’s emergency card. Officer Gates described the day as chaotic, which made his job to secure the school difficult. He recollected his job was challenging

“Because parents were running up here trying to get the kids, and some parents were hiding in …throughout the schools, then parents had people that had their green cards come up here and pick up the kids. Then, you
know, we couldn’t release a lot of them—if they weren’t on their emergency card we couldn’t release a lot of them. A lot of chaos that way.”

Officer Gates’ role to secure the campus quickly became harder. Unbeknownst to Linda and other research participants, Emmanuel, the community organizer, influenced the circle of people who knew of ICE activity near Aurora by contacting politicians and possibly the media. Emmanuel said, “I called [the] city council, and said ‘Let’s go to the mayor, let’s call everybody.’” Media also drove to Aurora. Participants varied in their accounts as to whether politicians and media came to Aurora the same day or the following day. However, the unexpected arrival of politicians and media onto Aurora’s campus created an additional layer of complexity to how Linda and school staff made sense of and responded to ICE activity.

First, Linda was confused about why political actors came to the school’s campus. She said, “And I had all of these officials come. And it was like right in the middle of the day. And I remember thinking, “I am busy. I don’t know why all of you are here. I don’t understand, you know, what it is that this incident is calling for the mayor, and city council to come down to my campus.” The arrival of these officials surprised Linda, interrupted and changed her sensemaking of the situation and the decisions she and the staff were implementing—forcing her to make new decisions to also respond to the presence of city officials’ presence.

Linda and several of her staff, in recollecting the impact of political figures at Aurora, questioned politicians’ timing and their purpose in coming to Aurora. Participants suggested that city involvement in the 2008 incident with ICE was largely
politically motivated, escalated the situation, and hindered school efforts to keep the school secure. Linda did not perceive that city officials intended to offer substantive support to her or the school. She was annoyed that she also had to deal with political figures and media when all she wanted to do was make sure the school was secure. Her impressions of political actors on campus was, “‘This is just you trying to be in front of the cameras. I don’t really have time for this.’” Linda said, “They were on campus for awhile. They stayed for awhile. And then they left. I just remember being that sort of a nuisance. Can you guys not be here for your media show? If you really want to help out with something…this isn’t really helpful right now.” In other words, political actors did not inquire how to best help Linda, the children, the community, or the school. Linda was focused on Aurora’s students and keeping the school environment as normal as possible. Linda stressed several times how busy she was, and that she was unclear exactly as to how politicians and the school board were trying to support the school. She implied, rather, that their presence interfered with her fulfilling her responsibilities—which was to be with the students.

“I am busy. I don’t know why all of you are here. I don’t understand, you know, what it is that this incident is calling for the mayor and city council to come down to my campus.” My board member was here. Everyone got a phone call, and everybody showed up. And they were just like “we’re supporting you.” Like “Supporting me in what? You’re actually taking away the time that I’m supposed to be in the lunchroom, with students.” I think they got after that I was like “thank you. If anything happens, I’ll make sure I’ll call.”
Jill, the school counselor, remarked that she and other staff also felt the timing of the politicians’ arrival was suspect, and questioned in whose best interests the city was acting. Jill said, “Honestly what most people say is, “great, thanks for coming down now” like we have so many needs. Education in general has SO many needs, and it just always feels political.” Tom, the school intervention specialist, was also skeptical of the motivations behind city officials’ decision to come to the school. Tom stated that politicians, particularly one of the then-mayor’s right hand men, seized on ICE activity near Aurora to garner political support from potential future voters—the Latino immigrant population. Tom also challenged whether having city officials at Aurora effectively calmed school and community tensions about ICE or was an effective way for the city to emphasize its status as a sanctuary city/city of refuge to the federal government. He remarked,

“…I guess he realizes that a big chunk of voters are of Latino background like him and he can address them that way. That didn’t seem like the kind of leadership that would actually quell the feelings. It seemed like…drumming up, you know, this, your righteous indignation against ICE. And that’s fine for political posturing, but how can you really take one segment of law enforcement and another segment of law enforcement and somehow, I mean, they can’t really be butting heads. They have to be working together. They’re part of the same system”

Linda perceived that the purpose of politicians’ presence at Aurora went beyond showing support for the school. Linda sensed that the intent behind city officials’ presence was to emphasize boundaries between city power and federal power to enforce
immigration law. The incident with ICE proved to be an opportune moment for city official to stand up to a federal entity; Aurora provided an opportune venue. Linda recognized and questioned the politicization of Aurora school grounds, saying

“I remember the influx of people that came to our campus when they heard that ICE was in the neighborhood. And I’m not talking people that are from the neighborhood. I’m talking about politicians. It must have just been the climate then around, like ICE, and around this, that just escalated everything, where it became, I saw this real separation of where the local entity and these are outsiders that are trying to pass through our jurisdiction. I saw that as kind of like a turf war between local officials and state and federal.”

In the midst of so many people coming to the school’s campus, however, Linda thought the politicians’ presence was unhelpful, a “nuisance” that counteracted her efforts to do what was in the best interests of her school and community.

Felicia did not interact with politicians or media, but her sensemaking of their presence at the school after the fact points to her belief that politicians used Aurora’s school grounds to make political statements. However, unlike Tom and Linda’s sensemaking of city officials’ actions, Felicia felt politicians’ presence at Aurora benefited the school and the local immigrant community. She remarked, “I think the mayor came the following day. And his entourage. The media came. I just thought it was, you know, politics. But I liked his message that, you know, we don’t want ICE in our neighborhood. So I thought that was positive. Definitely.” For Felicia, not only was ICE activity unwelcome near Aurora’s campus, but it was also unwelcome in the local
vicinity—and thus she approved of the city’s choice to get involved in what was happening.

Sandra, a 5th grade teacher, also approved of the message city officials sent, which in her mind, focused on protecting children. Sandra perceived city officials came to Aurora to make statements that immigration enforcement near schools had negative repercussions for children. City officials, in coming to Aurora, were acting in the best interests of children. Sandra’s sensemaking contested other Aurora staff accounts about the mayor’s involvement as a purely a political act. Sandra recalled, “I heard other people talking that the mayor came over and that he offered support and assurance to the kids that nothing was going to happen to them. And that he wasn’t going to let anything happen to the families. That’s what I heard.” Sandra indicated other staff influenced her sensemaking of city officials’ involvement. Her comments also indicated that whatever the reason behind the mayor and city officials’ decision to come to Aurora, she and perhaps other staff felt the city did support Aurora through their actions.

Staff decisions in light of the arrival of high-profile political actors and media reveal that school staff continued to focus on acting in the best interests of the students. For Officer Gates, the media aggravated him, because his role was to protect students and secure the school, to “[try] to help them and protect the kids,”—but his job became more complicated once city officials and media arrived on the scene. The media, according to Officer Gates, attempted to come into the school, but he maintained his focus on protecting students. He recalled,

“I had a problem with a few of the reporters trying to get through. You know,
trying to interview the kids and stuff like that, which is against the rules. You know, dealing with a lot of reporters. And then I had people who were trying to let the reporters in. That’s what bothered me. I had some parents, they were trying to let the reporters in so they could…They were trying to make a media circus out of it.”

Officer Gates is the only participant who reported that media were trying to get into the school—and to report that parents tried to enable media coming into the Aurora building. If it is true that parents tried to let the media into the school or to speak with media, then community parents also tried to take advantage of ICE activity near the school to help politicize the school grounds. Officer Gates’ statements showed that he was focused on doing what he perceived as in the best interests of the students, but others’ actions interfered with his job.

Officer Gates also requested school staff join him to help prevent outsiders from coming into the school, and he said that school staff helped him. Therefore, Officer Gates and other school staff formed a shared understanding of what was in the best interests of the school and students. Participants’ sensemaking and subsequent action involved limiting the risk to children by not allowing strangers enter the school building.

Participants perceived the school as a safe zone from strangers, but also from immigration enforcement, which is the topic of the following section.

The Ethics of ICE Activity Near School Property

*Acting in accordance with professional codes of practice*
While participants did not sense a legal or ethical dilemma, they still revealed in whose “best interest” they acted in the decision making process in 2008 and in whose best interest they would act if another incident with ICE were to reoccur. One reason I examined staff decision making priorities was to learn how staff reacted to the varying pressures and supports to which they were subject while making sense of complex circumstances. As I showed in this chapter and the previous one, Linda strongly influenced school staff sensemaking and decision making, which is consistent with the research literature (Coburn 2005; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001). Second, I wanted to test Stefkovich’s (2006) Best Interests (BI) of the Student model to learn if staff would prioritize student well being over concerns for themselves or concerns about immigration enforcement, and to see how the issue of ICE activity was framed by various actors. Staff uniformly demonstrated that their primary concern in 2008 was for the well being of Aurora students. Though the actual decisions staff made varied to some degree, these decisions created the impression that the school, as a whole, was focused on keeping children calm and mitigating their fears.

Again, the findings show that, unexpectedly, Linda had broad autonomy to make decisions over how her school would respond to ICE. The school district did not place constraints on Linda, but rather permitted her to make sense of the context of ICE near her school and carry out her decisions. School staff relied on Linda’s decision making in 2008 and indicated they would do so in the future, though school staff retained some autonomy in their decision as school leaders depend on teachers’ knowledge and support of the school agenda (Spillane et al., 2002). For example, Felicia permitted her students to call and warn their families they were potentially vulnerable to ICE. Felicia also drove
her students home. Iris indicated that she would make the same decisions she had in 2008 to keep her children in the classroom. During her class visit to try and see the mayor, Iris took her students back inside the building the moment she realized her students were “freaking out.” Further, she was so incensed about ICE activity near the school that in the future she would “…wait them [ICE] out. I’ll stay as long as I need to.” Iris’ comments convey her feelings of protectiveness toward her students. Together, staff acted with their students’ interests in mind with the level of autonomy they had.

Staff did not speak about specific professional or standard codes of practice related to the safety and well being of students in circumstances where they questioned if students would be safe. However it is clear that in staff’s sensemaking of the situation with ICE, reports of ICE provoked them to act in accordance with professional codes of ethics, such as those of the National Education Association, whose ethical principles state that educators “Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety” (2012).

Participants agreed that ICE activity near school property, whether intentional or not, was and is unethical due to the consequences activity has on children, their families, and children’s readiness to learn at school. Participants perceived that the school itself is a safe space, but most did not state that enforcing immigration law is unethical in and of itself. For example, Officer Gates drew distinct ethical boundaries based on whether ICE activity happens inside or outside the school building. Other participants like Sandra and Tom, who were against ICE operating near a school, did not deny that it is in society’s interests to make attempts to enforce immigration policy.
School as a safe space and protecting the family

When asked about their thoughts on the ethics of ICE conducting an operation near school, some participants such as Jill indicated the school could be a safe space for both students and their families. Jill said,

“I think school should be a safe place for kids and their families. I guess I just have an ethical issue with breaking up families and sending people back. I don’t know. I feel like people should be able to come here if they want to come here and work and have a better life for their families. And I think that school should be a sacred place. It should be a place for kids who are allowed to get their education and for their families to come and get their kids without being harassed by anyone, you know. So yeah, I think there’s a problem with that.”

Jill, like other participants, was focused on how ICE activity could affect students’ access to education, but was more concerned about the detrimental effects that the enforcement of immigration law can have on families. Mainly, participants were worried ICE activity would result in separating parents and children and tearing families apart. Paz felt similarly to Jill, saying ICE activity near a school is ethically questionable, “because it will stop most of the children coming in. Parents are going to be scared. And they, let’s say a mom’s bringing her kid, and they take the mom…you know, what are they going to do with the kids? If it does happen, immigration doesn’t care. They can take the mom and leave the kids here.”

The larger issue for participants was not just ICE activity near school property but the potential for immigration enforcement to split up families. Participants questioned the ethics of enforcing immigration policy more generally. Targeting adults or children at
school would be unethical, but for participants like Iris, such a strategy would not get immigration agencies closer to their goal to deter undocumented immigration. Iris stated,

“I think they should stay away from schools. It’s not the children. And if you’re picking up the adults who are there showing concern for their children by picking them up from school or meeting with a teacher to discuss their progress at school, or for whatever reason… to me, it’s too easy, and it’s also…I think it’s immoral to do something like that. If you really want to deport people, I think you need to go and look at the people who are hiring them. Who are American citizens. That’s where the moral issue is. Of course they’re coming over for jobs; they’re getting jobs. The kids have nothing to do with that. And to watch your mom or dad get handcuffed and thrown into a car and taken away, and you never see them again? Yeah, how am I going to teach that kid? So to me it always comes down to, “I’m the teacher, stay out of my classroom. It’s a safe space. It’s about learning, and that’s all it’s about.”

For Iris, the school is clearly meant to be an ICE-free zone for both students and their parents. ICE activity near a school is not in the best interest of the school, teachers, students, or families. If immigration policy is going to be enforced, government agencies should employ strategies to go after businesses that hire undocumented adults. It is therefore not in ICE’s best interests either to enforce immigration policy near a school. The purpose of a school is to be a place for learning: ICE activity near school property disrupts the school’s ability to carry out its primary function to educate young people by making it more difficult to help children learn when they are scared or traumatized.
Participants did not think that ICE would purposely target children, but ICE could hinder children’s learning if children feared ICE would pick up their parents and take them away. The resource specialist, Felicia, made similar connections among ICE activity, student well being, and disruption to the school’s goal to be an institution of learning. Felicia remarked,

“I strongly believe that ICE coming near any school is significantly unethical because it directly impacts student learning due to the emotional/social stress than it can cause. A school community needs to remain a neutral ground for children to feel safe and only worry about passing a test or completing their homework, not if their parent's might "get picked up" by ICE when they are waiting for them after school.”

Delineating ethical boundaries

In spite of the fact that participants view the school as a safe zone and perceive that ICE activity has negative consequences on student learning, participants did not fully negate the right for the government to enforce immigration law. Sandra, the 5th grade teacher, perceived the role of a school is to educate children and keep them free from harm—but she acknowledged and gave credibility to the viewpoint that immigration law should be enforced.

"I could see it two ways, because you have the two views. I see it through the eyes of our community and our children. That they are children, and we don’t want anything to happen to them. And we want the safety of their parents, and if their safety. And if they feel good about themselves
more, they’re going to learn. And that’s what we want them to learn a lot. And to prepare them for the future. But I can also see the view of other people that think they come here, and that they’re a burden to the society, because some of them come and have a lot of children. And I can see their point of view also."

While Sandra did not perceive an ethical or legal dilemma in her decision making like other participants in the study, she implied she agrees to some extent with the position that undocumented immigration to the U.S. results in social costs,—potentially placing additional burdens on the educational system obligated to educate undocumented children. Essentially, she acknowledged it is worth considering others’ perspective that it is in the best interests of society to enforce immigration law. Tom stated his position that ICE activity near school grounds could be considered unethical based on the consequences that enforcing immigration law has on people (e.g. causing fear/trauma or separating families). However, like Sandra, Tom did not entirely rule out a place for the government to enforce immigration law, or say that immigration enforcement is always unethical. He remarked,

“As far as the ethics go, it really depends on what your values system is. I think a lot of people feel that it is unethical to deport people who are good workers, good students, good parents, children, church members and so forth. But this is an extralegal sort of "ethics." In this line of thinking the law doesn't matter, it's the human beings that matter. I think I usually feel this way. If you believe in the laws as they stand, then their actions would be unethical only if they violated laws about how police and other
agencies should operate within the vicinity of a school. I don't know if there are any laws about that. In point of fact, ICE did not set foot on school grounds.”

While Tom did not think that ICE activity near Aurora was in the best interest of the students or the community, his comments about the ethics of ICE coming near a school fell short of calling such activity “unethical.” Tom personally believes that undocumented people who contribute to society and avoid trouble with the law should be allowed to stay in the U.S., but he left room for different interpretations concerning whether ICE activity near school property is ethical. Officer Gates too demonstrated that he is open to different interpretations of the ethics of ICE activity. However, Officer Gates clearly demarcated the ethics of ICE activity within the school building versus the ethics of ICE activity away from schools, saying “It would be that way [unethical] if it was in the schools, coming through the schools and stuff like that. But outside the schools, I mean, they’re just doing their jobs.” For Officer Gates, acting in the best interests of children includes protecting them within the school, but outside of school immigration enforcement activity is not necessarily unethical—and officers have a right to enforce immigration law. Linda also thought about whether ICE activity near a school is ethical or unethical based on proximity to the school combined with her assessment of ICE’s intention to actually come onto school grounds.

“Ethical, like decision on my part? If they would have been there, I don’t know. I keep asking myself like, “would you have let them onto campus?” And I keep going back to “no, probably not.” But I don’t know where I would have gotten that, in the face of that, where I would like…In
hindsight I can say I wouldn’t have let them on campus. But in the moment I don’t know if I would have been like, “am I supposed to?” trying to figure out. It’s like when any agency comes onto your campus, and they flash their badge and say, “we’re here because of blah, blah, blah.” When I see that, there’s not a time where I’m asking, in the beginning, like “do you have to let you on campus?”

Linda would have questioned not just the ethics of ICE coming onto Aurora’s campus. She would have combined her assessment of the ethics of such activity with the legal right of an enforcement agency to come onto school grounds. Her instincts to say “no” to ICE activity at Aurora demonstrate that she perceives this activity as unethical, but she would also pursue legal knowledge to support her position.

Olivia was the only participant to react strongly to any form of immigration enforcement, whether it happens near a school or not. Olivia, the former ESL teacher at Aurora, believed that it is in the best interests of society to not have immigration enforcement as it keeps undocumented immigrants from making valuable contributions to society. In speaking about the assets that undocumented immigrants’ efforts can bring to society, she said,

“These are people who do so much for the community. Who have so many skills and, they’re involved in the local school, but they’re going to leave and with all their skills go back home because as older people there’s no hope for them in this country. You know, they’re paying taxes. Payroll taxes into the Medicare, social security system, yet they don’t…they’ll never be able to take advantage of that.”
Olivia made sense of immigration enforcement near school property as an extension of her belief that U.S. immigration policy is “totally wrong” and “screwed up.” In Olivia’s mind, enforcing immigration policy is in no one’s best interests, and she critiqued laws she perceived as unjust.

**Conclusion**

School staff at Aurora did not make sense of what was in their best interests, the best interests of the school, and the best interests of the students by reconciling conflicting immigration laws or policies. At Aurora, school staff showed through their actions that their primary concerns in responding to reports of ICE was for the safety and well being of Aurora students. They prioritized what they perceived as in the best interests of the student. For example, staff calmed student fears by letting them call their parents and by reassuring them that the school would keep them safe. Participants did not explicitly address the fact that they were upholding the ethical codes of their profession, but their actions demonstrated that they were living out those ethical principles in practice. Participants did not talk about their obligations or responsibilities as it related to legal and school or district policies, and they did not express awareness of policies either. The implication is that educators are unprepared to some extent for how shifting immigration policies and enforcement strategies can influence how they ensure undocumented students’ access to education, and they are not ready to adapt to the changes policies might have on their responsibilities and obligations as educators. Aurora staff, and potentially other school leaders or staff without legal or policy awareness, do not have knowledge to call on if these students’ educational rights are challenged. Further, without
policy awareness, educators could inadvertently act contrary to policies (e.g. legal or district) that were designed to safeguard undocumented students’ educational rights. In addition, there is the possibility that educators could place themselves into a legal or ethical dilemma if their instincts cause them to automatically act in the best interests of the child without examining the broader context in which their legal and ethical responsibilities occur.

Linda, Aurora’s principal, influenced school staff sensemaking in terms of what decisions and school procedures staff perceived as in the best interests of the school. Staff indicated that they were unsure about school policies related to ICE, but they would trust Linda’s judgment and decision making in a similar situation. Linda, therefore, has framed how Aurora staff would make sense of any future ICE activity near school grounds. Namely, Linda called for the school to go into a lockdown mode and for staff (and community parents) to call Aurora families to alert them that ICE vans were spotted in the neighborhood. The result was that school staff erroneously assumed that the school would follow the same procedures if ICE activity near the school were to reoccur—which Linda rebutted by saying she was uncertain the school would need to go into lockdown mode again. One reason Linda would not call for a lockdown mode again is that there was no violence in 2008 as a result of ICE activity, and Linda normally calls for a lockdown if she believes the physical safety of students or staff could be compromised. As proposed earlier in this chapter, Linda expressed confidence that community members had learned their legal rights should immigration enforcement confront them. Linda could also have sensed—and decided she wanted to avoid—giving community members the impression that the school would automatically shelter them and shield them from law
enforcement. By agreeing to shelter adults, Linda could have more difficulty helping students feel secure and calm at school in the event law enforcement decided they would have to come into the school building to look for an adult suspect.

Arguably, the school district put the responsibility on the shoulders of the principals to protect the educational rights of their undocumented students and put district policy into action. Linda unexpectedly had wide authority to use her judgment to decide what she considered as being in the “best interests” of her school to respond to reports of ICE near the school. Although a school board resolution proclaiming ICE operations near public schools interferes with undocumented students’ educational rights, the school district’s legal department only suggested that Linda could call Aurora families as a “courtesy.” The legal department said the district was not supposed to do anything, throwing the extent of district support of its policies regarding undocumented students’ educational rights into question. Linda pursued making sense of what do next by conferring with two other principals. Together, the three principals agreed that making uniform decisions for their respective schools was in their best interests and in the best interests of their schools.

Linda later used her autonomy to persuade her local board member that Aurora should host a workshop for community members to meet with immigration lawyers to learn their rights. Linda strategized to influence her board member’s sensemaking of the follow up meeting. Linda appealed to the board member that it was in the mutual best interests for the board member and her constituents to show that the board member supported the community learning about their legal rights.
Linda and the school security officer perceived that the arrival of the mayor and other city officials jeopardized their efforts to keep the school secure from outsiders. Linda and other participants like Felicia and Tom viewed the purpose of city officials’ presence in the school as political in nature and unhelpful in the moment, wondering what actual support the city intended to provide the school. It is unclear whether the school would want support from the district or city based on participants’ impressions of the school district and the fact that Linda appears comfortable using her autonomy to make decisions on behalf of the school. Certainly, the then-mayor challenged a federal government entity’s right to enforce immigration law in a city that has declared itself a “city of refuge” for undocumented immigrants. However, what also remains unclear is whether the presence of city officials was valuable to schools in the long run, seeing as there have been no further reports of ICE activity near school property since 2008.

Finally, participants indicated that a school is primarily a place for learning and is a safe space for children as well as families. Participants perceived that there is an “ethical boundary” around the schools as ICE activity instills fear in children, making it more difficult to learn. Except for one participant who challenged the idea that immigration enforcement can never be considered ethical, all other participants suggested that as long as enforcement does not take place on or near school grounds, it is not necessarily unethical. For example, Officer Gates said that ICE agents are just “doing their job” to enforce immigration law. Instead, participants questioned immigration enforcement strategies and argued that undocumented people who abide by the law (though not law prohibiting undocumented immigration) can contribute to society. Therefore, participants perceived that undocumented people who work hard and show
they emigrated to build better lives for themselves and their families should be left alone.

Allowing undocumented immigrants to prove they are assets is in the best interests of not just a school but also society.
Chapter 8—MAKING SENSE OF DECISIONS

Introduction

In the first of the three research study questions, I inquired how educators who work with undocumented students make sense of potentially conflicting laws, policies, or messages. The second question asked how educators decided in whose best interests to act when their school experienced ICE activity near school property. In this chapter, I address the third research question, which asked

3. How does educators’ sensemaking of ICE activity on school property manifest itself in their decision making, and how do they make sense of the outcomes of their decisions?

The proposition underlying this research question is that an educator’s sensemaking of ICE activity on school property must result in the educator making a decision about how to respond. This decision leads to outcomes that an educator can reflect on, and this process of reflection can influence the educator’s sensemaking of the entire context surrounding ICE activity near the school. The process of reflection has the power to shape the educator’s sensemaking of the entire context of ICE near school, because sensemaking is an iterative process.

Again, in sensemaking theory, a person’s perception of her environment is filtered through preexisting beliefs, knowledge, and experiences (Weick, 1995). The focus of this chapter, then, is on how participants demonstrated that their preexisting beliefs, knowledge, and experiences influenced their decisions, decisions which ultimately represent their sensemaking of 2008 ICE activity near school property. Consistent with
sensemaking theory, participants’ experiences and knowledge from 2008 continues to shape their views of the outcomes of their decisions and how they would view future incidents of ICE activity near Aurora’s school campus. All participants believed that ICE could appear near the school again, but they differed widely in their beliefs as to why it might happen. Reflecting on their views regarding ICE’s intentions not only reinforced their satisfaction with the outcomes of their decisions in 2008, but also showed once more that sensemaking is an iterative process. Participants’ personal and professional experiences and sympathy/empathy toward undocumented immigrants, as well as their perceptions of the strategies ICE uses to enforce immigration law affects how they made sense of the context of ICE near school several years ago. Their experiences and perceptions of ICE strategies also affect their sensemaking of the potential for recurring ICE activity.

In the previous chapters, I showed how Linda and Aurora staff acted together as a school to react to reports of ICE activity, demonstrating that sensemaking involves social interaction. The school’s overall response was to act in the best interests of students by securing the school grounds and reassuring students they were safe. Arguably, the school also acted in the best interests of the students by calling students’ families to alert them to ICE activity in the local vicinity. The findings from the third research question complement the findings from the previous two research questions. In this chapter, I explicitly address how research participants revealed how they individually made sense of ICE activity near Aurora, which included basing their decisions on a sense of logic and rationalization, a sense of relationship and obligation to the community, personal experiences and sympathy or empathy with undocumented immigrants, and their
perceptions of ICE’s intentions in coming near the school. Participants enacted the multiple ethical paradigms, divided into both professional codes of ethics and personal codes of ethics, contained in Stefkovich’s (2006) Best Interests of the Student (BI) model. Key finding from this chapter include

1. Participants made sense of ICE activity in 2008 and the potential for future ICE activity near school through a variety of lenses. They based their decisions on their sense of logic, previous experience and knowledge, personal experiences, and perceptions of ICE’s intentions in coming near the school.

2. Participants’ sensemaking of ICE activity near the school, as demonstrated through their decision making, resulted in the actualization of all paradigms within the ethic of the profession (the ethics of justice, care, and critique, as well as community).

3. Participants made sense of their response to reports of ICE activity by also enacting personal ethical codes (e.g. sympathy or empathy with the struggles of undocumented immigrants and children), but these personal ethical codes were aligned with their professional codes of ethics.

The findings from the first research question revealed that participants did not perceive they had to make sense of conflicting policies or messages related to undocumented students. Nor did participants feel they were placed in a legal or ethical dilemma when responding to reports of immigration enforcement near the school. Although participants demonstrated minimal explicit legal, district, or school policy awareness, they stated they believe all students have a right to an education and should
feel safe. The purpose of a school is to educate children, and ICE activity close to school property makes it difficult for staff to maintain a school environment conducive to learning. ICE operations can inhibit students’ readiness to learn.

The findings from the second research question showed that when making sense of ICE activity near school grounds, the school district gave Linda, Aurora’s principal, autonomy to make decisions about how to act. The district enabled Linda’s autonomy (and possibly that of two other district principals), even though the district has stated that ICE activity near schools jeopardizes undocumented students’ legal right to an education. However, Linda’s actions and those of Aurora staff revealed that participants were first and foremost concerned to act in the best interests of their students. For example, participants prioritized student safety and well being by acknowledging and calming student fears and telling children that their parents would also be safe. When local politicians and media arrived on campus, some participants wondered in whose best interests the politicians were acting as the campus became more difficult to secure—and it was unclear what immediate support officials were offering. Yet, other participants gave credit to the mayor and other city officials for standing firm on the city’s stance on federal immigration enforcement in the city and for their statements that ICE activity disrupts children’s education. Whatever their perspective on the underlying purpose of city officials’ decisions to come to Aurora, participants agreed that city officials helped politicize the school ground—though participants countered local politicians’ assertions that ICE would purposefully target schoolchildren.

The findings in this chapter show more closely the influences on staff’s sensemaking of the 2008 incident with ICE, influences that include components of the
multiparadigmatic framework conceptualizing how educators can make decisions that are student-centered in complex situations. The framework also integrates educators’ professional and personal codes of ethics. This chapter addresses how participants’ preexisting beliefs, knowledge, and personal experiences contributed to their sensemaking processes, which then manifested themselves in their decision making. Participants’ beliefs, knowledge, etc. shaped their thoughts about the entire context of ICE activity near school property and how they made sense of and reflected on the outcomes of their decisions. All participants were satisfied with the outcomes of their decisions in 2008, and stated that they would not hesitate to make the same decisions again if ICE comes near Aurora’s campus.

**Integrating the BI Model into Participants’ Sensemaking Processes**

As described in Chapter 3, the Best Interests (BI) model conceptualized a framework for how educators might reflect on their thought processes in an ethically complex situation to arrive at a decision that is in the best interest of the child. The model, which builds on Shapiro and Stefkovich’s Multiple Ethical Paradigms (2005), is comprised of four complementary ethical paradigms that include the ethics of the *profession, justice, care,* and *critique.* The ethic of the profession encompasses the other three paradigms, and it also contains the *ethic of community,* though Shapiro and Stefkovich argue this ethic is not a stand-alone paradigm. The authors rationalized that educators perceive obligations to the community—taking account of how their decisions will impact school-community relationships—but their obligations to the community are under the umbrella of the ethic of the profession.
Briefly, the *ethic of the profession* argues that there are “moral aspects unique to the profession” of teaching (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2005, p. 19). As noted earlier, participants acted in accordance with professional ethical codes (e.g. those of the National Education Association) by prioritizing the safety and well being of Aurora students. The *ethic of justice* advocates for educators to uphold what is fair, just, and equitable—and to question the enforcement of laws and/or policies. The *ethic of care*, on the other hand, urges that educators be empathic and compassionate toward those in their care; that their decisions reflect these values and conscientiousness as to how those decisions will affect the relationship between the educator and student. The fourth paradigm, the *ethic of critique* challenges educators to question imbalances in power relationships, and to work to emancipate marginalized people. Finally, Stefkovich (2006) contributed to the multiple ethical paradigmatic framework, strengthening the likelihood that educators’ decisions stay student-centered in ethically complex situations by having educators consider the 3 “Rs.” The 3 Rs encourage educators to think about students’ *rights*, students’ *responsibility* for their actions in relation to their rights and those of others, and to work to maintain *respectful* relationships between educators and students (and between students as well).

As expected, school staff at Aurora did not think about their thought process in terms of the explicit ethical paradigms captured in the BI model. However, as I argued earlier, the ethical paradigms implicitly belonged to and shaped how participants thought about and reasoned their way through an ethically complicated scenario. I tested the BI model and confirmed its soundness. I also found that the BI model was integrated into participants’ sensemaking in the context of their decision making in a situation where
ICE comes near school property and potentially circumscribes undocumented students’ educational rights (See Table 8.1).
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<th>Personal Codes of Ethics</th>
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<td>Paz</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Care, community</td>
<td>Undocumented immigrants contribute to society</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Liaison</td>
<td>Justice, community</td>
<td>Education is a human right; Undocumented immigrants contribute to society</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Bilingual Office Clerk</td>
<td>Critique, community</td>
<td>Immigration policies unjust; undocumented immigrants contribute to society</td>
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<td>Olivia</td>
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<td>Former ESL teacher</td>
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<td>Critique, justice, care, community</td>
<td>Immigration policies unjust; undocumented immigrants contribute to society</td>
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Perceiving ICE Activity through Logic, Previous Experience, and Knowledge

Aurora staff used a number of implicit and explicit strategies to make sense of how to respond to reports of ICE activity in the school’s vicinity for the first time. Consistent with sensemaking theory, participants drew on their previous experiences, beliefs, and knowledge of the school’s response to circumstances where it is unclear if there is a threat to students’ safety. Participants used these strategies and also focused on making decisions based on what seemed natural, logical, or reasonable to them. Their decisions reflected their attempts to make sense of and respond to a situation that disrupted the school’s usual routine without knowing the extent to which that routine would be changed. Although participants revealed that they used different strategies to make sense of ICE activity near school property, the catalyst that drove their decision making was participants’ desire to act in the best interests of Aurora students.

Leadership Experience and Confidence in Using Authority

Linda, Aurora’s principal, stands out from the rest of the study’s participants in terms of her strategies to respond to reports of ICE close to the school. Primarily, Linda was able to use her autonomy as a school administrator to decide on behalf of the school what she perceived as in the best interests of her school, staff, students, and community. The school district’s legal department permitted Linda to made decisions that she believed were logical to respond to reports of ICE based on her professional role. Linda could make decisions that the district would not have allowed other school staff to make. In this way, Linda used the same strategies as other participants, but her sensemaking of ICE activity through her personal use of logic, experience, and knowledge trumped that of
other research participants. The implication, as evidenced in the role that Linda played in making decisions at Aurora and in how she used her autonomy, is that a school administrator is in a position to take the most critical role in deciding how to protect undocumented student’s educational access. Therefore, how school administrators in particular use their logic, professional experience, and authority to arrive at decisions that are in the best interests of their students in legally or ethically complex circumstances is likely to become increasingly salient in the immigration debate.

As described earlier, Linda called the school district’s legal department, consulted with two fellow principals to reach a decision about how to respond, and then asked both staff and parents to alert Aurora families to the reports about ICE. Due to her level of autonomy and the fact that Linda’s sensemaking resulted in the kinds of decisions that were enacted in 2008, I privilege Linda’s voice to some extent above other voices in this chapter. Linda, as well as other participants, incorporated a sense of logic, calm assessment, and previous (and personal) experience to make sense of new circumstances involving ICE to reason their way to a decision.

Linda has had to demonstrate school leadership in a number of complicated situations during her fifteen-plus years of experience working at Aurora, and her wealth of experience contributed to how she reacted to a new situation with ICE to assess and evaluate the potential impact ICE activity would have on the school and the decisions she made about how the school would respond. For example, in the past couple of years, Aurora students have lost parents and/or siblings in consequence of neighborhood robberies, gang-related violence, and deportation—all circumstances that strongly affect the school community and students, and presumably students’ receptivity to learning.
Linda’s leadership abilities, knowledge of how to respond to unexpected circumstances, and authority also came from her experiences acting in different professional roles at the school. In her tenure at Aurora, Linda has served as teacher, union representative, and as a teacher on “special assignment” (i.e. a coaching position). Linda saw three other principals come and go at Aurora before taking the position herself, and she paid close attention to how they handled their responsibilities, proactively building her professional knowledge to act in a number of capacities and circumstances. Before taking over the principalship at Aurora, Linda had several years to observe the actions of the school’s former principals and note these principals’ values, strengths, and weaknesses. She compared these observations with her values and priorities—and noted what she would do differently when she became principal.

According to Linda, feelings of discomfort initiate her sensemaking in a new situation, consistent with sensemaking theory. Sensemaking theory states that disruptions in expectations and routines provoke a person to try and understand and ascribe meaning to a new situation or event (Weick, 1995). Once Linda wonders whether some type of action has “crossed the line,” she proactively starts gathering as much information as she can to inform her decision making. She reaches out, begins asking questions, and in her words, “[tries] to read a situation.” With law enforcement, for example, Linda stated that she desires to be helpful, but she will take a moment to stop, think, and reflect on her obligations and responsibilities—and her level of autonomy—before making a decision. Linda explained that her experience and sensemaking of other situations helped her process how to respond to reports of ICE. Linda reflected on what her decision making
process might have been if ICE had tried to actually come onto Aurora’s campus in 2008. She said

“I still ask myself that question, like ‘What would I have done in the face of it?’ and I don’t actually know. I think I’m always the type of person that tries to read a situation and then decide what to do. I feel like I’ve done pretty well with that through the years. So I can’t say, you know, exactly what I would have done. I think I would have probably had them (ICE) stay here and then made a couple of phone calls”

Linda acknowledged she would have initially felt uncertain if ICE had tried to push onto school grounds. However, she also expressed confidence in her ability to successfully and rationally evaluate a new situation—and not be pushed into a decision that is potentially not in either the school’s or students’ best interests. Linda remarked her confidence comes from previous experience—some of which has included interaction with local law enforcement agencies asking to use school property as a site for sting operations. Presumably, Linda has called the school district’s legal department to learn the legal rights and responsibilities of the school to respond to requests from law enforcement. Responding to a request from a federal agency like ICE would provoke Linda to logically seek some new knowledge to her inform her decision making. Essentially, however, Linda would use knowledge from her previous experiences with law enforcement to help make sense of a new context involving ICE.

Rosa and Tom both commented on how they respect Linda’s approach to decision making. Rosa, the community liaison, stated that Linda maintains a calm, cool demeanor, and that she has never seen Linda upset; Linda always stays calm. Rosa said, “I’ve never
seen her upset. Never. She’s always so calm, and she doesn’t get upset. Maybe she does, but we just don’t see it.” Tom’s perception of Linda resembled that of Rosa. His past observations of Linda’s calm handling of difficult situations matched his observation of Linda’s sensemaking and rational response to reports of ICE activity in 2008. Tom said, “She is emotionally controlled, and she addresses fears and other issues directly. She took families into her office and talked to them. The ones that were more wound up, that could control themselves enough to just stop and talk to her. And she…she understands it from both points of view. She understands it from an administrator point of view and from a community member point of view.”

Tom provided evidence that Linda seeks to respond to others in a levelheaded fashion and to listen to others’ perspectives and feelings. Notably, Tom also indicated that in the context of ICE coming near school property, Linda tried to understand and balance her professional obligations with exhibiting the ethic of community by valuing Aurora parents’ reactions to possible immigration enforcement.

*Using Knowledge and Experience to React Rationally*

Other participants like Officer Gates, Rosa, Olivia, and Felicia also used logic to make sense of report of ICE activity and as a strategy to respond to community members’ concerns about their vulnerability to immigration enforcement. Participants like Rosa drew on previous knowledge, which included personal stories that people who had had some encounter with immigration enforcement had shared with her, to make sense of ICE coming near school. When Aurora parents expressed continued fears about coming near
the school following the 2008 incident, she said, “I remember when I was talking to them, I was like “well, they’re not gonna come to your house, and if you know that they’re in a…this area, just you know, go around. Take another route.” Rosa tried to calm families’ by appealing to their sense of reason as well. She stated that although she had not been instructed about specific school policies to guide her decision making, she related that her decisions were based on rationalization. In terms of her sensemaking, she said,

“Well, it’s just a logical process, I mean, people are not gonna come to your house unless they have like a…because I’ve heard this from my family before. They’re not gonna come to your house unless there’s like a direct report that there’s people at that address who are illegal and…so they’re coming directly to that house. But if immigration is like, let’s say they’re in the McDonald’s right now, I mean, they’re not gonna go to homes. They’re just gonna stop whoever’s around that area, at McDonald’s.”

It is possible, as evidenced by Rosa’s previous experience and knowledge prior to ICE coming near school grounds, that Rosa was aware of immigration policy and suggests she may have also inadvertently helped enact the ethic of justice by sharing her knowledge with families.

Officer Gates also implied that his sensemaking of ICE activity near Aurora and his subsequent decisions were based on logic/common sense. When asked how he later perceived both his response to reports of ICE in the neighborhood and the community’s response, he replied,
“There wasn’t nothing to make sense of…It was to me—it was just people trying to hold their rights. People trying to protect themselves. Just people trying to protect their rights, protect their families, not [get] arrested, you know, so then I could say once again, I just do what I supposed to do [sic].”

Gates’ reaction to parents’ response was a natural, logical extension of decisions he has made during his years of experience working as Aurora’s school security officer. He boiled down his job description to a simple statement, saying his job is (and has been) “just coming in here and working with the kids, making sure they’re right; protecting the kids.” Gates made sense of his decisions and the outcomes of his decisions based on his history of experience securing the school grounds and his understanding of his school role. Gates’ primary job has always been to make children feel secure at the school and to build relationships with Aurora families to create trust between the school and community (i.e. exhibiting the ethic of care) to better achieve student well being; his decisions in 2008 were no different.

There is a “cultural norm” at Aurora for staff to try and remain calm in uncertain situations, as evidenced by the responses of Linda, Rosa, and Officer Gates. Olivia’s reaction to reports of ICE and her sensemaking were also similar to those of other participants: to keep calm herself and try to mitigate student or community fears. Her sensemaking of ICE and her decisions reflect that she used her logic and common sense once her adult ESL students fearfully responded to reports that immigration enforcement was in the area. Again, this participant’s instinct was to prioritize the well being of community members, which ties back to the high value Aurora staff place on
relationships—and demonstrates that staff frequently enact the ethic of care, which is described further in the section below. In speaking about how her sensemaking of manifested itself in her immediate decisions, Olivia said,

“I was in there teaching, and somebody comes to, [say] ‘la migra, migra.’ And I said, ‘Ok, let’s close the door,’ you know, ‘let’s sit down, just be calm…’ and so…Maybe I said that. ‘Ok, we’ll just close the door.’ So we just stood behind. We stayed behind the door for about a half hour and then I went out to see what was happening.”

Making Decisions that Value Relationships

The school culture at Aurora is one where staff highly value relationships with the community and with their students. Linda, as the head of the school, has been largely instrumental in creating a school environment where staff are encouraged to reach out to the community and build relationships with them. For example, participants have asserted that Linda has consistently demonstrated that she values relationships with the Aurora families and acts in the best interests of students. She has strived to build ever-stronger connections between the school and local community by requesting that teachers make visits to their students’ homes to meet families, learn about students, and understand what students’ home lives are like.

Linda’s personal codes of ethics—her personal values—align with the ethic of the profession in the BI model, particularly the ethic of care, which has also set the tone for how school staff think through their decisions. Many of Linda’s past decisions have stemmed from her concern to demonstrate an ethic of care in supporting families and
those who struggle. Her decisions have also stemmed from the ethic of critique as she shows sensitivity to differential or inequitable treatment of people. In speaking about her views of a former principal’s leadership abilities, Linda said, “…There were a lot of instances of the person making decisions that seemed like they weren’t supporting the families. Even to the point where she [a principal] was being accused of racial discrimination.” Essentially, the former principal’s decisions were the antithesis of what Linda would have done. Remarking on the positive aspects of school leadership she learned through watching a different former principal whose values were more like with her own, she stated,

“His strengths were student discipline and counseling, because he had a counselor background. So I loved watching the way how he interacted with kids and families, because he did a great job, kind of coaching families through some difficult family situations. Giving them support and access to counseling and that kind of stuff.”

At Aurora, Linda has supported families and students by looking after their physical and mental health. In spite of an increasingly tightening school budget, Linda has ensured the school offers support services: Aurora has a school counselor, several intervention specialists who also work with children, and a resource specialist available to work with students so they have the support they need to succeed academically, no matter what their background or home life look like.

Linda has actively built close ties between the school and community in several ways during her tenure as Aurora’s principal. For example, Aurora’s community liaison, Rosa, helps families fill out forms so they can receive Medi-Cal or food stamps. As
another example, and as noted in a previous chapter, the community organizer, Emmanuel, whose organization works to help immigrant communities, is very involved at Aurora. Linda enables Emmanuel to come to Aurora to host meetings with parents to encourage increased parental involvement at the school. In 2008, she worked with Emmanuel to arrange the workshop for families to meet with immigration lawyers in the school cafeteria in the wake of the ICE incident. Linda’s sensemaking and the decisions in result of her sensemaking regarding ICE activity further emphasized that she has consistently valued relationships and exhibited an ethic of care toward students and the community in her decisions—and encourages staff to value those relationships too.

Linda’s sensemaking in 2008 and in prior situations reveals that the ethic of critique informs her sensemaking and her decision making. Again, Linda furthered community members’ knowledge of their legal rights in the face of immigration law enforcement. She acted to empower undocumented adults to stand up to challenges questioning or infringing on their rights, simultaneously reducing her own power and authority to make decisions on their behalf—thereby exhibiting the ethic of critique. For example, instead of sheltering undocumented adults in the school if ICE activity was to reoccur, Linda expressed confidence community members could handle themselves and that the school would not automatically go into lockdown mode. In addition, Linda exhibited the ethic of justice through her actions by helping others learn their rights so that what society agreed was fair and equitable, as supported by law, was upheld. Her sensemaking of previous experience with ICE activity and her satisfaction with the outcomes of her decisions influenced how Linda later viewed the entire context of what
happened in 2008 and would also color future choices—which demonstrates that
sensemaking is an iterative process.

**Making Decisions Based on Relationship with and Trust in the School Principal**

Staff relationships and their trust in Linda shaped how they viewed their abilities
to make decisions in 2008 and the decisions they would make in a recurring incident with
ICE. Linda and the principal of the school sharing Aurora’s campus influenced Officer
Gates’ sensemaking of his decisions and his enacting professional codes as noted in
Chapter 7. Gates has close working relationship with both principals, and an additional
part of his job is “Just protecting my principals, making sure they’re good, making sure
I—I’ll do my job with my principals. I love my principals.” He cares for others on the
basis of his perceived responsibilities associated with his job, but also due to the strong
relationships he has built.

Gates believes his relationship with Linda is one of mutual respect; he referred to
her as a “top-notch principal,” and that he does his job “with,” not “for” the principals.
Gates says his principals are “…understanding, they’re caring. They’re professional
people. And they don’t…they listen, but you’re not gonna just run ‘em over.” With this
comment, Gates drew parallels between himself and the traits and values he has observed
in Linda and the other administrator. Gates’ comment expressed how he has approached
his relationships with community members and his attitude toward his job
responsibilities. Similar to how parents relied on Linda in 2008, Gates encourages parents
to trust him. He said, “I let them see that their kids are safe. The kids come to me, they
rely on me. Got any problems, they come to me. And if the parents have any problems, they come to me. So just make, let them see that’s we’re safe. We’re ok.”

In making these connections, Gates suggested that he and the principals created shared understandings about the school’s priorities. Consistent with sensemaking theory, Gates placed new information into a preexisting cognitive framework. He also suggests that through social action with the principals, he has enabled them to shape his beliefs by creating boundaries and a framework for the kinds of actions or decisions he has made. Principals like Linda have contributed in part to Gates’ understanding of what it means to enact professional codes of ethics.

Jill also has a close working relationship with Linda, which also shaped her views that she and Linda have a shared understanding of what it means to act in the best interests of Aurora students and the community. Jill was working in the front office with Linda in 2008 on the day of ICE activity, and she was one of several participants Linda asked to call Aurora families to alert them to reports of ICE. When asked to reflect on the events of that day and the outcomes of her decisions, Jill first indicated her satisfaction with the decisions she made, saying she would have no qualms to handle another, similar situation with ICE in the same way. “Yeah! Oh, definitely. Definitely I would.” After this response, Jill then immediately questioned whether she would have the knowledge to make decisions related to reports of ICE near school, saying those decisions were a little outside her area of “expertise.” Jill then stated she would demur to Linda, and allow Linda to make decisions in a recurring incident with ICE, with Jill following Linda’s lead. Jill made sense of ceding power to Linda to make decisions based not just on her perceived lack of expertise but by justifying her choice with her training in psychology.
Jill evaluated Linda’s decisions in 2008 and believed they were sound, saying, “I’m thinking, even from a psychological perspective, she did the right thing to keep the kids calm, keep them at school.” In drawing a connection to her own professional training and knowledge, Jill suggested that Linda abided by the same professional codes of ethics as Jill and that the two have a shared basis from which to make decisions to respond to ICE activity.

**Acting out of concern for the community and children**

As there is a school culture at Aurora where relationships are highly valued, staff were used to enacting decisions that took the well being of both the community and school children into account. Their familiarity and comfort with prioritizing relationships with the community and students shaped their responses to ICE activity in 2008. Jill, the school psychologist, upon hearing reports of ICE vans near Aurora, also exhibited the ethics of care and community, as did Olivia, the former adult ESL teachers.

Although Olivia’s recollection of her exact response to her students was imperfect after several years, she reasoned that her students would be safest by staying indoors while she, a U.S. citizen, investigated the situation further. Olivia cared for those for whom she perceived herself to be responsible, and her actions showed she chose to react in a way that she considered as in her students’ best interests. She told her students to stay inside the classroom, because she was sensed they were vulnerable in a set of circumstances where she was not. Olivia, though she interacted with adults, was enacting what in her mind were professional ethical codes to protect her students from any kind of harm.
Another participant, Jill, also acted out of concern for the community and her belief that they were vulnerable. This belief helped instigate her response and subsequent decisions to act. Jill recalled that she immediately thought through reasons why immigration enforcement could affect Aurora—the fact that the community Aurora serves includes undocumented persons—implying their legal status made them particularly vulnerable. Jill’s next logical concern was how the reports of ICE activity would affect the rhythm of a typical school day (i.e. children being released to the proper adult in the afternoon), and potentially result in a safety issue. Jill recognized the school staff would have to quickly enact decisions that anticipated the potential consequences ICE activity could have on the school and how to keep students safe. In recounting her initial processing of reports of ICE near Aurora property and how that led her to subsequent decisions, Jill stated,

“I don’t know what time of day it was, and so then it was like, the next thing was ‘How do we respond as a school. What do we do?’ Because so many of our families are undocumented. The first way that I was directly pulled into it was after school when there was the question of “what do we do when all the parents come to get their kids? So, the issue was what do we do about the parents that are going to come pick their kids up from the school and may be confronted by immigration. And so we decided, I can’t remember who—maybe Principal Linda, that we should call the families that we know that are undocumented, and tell them not to come to school to get their kids. And we would keep all the kids here safe at school until we got clear that immigration was no longer in the area.”
Again, along with Linda and other school staff, Jill called families to let them know they could send an alternative person to pick a child up from school. Jill demonstrated that she and her colleagues assumed primary responsibility to care for Aurora students by agreeing to stay with children at the school as long as necessary, until there was certainty ICE had left.

Sensemaking by perceiving injustice

Several participants had very strong emotional responses to the presence of ICE near school property. Their responses were fostered by their perceptions that immigration policy—and therefore how immigration law is enforced, particularly near a school—is unjust. Olivia vehemently disagrees with U.S. immigration policy and immigration enforcement tactics such as building a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, which led to her exhibiting the ethics of critique and justice in her decisions at Aurora in 2008. Olivia referred to the wall along the border as “…that horrible wall. It’s called the ‘Wall of Shame.’ The verguenza. You know, billions and billions of dollars to build that wall down on the Mexico border,” a border which she believes is senseless, inhumane, and a waste of resources. Olivia actively critiqued the ethics of U.S. immigration policy and the treatment of undocumented people in general, saying

“These are people who do so much for the community. Who have so many skills and, they’re involved in the local school, but they’re going to leave and with all their skills go back home, because as older people there’s no hope for them in this country. You know, they’re paying taxes. Payroll
taxes into the Medicare, social security system, yet…they’ll never be able
to take advantage of that.”

For Olivia, the fact that her students and friends cannot reap the benefits of their labor is
an injustice. In light of Olivia’s preexisting beliefs about U.S. immigration policy and
views on the contributions undocumented people can make to U.S. society, it is
unsurprising that she would enact the ethic of care upon learning about ICE activity near
Aurora and later critique the government’s actions. Olivia tied her reflections of the
context of ICE’s actions near school property to her sensemaking of U.S. immigration
policy writ large and the direct effects immigration policies can have on her Latino
friends.

Similar to Olivia, Felicia had very strong feelings about U.S. immigration policy
and how immigrants are treated. However, in spite of feeling very upset to learn that ICE
came close to Aurora, she put her surprise and anger aside to reason her way through to
decisions that would best benefit the students, saying,

“I was really pissed at first, but I knew I had kids in here. So I knew I just
had to keep it together, and just see what they needed to do. So that’s why
we called home. Then I took them [students] home….I was pissed. It was
definitely really emotionally draining, I would say. Definitely….I just
never thought that they [ICE] would be in our neighborhood. ‘Like, why
are they in our neighborhood?’ so I was just really pissed, and like, what
rights do they have? It’s so wrong to come into schools, and just thinking
of the whole issue of displacement. Families being torn apart because of
deporation.”
Felicia’s processing of the potential implications of ICE activity reflected the BI model paradigms of the ethics of care, justice, and critique. First, Felicia was concerned about how students would feed off her reaction, and she tried to remain calm for the sake of those in her care. Second, she questioned whether ICE had a legal right to conduct an operation near the school; and third, Felicia was critical of the power ICE wields to enforce immigration law and how it could result in separating families. By referring to “our neighborhood,” Felicia indicated she identifies with the local community. Felicia’s words further speak to the strength of the ties between the school and community, helping to explain why Aurora staff consistently demonstrated the ethics of care and community.

Felicia, who drove her students home on the day of the 2008 ICE incident, had no question that she was pleased with the outcomes of her decisions. Like other participants, when Felicia considered whether she would make the same decisions again if ICE appeared near Aurora a second time, her experience in 2008 informed her belief about what decisions she would make in the future. Felicia remarked, “‘To drive? Yeah, yeah. Definitely. Oh yeah, without a hesitation. Yeah. Definitely.” Felicia also she suggested she might be more vocal about her displeasure, half-joking that “I might make a little poster, like ‘ICE get out of my neighborhood’ the next time.”

Iris, the 3rd grade teacher who took her students to see the mayor but had to quickly return with them to the classroom after seeing them “freaking out” and hearing their comments about immigration also suggested that she was satisfied with her decision making in 2008. However, similar to Felicia, Iris stated that she was so against ICE activity near school property that she would consider taking additional measures to
protect her students. Iris was also willing to personally transport her students safely to their homes. She said, “If I have to take the kids home myself, I will. Ferry them one at a time. To a safe space or have them meet somewhere else with the parents, that’s not here at school.” While Iris’ perceptions of the outcomes of her decisions in 2008 indicated that her decisions were successfully enacted and she could make the same decisions again, she was also prepared to make new decisions if she felt it was warranted.

Neither Felicia nor Iris indicated that they spoke with each other about their reactions and subsequent decision making in response to ICE coming near Aurora. Yet, the fact that each woman came to the same conclusion that she could offer the greatest protection to students by personally taking them home—and indirectly helping protect students’ parents from encountering ICE as well—is evidence that there is some shared understanding in the school that children’s safety is a top school priority and that staff make decisions around perceptions about what is in the best interest of the students. As represented through participants’ actions and their perceptions of the outcomes of their decisions, it is clear that exhibiting the ethics of care and community are paramount at Aurora.

**Sensemaking through Personal and Professional Experience and Relationships**

As stated in previous chapters, all participants believed it is possible ICE might conduct an operation near the school at some point. However, participants varied in their beliefs as to the actual probability ICE activity will reoccur. Their views about the likelihood of ICE coming near Aurora again were colored by their own personal experiences (e.g. personal histories with immigration), awareness and sympathy/empathy with the personal
experiences of undocumented people, and perceptions about whether ICE knew they were enforcing immigration law near a school. In the previous section, I showed that when school staff reflected on their decision making and the outcomes of their decisions, they were satisfied with how they responded to the 2008 ICE incident. In this section, I exemplify how participants’ personal experiences, sympathy/empathy toward undocumented immigrants, and their perceptions of how ICE views boundaries to enforce immigration law has affected their sensemaking of the probability of recurring ICE activity.

*Sensemaking through first-hand experience and sympathy/empathy with undocumented immigrants*

Every research participant in the study had either first-hand personal knowledge of the difficulties undocumented people face through their friends or families, or they mentioned learning about the struggles of undocumented families through the course of their professional life. Ten of the fourteen research participants had a history of immigration in their families. Participants either immigrated to the United States with their families or have a close family member (i.e. a parent) who is an immigrant. These personal experiences likely strengthened the ties and trust between the school staff and the community. With their own experiences of immigration or in hearing the stories of others, staff could more closely identify with community members’ circumstances, feelings, and needs. As stated earlier, participants have consistently prioritized the best interests of students in their decision making and anticipated how their decisions might also affect the local community—resulting in participants frequently exhibiting the ethics of care and community.
Participants’ sympathy/empathy with undocumented immigrants also led them to be critical of immigration law itself and to question how those laws are enforced (thus, exhibiting the ethics of critique and justice). Aurora school staff overwhelmingly empathized with undocumented students and adults, and participants made sense of their decisions, the outcomes of their decisions, and potential future decisions by relating their responses back to their personal and/or professional experiences.

Paz, the school librarian, was not present at Aurora on the day of the ICE incident, but due to her role as librarian, she has had ample opportunity to interact with both Aurora children and their parents. Paz stated that oftentimes parents tell her of their struggles and ask her for advice. For example, parents will tell Paz they are out of work and are seeking employment. Paz indicated she tries to be as helpful as possible to families, but recognizes there’s only so much she can do to help. Paz knows what it is like for families to try and start a new life in a foreign country, and that starting over can be a difficult process. She and her family came to the United States from Mexico when she was a very young girl. It took her father a lot of time and effort to secure official documentation for Paz, her mother, and siblings to be able to stay in the United States. Various family members had also tried to make the same journey over the years. Although Paz was away from the school when reports of ICE activity, she remarked on how she would reassure undocumented immigrants in response to their fears of immigration enforcement. She said,

“I tried to make them see it wasn’t something to worry about. Because in my experience [since] I’ve been here…I have a lot of relatives that don’t have papers. I have a lot of them. And…a lot of them, if they stay, you
know, the main thing is they come and work. If they behave, then they’re doing fine. Nothing happens.”

Paz could use her family members’ experiences to relate to community members. She also stated she noticed parents were scared in the wake of ICE coming near the school. Paz counseled the parents, recalling, “… all I told them was…. ‘Don’t go around telling people you are here without papers. They don’t need to know this.’” Paz had preexisting knowledge and beliefs about how undocumented people could reduce their vulnerability to immigration enforcement. The community trusted the relationship with Paz enough to reveal their legal vulnerability to her and their fears of immigration enforcement; they trusted that she would help them think through decisions that would be in their own best interests.

Community members also clearly trusted Mariposa, Aurora’s bilingual (Spanish and English) office clerk, to keep their confidence. Trust between the school and the community is a two-way street. The strength of Mariposa’s relationship with community members is evident based on a number of factors. Mariposa has a long history of personal and professional experience in both the school and community, bridging the two and creating closer connections between them—further demonstrating reasons why school staff responded to reports of ICE the way they did. Mariposa also had a history of immigration in her family: Her parents are first-generation immigrants from Mexico. She suggested that due to her background and personal experience of belonging to a family of immigrants, she identifies with the issues undocumented community members can face. She said, “My parents came down here to get a better job. Get a better life for their family. I mean, they’re citizens now. So they’re here working.” She believes that
undocumented immigrants work hard and have a right to seek improved living circumstances. Mariposa can relate to community members as well: For years, Mariposa and her family have been a part of the local community that Aurora serves, which includes a population of newer immigrants (including undocumented persons) and immigrants who are more established. Mariposa’s personal history means that she has understanding of what people in her community go through based on their legal status. Like Mariposa’s family, she says of undocumented people, “They’re not doing anything bad. They’re here working. They get paid very little and I just feel that, let them work. They’re not doing anything.”

Although Mariposa moved away from the community several years ago, she still maintains close relationships with the community, interacting with them on professional and personal levels. She said, “I’m friends with a lot of the families. We meet. Sometimes….Just yesterday I was with—they’re friends….They all stop by the office. We talk, they invite me to parties that they have.” Mariposa’s children attended Aurora before she started working at the school, so it is likely she formed long-standing, tight connections with other mothers through her children. Mariposa currently works in Aurora’s front office, so she handles the requests of friends and other Aurora families on a day-to-day basis, thus melding her professional and personal lives together.

As evident through her decision making in 2008, Mariposa showed through her actions that she sympathized with undocumented persons. Her professional and personal codes of ethics aligned in her sensemaking and influenced her subsequent decisions. Mariposa made decisions to respond to reports of ICE based on her perceptions of how immigration enforcement could negatively affect her friends. Several years ago, Mariposa
was working in a different role at Aurora. She worked part-time supervising children at recess during the lunch hour. She had heard reports on the radio that ICE was going around the neighborhood. Although she couldn’t recall the exact procedures other staff followed as she was not working in the front office at the time, she was sure school staff called parents to alert them to immigration enforcement. She remembered, however, calling parents—her personal connections—saying, “And friends of mine that I know, I let them know just in case they didn’t know.” Mariposa’s relationships with Aurora families provoked her to make decisions that she perceived would best help her friends, and she did not perceive any impediment to integrate her professional role and personal beliefs to caution undocumented families.

In recounting her views on undocumented immigration, Mariposa did not condone people coming to United States without official authorization, but she expressed her displeasure with how immigration law is enforced and the impact it has on families. She said, “I’m not gonna say, ‘Leave all the immigrants here. All the people that are…not legal here,’ It’s just the way they do it, the way they approach people, the way they’re doing everything. I just think it’s so intimidating. And families, children, kids here at school are really scared.” Mariposa’s close relationships, along with her experience seeing the effects immigration enforcement near a school can have on people, influenced her perception of the context of ICE activity near Aurora in 2008. She revealed that her sensemaking of that context resulted in her prioritizing her personal relationships with community members to ensure their safety. Mariposa’s actions to warn her friends of their vulnerability to ICE stemmed from her personal understanding of and empathy with undocumented immigrants’ experiences. Her sensemaking of the 2008 incident,
processes that combined her personal knowledge of immigration, valuing relationships, and her strong beliefs that undocumented immigration is not automatically a criminal activity—that it can actually be argued as a human right—indicates she was satisfied with her decisions and their outcomes. Therefore, Mariposa would likely make similar decisions in a recurring situation with ICE near Aurora property.

Like Mariposa, other research participants such as Emmanuel, Rosa, Felicia, and Luz had personal histories of immigration in their families. Emmanuel and his family emigrated to the U.S. because they feared for their lives due to violent political revolution in their native country. Rosa, her parents, and siblings moved between Mexico and the U.S. before settling permanently in the U.S when Rosa was 11 years old. Felicia’s parents are first generation Mexican immigrants, and growing up she wanted to be an immigration or refugee rights lawyer after seeing the “BS [her parents] have gone through…” For example, Felicia recalled her desire to become a lawyer was spurred by incidents where her family was treated unfairly when crossing the border between the U.S. and Mexico, saying “There was always this big drama crossing the line to get back into the United States. Like, my parents were citizens, but it seemed like the immigration officials were always very rude.” Luz, on the other hand, is the daughter of political refugees from South America. Her parents fled from living under the rule of a military dictatorship in their native country, a dictatorship under which “a lot of people…disappeared.” These participants, in light of their personal backgrounds and knowledge of—and disagreement with—U.S. immigration policy helped them relate with greater sympathy/empathy toward Aurora students and families and undocumented immigrants in general, shaping their views on the context of immigration enforcement
near school property. Their personal values were reflected in the actions they took, or were asked to take in 2008, and would propose to take in the event of recurring ICE activity near school grounds.

For those participants without recent personal histories of immigration, their professional experience and first-hand knowledge of working with children of immigrants and immigrant children influenced how they made sense of ICE activity near school grounds. Tom, an intervention specialist, saw his professional role and obligations as centering on children’s well being, and he took pride in making his work student-centered. He expressed his perceptions of his professional responsibilities by saying,

“…even if I’m not doing anything earth shaking during that hour I’m becoming the person who knows that kid much better than anybody else. So when there is some need, that’s there, for them to talk to me about it or for me to go and support them in that situation, whatever it is. It’s sort of like being a translator. Like you become someone who speaks that kid’s language, right?”

Through his role at the school, Tom has gathered a wide range of information about the circumstances in which Aurora students live. Some students’ living circumstances (e.g. living in poverty) contribute to the reasons why students see Tom. For example, some students need extra support to work through issues like anxiety. Tom perceives that he can be most helpful and supportive and do his job by knowing the child as well as possible. Tom made sense of ICE activity near Aurora’s campus in large part due to his professional role at the school and his perceptions of what that role entails. His
sensemaking led him to recognize that ICE coming near Aurora’s campus just once could have a longer-term impact on children.

“I told any kids who picked up on it, I minimized it and said there was just—that there were some families that…were taking their kids out early, whatever, but it did spread, and I think as soon as the kids heard it, in whatever form, they were really anxious about [ICE taking] their family members away. So that means they were already primed for it. In their family, they already had a story of this, that this could happen. That people could be yanked out. Kind of a bogeyman story. And so ICE’s presence, I think was very much a bogeyman presence for them, and they were just reacting at that primal level.”

Tom’s comment suggested that, for Aurora schoolchildren, ICE coming near school grounds was akin to a nightmare coming true: The “bogeyman story.” In result of the incident with ICE, Tom gained a deeper level of understanding about the reality of the lives of Aurora students, their families, and their fears. Tom obtained greater insight into issues that affect the well being of students, which in turn, presumably would better strengthen his professional and personal approach to act in the best interest of students. In 2008, he calmed children as best he was able and attempted to mitigate their anxiety. He tried to do the same with children’s parents, recollecting,

“I talked to…whoever was there, and learned what I could from them about how they saw it. And I usually expressed that I didn’t think that the school was going to be targeted. But I supported them in thinking strategically about how to protect their family members.”
The incident with ICE also offered Tom insight into his relationship with the local community and their response to him as a white male in a predominantly Latino neighborhood.

Like other participants, Tom had a very positive impression of the community. He remarked, “I think most of these people are just working class families. I mean they’re very regular, normal, church-going, responsible kind of people.” The incident with ICE increased Tom’s understanding of why some Latino adults had kept him at a distance and enabled him to understand how the community might perceive or has perceived his actions when he thought he was simply demonstrating the ethic of community. Tom stated that many members in the community “either won’t respond to me, or [they] look at me suspiciously.” Tom had tried to build some relationship with the community by making simple gestures of outreach to them like greeting them when he saw them away from school property. He did not receive a warm response in return, which confused him, but the reasons for their perceived coolness toward him became clearer after ICE appeared near Aurora’s campus. He said,

“And then I talked to some of the staff here and they said, “oh, they’re worried that you’re baiting them, as like an ICE agent plant, you know to speak Spanish, and that will make them suspicious of them being illegal.” And I can understand that. So, if I recognize them, if I really know who they are, then I’ll still say ‘Hi,’ and they’ll respond well to me. But I’m not going to push it.”

Although Tom recalled that the school quickly returned to normal in the day or two following the reports and sightings of ICE in 2008, the knowledge he gained through that
experience influenced his sensemaking of that event and increased his empathy for school students and their parents.

ICE coming to the school again is not frequently on Tom’s mind. As mentioned in a previous chapter, school staff are more concerned to prevent local gang violence and poverty from affecting both students’ physical and mental well being as well as their academic performance. Yet, Tom’s experience in 2008 augmented his awareness of issues that could be on the minds of community members more frequently and has prepared him to respond to another situation with ICE. He said,

“…on the one hand it’s a big nebulous anxiety. On the other hand it’s just practical law enforcement response to ignoring a deportation order, right? But there is a real thing. There are real people. It’s scary. It’s off to Arizona then Mexico. So it wasn’t just made up.”

Olivia, who is white like Tom and does not come from an immigrant background, made a similar assessment to Tom about the undercurrent of anxiety that runs through the undocumented community that ICE will enforce law in the local neighborhood. Olivia said, “We haven’t had any more raids around the school. But I believe it’s sort of this, blanket. Dark blanket that hangs over this community. The Latino community.” As previously mentioned, Olivia worked with adult ESL students on Aurora’s campus in 2008 and decided to keep her students inside the classroom until the perceived threat of immigration enforcement had passed.

Olivia made sense of immigration enforcement and immigration policy in general because of her professional and personal experiences, which have fostered a deep empathy within her toward immigrants and undocumented workers and their struggles.
Olivia’s undergraduate studies in sociology and community studies influenced her career choices and criticism of social systems and policies. She said the result of her education was that “…I got totally radicalized. I mean, it turned me around. I became a catalyst for social change.” The poverty she witnessed during her travels to the Dominican Republic and Mexico “stunned” her, and she was further stunned by the poverty she observed in the Central Valley, California since “Here we are, the richest country in the world, and people…have an irrigation canal dripping under their homes, and kids dying of meningitis…”

In the spirit of giving back to others and helping them to better their life conditions, Olivia worked as a community organizer who interacted closely with farmer workers in California—jobs that undocumented workers often occupy. In addition, she later worked as a worker’s rights counselor for an aid society before eventually moving to Aurora. Through her years of professional and personal experiences, Olivia developed relationships with different Latino communities and grew in appreciation for various Latino cultures—which has translated into her appreciation for the Aurora community as well. She stated,

“Oh, because I love Latino culture because of my work in the Central Valley. Like, I, they [people in the community] call me [her pet name]. I celebrate the…I’m really into, I think it’s a beautiful culture, and so…I celebrate their culture.”

Empathy and respect for Latino friends and workers immigrants also facilitated Olivia’s sensemaking of ICE activity, even though she did not have her own personal experience with immigration. While at Aurora, she also actively sought to build relationships with
Aurora community members, who are also predominantly Latino. The community’s trust in Olivia has grown over time. Like Tom, Olivia learned that the community was wary of her. She learned later that “the community checked me out to decide if I was ok.” However, many community members now express their affection for Olivia by using a pet name for her. More important, though, Olivia’s undocumented friends will text her to inform her when they hear about ICE conducting raids, which they call “redadas” in Spanish.

Again, Olivia acted to protect her students as best she was able in 2008 by keeping her students in the classroom while she ventured outside to learn what was actually happening after hearing reports about ICE near Aurora. She prioritized her relationships with the community and her long-standing beliefs that immigrants—and undocumented people—are assets in a community through her actions. Olivia’s reflections on the incident in 2008 and her criticism of present-day immigration enforcement activity and U.S. immigration policy demonstrates she would continue to base future decisions around the impact her choices could have on her close connections in the community. In speaking about U.S. immigration policy, she stated, “…it’s just so offensive, you know? It’s so negative. I do feel our immigration policy is totally wrong. Is totally screwed up.” She reasoned,

“Capital moves without any problem across the borders. Why can’t people? A lot of people who are here from Latin America, Central America, are here because of NAFTA and other trade policies that have obliterated their livelihoods in many different ways. So people are coming for a better life.”
Participants did not criminalize undocumented immigration. Rather, like Olivia, they suggested that people have the right to seek a better life, particularly when those policies have contributed to the difficult life circumstances people are trying to leave. Olivia was one participant who clearly showed multiple paradigms contained in the BI model. Olivia’s knowledge, beliefs, and personal and professional experiences led her to process ICE activity near Aurora and make decisions by using the ethics of justice, critique, care, and community to shape her sensemaking of the context. Similar to other participants, Olivia’s personal values were also in line with the professional codes of ethics she followed.

Gates is another participant who enacted professional codes of ethics to protect school students, but his response to reports of ICE activity and decisions also resulted from long reflection on his personal values. Though Gates only alluded to the reasons why he had a major life shift that led him to move away from a “life on the streets,” and to have a “big turnaround in life,” his reasons influenced his motivation to become a school security officer, role model for, and protector of children. He said he was “getting tired of seeing kids go through what they were going through.” His sensemaking of any situation drives his subsequent decision making to sure that “making sure that they’re [the kids] are right” and safe. Gates valued using his personal experiences to help keep kids off the street—and presumably prevent some children from making mistakes that he himself had learned the hard way.
Sensemaking through Perceptions of ICE’s Intentions

Participants’ reflections on whether ICE intentionally or inadvertently operated near Aurora’s campus varied, but they all thought it possible for ICE to come near the school again. Their beliefs point to the fact that they recognize the school can be the physical grounds for the immigration debate. Staff perceptions of ICE’s intentions also demonstrate why all school staff, not just school or district administrators could benefit from more policy knowledge and training on how the shifting political landscape around immigration policies can affect their roles as educators, and how they can help ensure undocumented students’ access to education.

Participants’ reflections on ICE’s intentions, though they differed, help to explain why participants were satisfied with their decisions in 2008 and have incentive to make similar decisions in the future. Iris, the third grade teacher whose class ventured to see the mayor but quickly turned around and went back into the school, definitely believed that ICE knew they were acting near a school in 2008. More important, Iris believed that ICE would purposefully seek undocumented people on school grounds simply because it would make agents’ jobs easier, and the agency does not view or treat undocumented people as human beings when enforcing immigration law.

“I think it’s like shooting fish in a barrel. They’re like, ‘Ooooh. We can definitely pick up some people; we’re low on quota. Let’s go down to the schools.’ I totally believe that. But I have a very healthy distrust of authority…so, it’s…I don’t trust anybody who’s in those positions. Because they don’t see people as people. They can’t. They can’t afford to in that job. You wouldn’t be able to do it. They see people as numbers. So
it’s not a big deal for splitting up a family. It’s not a big deal if we’re taking mom and dad and leaving kids on their own. I don’t think people really care about that, at that level.”

For Iris, then, the school campus can truly serve as more than symbolic grounds in the immigration debate. In light of her comments, Iris has already chosen a “side” in the debate, so to speak. She was and still is vehemently against ICE activity near school grounds. In 2008 she took her students back to their classroom to calm them down. If ICE was to come near Aurora again, she stated she would “wait them [ICE] out” or ferry her students home, one by one, because she was so upset and suspicious that ICE would not be aware that it was operating close to a school.

Officer Gates, in talking about the possibility of ICE activity taking place near school again, echoed Iris’ comments. He said,

“Always happen. That’s always gonna happen. That’s the law, it’s gonna happen. The problem with that is you don’t know when, you just don’t know when. But you know they have their target spots. You know. They’re smart because they know how to catch people. And that is going and coming from schools. I mean, think about that.”

Officer Gates believes it is a matter of time before ICE activity takes place in the neighborhood again. Such activity is unpredictable, but it should be expected that government will attempt to uphold immigration law. Further, Gates suggested to expect the activity to happen near the school again as it would make sense for ICE to do so from a tactical point of view. Like Iris, Gates explicitly perceived ICE is willing to enforce immigration law near school without compunction. Gates may have some justification for
his position. It is unclear how much knowledge Gates had about ICE conducting an operation close to Aurora in 2008 prior to reports of ICE activity reaching other research participants. Gates hinted that he may have been alerted to expect ICE activity at some point due to his position at the school as a security resource officer. Due to Gates’ position, he has contacts at the city’s police department and through the district, so it is possible he was privileged with information that Linda, the school principal, did not have. Gates declined to provide details about how he first learned ICE was in the neighborhood, saying “I can’t really get into that, because that’s…the unfortunate part of it. But I knew from my sources which is my, my people…” that the day was going to be out of the norm, though he couched his awareness of the expected difference in that particular day by stating there was “something in the air.” He would not share what knowledge he did or did not have about ICE, because he perceived that sharing such knowledge would compromise his professional ethical codes. When asked what he knew, he responded, “there’s some things I really can’t, I can’t say because [it’s] more of an enforcement thing I can’t talk too much about. I can’t do that.”

Other participants such Olivia, Mariposa, Javier, and Jill also either believed ICE intentionally came near school grounds as part of its immigration enforcement strategy, or perceived ICE’s strategies would not prevent them from enforcing law near school grounds. Notably, no participants thought ICE would come on or near school grounds to pursue undocumented school children, which is how local politicians helped frame ICE activity close to Aurora. Instead, participants believe undocumented adults would be targeted and the school could serve as a strategic site for ICE operations. In this case, ICE activity could still affect the school environment and have serious repercussions for
students and families. The implication is that without policy knowledge and sound knowledge of school procedures, Aurora staff remain unprepared for how ICE activity could affect the school.

Olivia, who is generally suspicious of the government and likens government to “Big Brother,” thought that ICE operating near Aurora in 2008 was inadvertent. However, she believes ICE enforcement strategies are motivated by the desire to create fear in undocumented immigrants. Like Gates and Iris, though, she would not rule out that ICE would intentionally search for undocumented immigrants close to school grounds. She said the purpose of the incident in 2008 was to scare the community, and it was possible ICE knew they were in the school’s vicinity. She said, “I don’t know what they know. And maybe they wanted to scare the community. A lot of this is about scaring the community.”

Mariposa not only thought it possible that ICE could intentionally come near the school again, she also suggested that ICE racially profiles and singles out Latino communities as part of their enforcement strategies. She said, “They’re gonna go straight where all the Latinos are at. They know there’s gonna be people that are not legal here. Who are not documented, and they’re gonna come here.” Mariposa commented that Latinos are not the only ones who immigrate to the U.S. without official documentation, but she believes Latinos are targeted specifically.

Javier, a kindergarten teacher who was not present at Aurora on the day of the ICE incident in 2008, also thought ICE would use a school as a strategic site to look for undocumented people. He surmised, “You know it was like they came exactly knowing that kids were here. So it’s like, are you using, because these kids, most of them are
citizens. Parents are illegal.” He did not believe ICE would come to school to pursue children. Rather, ICE could use the school grounds and children to bait undocumented adults.

Not all participants expressed certainty that ICE activity would definitely reoccur, but they did believe it is possible. Jill, like Olivia, was not as certain as Mariposa, Javier, or Iris that ICE intentionally operated near Aurora in 2008. However, once she reflected on the possibility ICE might have known that a school was nearby, she hesitated to strongly express that their actions were unintentional. Yet she acknowledged that she, too, believed it was not beyond ICE to enforce immigration law close to the school.

“I think they did. This is totally guessing [but] it’s pretty smart on their end to come to a school and come near a school because they know that adults are coming to get their kids. So it’s a pretty good way to corner some people. But I don’t know. I don’t know how they work at all. I don’t know anything about it, so, I guess in theory I would say it was a pretty smart move on their part if that was what their goal was, but I don’t know if that was their intention or not.”

Whether ICE intentionally acted close to Aurora or not, Jill emphasized that she believes ICE could come near the school again. She stated that in her role as school psychologist, she knows that Aurora families are dealing with issues related to their legal status in the country. She has also heard stories in the school that in the past some children have not come to school because there are concerns about a parent deported, so the child “kind of stays on lockdown in the home,”—though she has not worked with a specific client whose parent has been deported.
Other participants like Tom, Rosa, and Linda believed that ICE inadvertently conducted an operation near the school. He stated,

“I think the way the ICE presence affected the school community was inadvertent. I don't think they meant to cause that sort of anxiety. As a law enforcement agency, I'm sure they were just enforcing a judge's orders and going after specific targets. However, every action is changed by it's context, so the fact that they were going into a community where so many people have a strong, emotional response to ICE—due to personal experience or that of family members or close friends—meant that they should have thought carefully about how they were going to carry out their operation.”

Unlike Mariposa, Tom did not think that ICE tried to target undocumented adults through the school or was making a bigger sweep of the local neighborhood to find people who were legally vulnerable. Tom indicated that ICE lacked sensitivity by not being alert to their surroundings, but he did not believe their actions were intentional. Rosa also doubted that ICE would purposefully come near school grounds as part of enforcement strategy. Further, she never entertained the thought that ICE would come near a school to go after students or to cause fear. She said,

“Well, I don’t think they should go to schools because first of all, the employees, school districts are not gonna hire anybody who’s undocumented. So why would they come looking for children? I mean, are they looking for the parents who would be here at the school?”
Rosa puzzled over the question as to whether ICE coming near school presented an ethical issue. Her answer, as evident in the quote above, demonstrated that she didn’t conceive of a reason why ICE would have a reason to come near the school—either intentionally or inadvertently. Instead, Rosa reasoned that the school campus would be safe as long as the school district does not employ undocumented staff, and Rosa didn’t believe the district would do that. As noted earlier, Rosa expressed little concern about the impact ICE activity could have on the neighborhood. In response to community members’ fears that they are vulnerable to ICE, Rosa calmly told them it was unlikely ICE would come to their homes and that if they needed to come to the school, they would be fine if they learned where ICE was located and then took a different, less vulnerable route to the school.

Finally, Aurora’s principal, Linda, who demonstrated a lot of influence over how her staff made sense of the context of ICE near school and the decisions they consequently enacted, did not believe that ICE targeted the school. People in the community told Linda that ICE activity in the neighborhood was not coincidental and the 2008 incident was not an isolated event. They told her “We feel this is more targeted because we have a high population of immigrants in this neighborhood,” which Linda, upon reflection, later rationalized contributed to the decisions she made to shelter undocumented adults in the school, keep children indoors, and Aurora alert families.

According to Linda and Emmanuel, the community organizer, at least one ICE agent was present for a little while at the school’s follow up workshop where community members met with immigration lawyers. ICE also had the opportunity to explain that they did not know they were operating near the school. However, Linda, as principal, was the
only participant who had a direct, full conversation with ICE about the 2008 incident. She said that during that event someone from ICE called her several days after the event, which also was likely after the workshop as well. She said that ICE told her,

“‘No, we weren’t planning to come on campus. We weren’t…we can’t just pick up random people.’ They explained more of it to me, and I was just like ‘Where were you the first day, when we have to go through all of these other steps?’ ‘We only come and pick up the offenders that we’re looking for’ and this, ‘in the neighborhood we were picking up two individuals that had broken laws and that were repeat offenders.’…. There was not, you know, ‘We were not intending to scare you or your community.’ The one thing that made me laugh was ‘You should have called us.’ I was like, ‘You can just pick up the phone and call ICE? And then I would get somebody on the phone that would just tell me ‘Oh, we’re just there in the neighborhood to pick up some person that broke the law, not there to just do a raid. Like you would actually tell me this information?’ The person was like ‘Yes, we would tell you.’ It’s just like, ‘That’s strange.’ But I remember laughing at that, like ‘Oh you can just call us, we could have clarified all of this for you. It’s, like, ‘Really?’ Yeah.”

Linda believed that ICE was not targeting the school, and though she has not ruled out ICE coming near the school again, ICE activity close to campus is not a concern at the forefront of her mind. Like Tom, she pointed out that ICE demonstrated a lack of sensitivity to knowing their surroundings and how their actions could have an adverse
affect on the school and community. While the ICE representative explained the boundaries within which ICE operates (i.e. “We can’t just pick up random people”), the ICE agent gave an explanation for what happened but did not apologize to Linda on behalf of the agency. What stands out particularly about Linda’s conversation with ICE is that Linda perceived that ICE placed the onus on her and the school to know that ICE would be in the area so that she and staff could have anticipated the outcomes of their activities. Based on Linda’s reaction to the ICE agent’s phone call, she thought the agent’s response was ridiculous. The result was she questioned the truth behind what the ICE representative told her in consequence. So, while Linda and school staff are busy with other daily concerns that do not include thoughts about ICE activity, Aurora staff provided strong reasons why it is possible ICE could again come near Aurora—ICE did not thoroughly or convincingly deny that they would not conduct an operation in the school’s vicinity.

Sensemaking of Future Decisions through Satisfaction with Previous Decisions

All participants in the research study reflected positively on the decisions they made in 2008, and indicated their willingness to make similar situations in a recurring incident with ICE. In this chapter and in previous ones, I have shown that some of the key reasons Aurora staff would largely make the same decisions is that they are driven to first consider how their decisions will affect the well being of Aurora students. Again, sensemaking is an iterative process, and participants’ satisfaction with their decisions in 2008 signifies that they will not perceive a need to make different decisions in the future. Participants’ decisions included reacting to reports of ICE in the neighborhood with
concern for children’s safety, to allaying students’ fears that their parents would be picked up by immigration enforcement agents, and by securing the school grounds. Aurora staff also responded by calming the fears of Aurora parents as well. Based on participants’ professional and close personal relationships with families in the community, Aurora staff offered support, advice, and physical shelter in the school building for adults who worried they would encounter and be vulnerable to ICE. Participants’ satisfaction with the outcomes of their decisions also implies that those decisions “worked.” Therefore, participants also will not see a need to pursue knowledge of federal, state, district, or school-level policies; policies that may in actuality help them in their quest to protect undocumented students’ educational rights and ensure a safe learning for all of Aurora’s students.

Participants revealed that they were satisfied with the outcomes of their decisions in 2008: No parents were picked up by ICE, and the school quickly returned to normal and once again became a place conducive to learning. In a previous chapter, participants showed that in spite of having little policy knowledge about what district or school procedures would be in the event ICE comes near the campus again, they would make the same decisions. Gates’ professional ethical codes included prioritizing student safety in a situation where student well being was in question. ICE activity near Aurora’s campus in 2008 was a situation no school staff had encountered before, but Gates perceived his decisions on that day proved consistent with previous decisions. Gates’ role has always been to prevent strangers from coming into the school building and placing students in jeopardy. He offered the example that no child had ever been kidnapped from Aurora property—thus expressing his satisfaction that the outcomes of his efforts to secure the
school had proved satisfactory and had prevented any such tragedy. Like Linda, Gates was confident in his decision making in 2008 in result of previous experience, again saying of that event, “There wasn’t [sic] nothing to make sense of.” In his mind, his response was natural. Gates’ sensemaking of the context and outcomes of 2008 gave him confidence to make similar decisions should ICE activity reoccur near Aurora.

Olivia’s actions in 2008 were also consistent with her personal values that all people have the right to a better life and immigrants deserve some empathy, similar to the perspectives shared by Felicia and Iris. Olivia too was satisfied with the outcomes of her decisions as none of her students were confronted by ICE, and her political beliefs and relationships would cause her to act on behalf of her friends should her friends have concerns about their vulnerability to ICE. For example, although Olivia was no longer employed by the school district at the time of this study, she was still close with the local immigrant/undocumented community to the point where she would translate documents that the U.S. Department of Homeland Security had sent to her friends.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Aurora school staff were satisfied with the decisions they enacted in 2008 to prioritize their students’ safety and well being, to calm undocumented adults’ fears and offer support, and to alert local families that the school received reports that immigration enforcement was in the area. As participants were satisfied with the outcomes of their decisions, they did not offer reasons to make alternative decisions in a recurring incident with ICE (except for Linda). In reflecting on the event in 2008, I showed in this chapter that participants’ decisions stemmed from their sense of logic, previous experience and
knowledge, and professional and personal experiences and relationships, not from specific policy knowledge. That participants’ sensemaking of the context of ICE activity near Aurora was influenced by their previous knowledge and experiences is consistent with sensemaking theory. In turn, participants’ 2008 experiences also influence how they would perceive future ICE activity close to the school’s campus and their willingness to take actions similar to those they took several years ago. Their thoughts on whether ICE knew it conducted an operation close to the school also factored into their sensemaking of their decisions and beliefs about the likelihood ICE activity will reoccur.

Participants exhibited all of the paradigms within the BI model in the context of their sensemaking of ICE activity near a public elementary school. School staff showed that their professional codes of ethics aligned closely with their personal ethical codes in their actions. For some participants, personal codes of ethics likely matched their professional codes of ethics and actions based on participants identifying and empathizing with undocumented immigrants. The two paradigms most often represented in participants’ decision making were the ethics of care and community. The main reason these ethics were revealed more consistently is due to the fact that school staff acted on principle and instinct to think about and protect students. Staff have very close professional and personal relationships with the local community. The school’s culture encourages staff to prioritize relationships with the community (e.g. Emmanuel the community organizer holds parent meetings) and to seek the best interests of students in their decision making. Staff would not hesitate to make the same decisions again if ICE came near the Aurora campus—which ICE did not fully deny.
Chapter 9—DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!

Emma Lazarus (excerpt from “The New Colossus”)

Introduction

Schools have long been the principal institution used to help incorporate immigrants into U.S. society, transmit American cultural values, and enable people to gain the necessary skills and knowledge to lead productive and meaningful lives. In Plyler (1982), the Supreme Court ruled that limiting a person’s access to education severely limits their life prospects. However, when Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) activity takes place near school property or in the local vicinity, it can inhibit undocumented students’ access to education (e.g. undocumented parents keep their children out of school) and receptivity to learning (Chaudry et al., 2010; Dominguez, 2005; Murillo, 1992; López & López, 2010; Ricardi, 2008).

The primary arguments driving this research study, and a key research finding, is schools have become more than symbolic ground in the immigration debate. This study was built on the premise that educators have both legal and ethical responsibilities as it relates to undocumented students’ education. Educators are legally obligated to comply with immigration enforcement agencies, but they are also charged on ethical grounds to “… protect students from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety” (NEA, 2012). To gain an understanding of educators’ thought and decision making processes when ICE comes near school grounds, the following research questions guided the study
1. How do educators who work with undocumented students make sense of laws or messages regarding ICE and school policy toward undocumented students when these laws, messages, or policies conflict with one another?

2. How do educators who work with undocumented students make sense of their own best interests, the best interests of their school, and the best interests of the students when their school has experienced ICE activity?

3. How does educators’ sensemaking of ICE activity on school property manifest itself in their decision making, and how do they make sense of the outcomes of their decisions?

This study makes significant contributions to the growing body of literature on issues that affect the education of undocumented students and to the fields of education policy and immigration policy. This study specifically illuminates how immigration enforcement strategies directly affect educators, educators’ decision making, students, schools, and communities by provoking fear in the community and forcing school staff to make decisions about how to respond. At this point in time, no study has specifically examined how ICE’s presence on or near school property impacts the sensemaking of educators serving in a school with undocumented students, and what this means for educators’ views about providing education for undocumented students. Nor has a study investigated with it means for educators to act in the best interest of their students in the context of ICE operating near a school. The purpose of this chapter is to present a summary of the salient research findings and to discuss why the study’s findings from
this particular case study should matter to schools, educators, school districts, and policymakers nationwide. After discussing the research findings, I close this chapter by addressing the implications that the study’s findings have for policy, practice, and future research.

**Summary and Discussion of Key Findings**

ICE has issued statements that schools are not a place for routine immigration enforcement activities and that the agency recognizes the effect its actions or perceived presence can have on schools and schoolchildren (Martinez, 2008). However, the research findings showed that ICE did not demonstrate sensitivity to the impact their activity had on Aurora and the local community. The consequences for Aurora staff, the school children, and the local community were myriad. The first key finding from the study showed that

1. *School staff demonstrated little to no individual or collective legal awareness as it relates to undocumented students’ educational rights, or district and school policies related to ICE activity on or near the school’s campus.*

School staff revealed they were largely unaware of the *Plyler* (1982) ruling either before the incident with ICE on school grounds in 2008 or several years later. Unexpectedly, only two participants, one of whom was Linda, suggested having explicit knowledge about the *Plyler*, though neither mentioned the federal ruling by name. Neither did school staff show they had much awareness of district or school polices related to ICE activity near the school’s campus, though participants thought it possible ICE activity could
reoccur. Aurora staff did not have knowledge of law or district and school policies and procedures to draw on that could have potentially enabled them—and the school as a whole—to be better prepared and strategize ways to respond to challenges to undocumented students’ educational rights.

There were several reasons why staff at Aurora likely demonstrated minimal policy knowledge. Instead of relying on policy knowledge or district and school procedures, participants expressed curiosity about school procedures in a recurring incident with ICE, but most participants 1.) Were more concerned about the immediate impact of neighborhood violence on the school; 2.) Assumed that the school would follow the exact same steps and go into a “lockdown mode,” whereby everyone is secured in the school—though Linda rebutted this; or 3.) Increased Linda’s autonomy to make decisions on behalf of the school by remarking they would follow Linda’s lead. In both instances, Linda exerted strong influence over the sensemaking of Aurora school staff and their power to make decisions in response to ICE activity.

In result of their level of policy knowledge, staff did not perceive they were in a legal or ethical dilemma when responding to ICE activity in 2008. Therefore, they did not conceive they could face a future dilemma in their decisions to respond to ICE or in other situations where immigration policies could influence the school environment. For example, community members sought and received shelter in the school in 2008 after learning ICE was in the local neighborhood, and they could potentially expect to receive shelter at the school again. Arguably, ICE could have more incentive to come onto school grounds or in the school building if it learned the school was providing sanctuary for undocumented adults, which would have a much bigger impact on school staff decision...
making and consequences for students. A broader implication for schools and school staff without policy knowledge in states or cities where immigration policies are more conservative is that educators will also be less prepared to respond to unexpected situations like when state policies attempt to have schools track students’ immigration status or when undocumented parents fear pull children out of school. In those circumstances, educators would be challenged to think more critically about what would be in the best interests of their students, school, and community.

The research findings that revealed participants’ limited knowledge of policies related to undocumented students were unexpected on several accounts. First, participants live in California, a state that has been at the forefront of supporting undocumented students’ access to education. Two notable pieces of newsworthy legislation related to undocumented students’ educational access passed years prior to the 2008 incident with ICE: Proposition 187 (1999) and Assembly Bill (AB) 540 (2001). Briefly, Proposition 187 (Prop. 187), dubbed “Save Our State,” was a ballot initiative that intended to limit undocumented immigrants’ access to social services like healthcare and education in California. Prop. 187, had it not been struck down by a federal court for violating the U.S Constitution, would have required teachers to report on the legal status of all children (ACLU, 1999). AB 540, which passed in 2001, permitted undocumented students to pay in-state tuition rates to California institutions of higher education (California Legislative Information, 2012). Luz, who was not employed at Aurora in 2008, was the only participant to specifically mention state legislation related to immigration policy by name. Linda, Aurora’s principal, also recalled learning about her legal obligations around undocumented students’ educational rights, because she took an education law course in
her principal leadership training program. Other participants, in talking about their knowledge of immigration policy, referred to specific types of immigration visas or spoke more generally that they believed U.S. policy and immigration enforcement is misguided. Participants perceived most undocumented immigrants have the right to pursue a better life and supported their beliefs by pointing to the hardships immigrants face in their native countries.

Participants’ lack of explicit policy knowledge was also surprising in light of the city’s clear, pro-immigrant stance. The city is a “City of Refuge,” and a “sanctuary city.” City policy prohibits city personnel to help enforce federal immigration law, nor can city resources be used to help enforce immigration law either. Further, school staff did not express awareness of district policy related to the district’s commitment to all students regardless of legal status, though the school district passed a resolution months before ICE was near the school. In terms of education for undocumented children, the district stated its policy is to promote a safe learning environment for all students. In addition, the district resolution declared that the city and school district stand “in solidarity” with immigrant organizations—and that ICE raids in Northern California cause immigrant families to fear leaving home or taking their children to school.

That participants displayed only general immigration policy awareness was further surprising given that many of the research participants have personal histories of immigration in their family—some that include coming to the U.S. without official documentation. In addition, staff maintain close professional and personal relationships with the Aurora community and are privy to the struggles and experiences of undocumented families. Paz, the school librarian, for example, said that undocumented
parents have asked her to help them find work opportunities. Mariposa, the bilingual office clerk, regularly spends time socializing with Aurora parents, some of whom are undocumented. Participants stated that the undocumented status of Aurora children and families is an “open secret” at the school. Iris, the 3rd grade teacher has had to caution her young students to be very careful in talking about their families’ legal status. Other participants like Felicia, Tom, and Jill often learn about a family’s legal status when helping a family gain access to social services like Medi-Cal.

On the other hand, it is not entirely unexpected that Aurora school staff did not reveal explicit policy knowledge related to undocumented students’ legal right to an education or procedures the school would use to protect that right. Aurora staff could not have anticipated the reaction that ICE activity near the school would cause in the community, which then resulted in the school quickly having to make decision about a response. The 2008 incident with ICE was the first time ICE activity had a direct effect on the school at large. Prior to 2008, school staff were aware of ICE, such as when a student’s parent or family member was deported or suddenly “returned home” to the family’s native country. However, in general, Aurora staff have little reason to think often of students’ legal status, or that they might be involved in a situation where they would have to invoke the Plyler ruling. With Linda as the head representative of the school, staff would arguably be likely to express their concerns about students’ educational access to Linda and then let her speak on behalf of the school.

In addition, staff presumably did not perceive a need to know specific policies concerning undocumented students or about ICE activity before 2008. As ICE activity has not recurred near the school again, participants have not been forced to be
conscientious of existing policies or seek policy knowledge. Staff are much more concerned that their students are grasping academic material and passing standardized tests. In addition, school staff’s more immediate concerns are related to anticipating and mitigating the effects that local violence or gang activity might have on the school environment. In the words of Tom, the intervention specialist, ICE activity is like a “bogeyman story,” or a “nebulous fear.” Participants were cognizant they were obligated to educate any child that came through Aurora’s doors, and they were able to continue fulfilling that mission until the event with ICE in 2008. While participants had knowledge of students’ varying legal status at Aurora, they did not have to actively use that knowledge to make decisions and, moreover, were taught to disregard this knowledge, because it should not impact their interactions with students at the school or in the classroom.

That participants displayed minimal knowledge about policies at the district level or the school level was also to be expected due to the trusting nature of staff’s relationship with Aurora’s principal, Linda. For example, Jill, the school psychologist stated she would follow Linda’s lead in a recurring situation with ICE, essentially ceding some power to Linda to help her make sense of the situation. Officer Gates also stated he would do anything his principal asked of him, while Tom remarked that Linda consistently displays good judgment in her decisions. Coburn’s 2005 study and the work of Spillane et al. (2002) demonstrated that school leaders can influence teachers’ access to and connection with policy messages. School leaders can set the boundaries for how teachers perceive an event by mediating the type and amount of information a teacher can access.
The study did not reveal evidence that Linda intentionally tries to control staff’s access to or connection with policy messages regarding undocumented students. Yet, she does have some control over the type of information to which Aurora staff have exposure, because she sends out a weekly newsletter to staff. By choosing what information she believes is relevant for her staff to know, and in how she decides to frame various issues or policies, Linda can shape staff perceptions of the importance or relevance of a topic. For example, in the wake of the 2008 incident with ICE, Linda stated she sent a newsletter to school staff about school policies related to undocumented students. Even so, school staff did not recall what was contained in that newsletter, and again, many participants assumed the school would go into a lockdown mode if ICE comes close to the school again.

That staff remained unaware of school policies in light of Linda’s newsletter can be interpreted in several ways. The most reasonable explanation is that the school has not experienced another situation with ICE. Subsequently, participants’ memories of school policies or procedures to protect undocumented students’ education rights have likely diminished over time and as staff responded to more relevant matters. For example, in 2011 Aurora staff offered counseling and support services to students and families after a student’s parent was murdered in an attempted robbery. Fears of ICE activity are once again “nebulous,” and thus policies about ICE or undocumented students do not presently seem deserving of much attention.

A second explanation that addresses Linda’s ability to influence staff’s awareness of policies concerning undocumented students is that as school principal, Linda has more cause to interact with the school district and pay attention to policies potentially affecting
the entire school body. School staff like Felicia, Mariposa, and Iris suggested they interact only minimally with the school district, which is in part a conscientious decision and also partially due to a lack of cause for the staff person to contact the district. In the next section I discuss in greater detail why Linda’s level of autonomy played an important role in the context of staff sensemaking of ICE activity near school property and the school’s subsequent response.

Ultimately, the research findings showed that school staff did not, do not, and cannot perceive a legal or ethical dilemma when responding to reports of ICE activity. One main assumption of this study was that authorities who enforce immigration law near school property can create unique legal or ethical dilemmas for schools and educators working with undocumented students. Yet, without greater or more explicit policy knowledge about their legal obligations to undocumented students, or more indication that they might be compelled by law to comply with immigration authorities, participants did not perceive themselves in a legal dilemma in 2008 and do not foresee anticipating a future legal dilemma.

Clearly, school staff did not perceive that ICE activity near school grounds could place them in a legal or ethical dilemma. Another probable reason for this was that Linda had strong influence over staff’s decision making in 2008. She displayed strong leadership by deciding with other principals that her school would alert Aurora families to ICE activity, and therefore staff could not perceive indecision or a dilemma about how the school would respond. Linda called for specific actions, and participants followed through on Linda’s decisions. Linda played a critical role in how Aurora as a whole responded to reports of ICE activity. Yet, school staff relied heavily on Linda’s decision
making, who was confident and secure in her leadership and decision making abilities. Had Linda not displayed such strong leadership, staff would not have been prepared to step in and use policy knowledge and procedural knowledge to help make decisions to respond to ICE activity, or to know how to claim protection for undocumented students’ educational rights. Therefore, school districts and potentially unions should actively work with teachers and school staff to inform them about legal rulings like *Plyler*, school district policies and procedures, city immigration policies, and as well as shifts in immigration policies at the state and national level.

Linda was not alone in her decision making regarding ICE—she consulted with other professionals and talked with Aurora staff like Rosa, Jill, and Officer Gates—but she played a critical role in the school’s response to concerns about ICE activity. As I demonstrate with the next research finding and discussion, Linda surprisingly had autonomy to decide how Aurora would respond to reports of ICE activity near the school. The second key research finding from the study demonstrated that

2. *Aurora’s school principal used her autonomy to make decisions in response to ICE activity even though district policy advocates for undocumented students’ educational rights.*

Aurora’s principal had authority to make decisions on behalf of her school in response to ICE activity. The implication is that educators or administrators can use their discretionary power to advocate for students and help buffer schools from policies established around the best interests of the child and also from potentially oppressive policies as well.
Unexpectedly, Linda had full autonomy to choose what to do with community members’ reports that ICE vans were spotted in the local vicinity. Linda sought advice from the district’s legal department, but was ultimately told by the district that the decision was in her hands: The district was “not supposed to do anything.” That the district only suggested to Linda that she could call families to alert them to ICE’s presence was somewhat surprising. In January 2008, the district made a specific policy statement that it was committed to educating undocumented students, noted the Plyler ruling, said ICE activity near school property can “chill” students’ educational rights, and district policy is to provide a safe learning environment for all students. The resolution stated that the district would cooperate with federal immigration authorities as required by law, but the district noted that it is in a city designated as a “City of Refuge.”

The resolution was the board’s response to decry an incident where ICE came onto a district school’s campus with the mother of a student, and later leading the mother away for questioning. Only four months later, ICE activity took place near Aurora’s campus, three other district campuses, and near a school’s campus in a neighboring district (Martinez, 2008). The district stated through its resolution that it has a clear stance on education for undocumented students and ICE activity near school grounds. However, when ICE challenged the district’s stance on education for undocumented students by acting near school campuses months later, the district allowed Linda leeway to decide how to best handle the situation. Linda conferred with two other principals about the situation, one of whom is the principal of a school sharing Aurora’s campus. Linda then took the legal department’s advice and had her staff and community parents call Aurora families to tell them the school had received reports that ICE was in the
neighborhood. Further, families could choose to send an alternative person to pick the child up from school. Linda also agreed to let Aurora parents wait in the school building until they felt comfortable enough to leave, and she had the school security officer, Officer Gates, secure the school. Linda and staff led children who were not picked up from the school at the end of the regular school day to the school’s auditorium to watch a movie while they waited for an adult caregiver to arrive. Then, in the days following this event, Linda contacted her brother’s colleagues, who are immigration lawyers, and asked the lawyers to lead a workshop on undocumented immigrants’ legal rights and the rights of immigration enforcement entities.

Linda’s ability to make decisions to respond to ICE activity was unexpected based on the fact that the district presents a clear stance that ICE activity near schools is unwelcome and jeopardizes undocumented students’ educational access. On the other hand, the district’s response was not entirely unexpected. Linda stated that in other situations where she has turned to the district’s legal department for advice, she has also experienced autonomy. She recalled that the department has told her in the past “you know your community best,” therefore giving her the authority to make decisions. The legal department indicated it could not get involved with the ICE incident, as exemplified through their response to Linda that they were “not supposed to do anything,” but the district’s response did not mean that Linda herself could not take some action. The district did state that Linda could call Aurora families as a courtesy, and they did offer Linda some advice about what she might do.

It is unclear if Linda had authority to take the lead in responding to ICE based on the legal department’s knowledge of her history of her decision making, and therefore
had confidence in her, whether the department would have given a different response to Linda had they not believed she would act in the best interests of her students, or if legal intricacies specifically prevented the district from acting. The full scope of Linda’s authority, or the intent of the district’s legal department, cannot be ascertained through the evidence in this study, but again, Linda was able to act as she saw fit. Linda did not indicate there were constraints on her decision making. However, Linda and two other principals worked together to make the same decisions to respond to ICE, indicating that she allowed others to influence her sensemaking of the context of ICE near school property.

While district policy advocates for undocumented students, the extent to which the district can support schools to protect the educational rights of undocumented students is uncertain—and raises the question as to how districts around the nation can protect undocumented students’ educational rights in the face of ICE activity. Based on the evidence presented in this study, whether the district was aware that ICE would conduct an operation near Aurora in 2008, unbeknownst to Linda, is only speculation. Although Officer Gates hinted that he had been forewarned by his contacts at the district that some unusual activity would take place on the day ICE came close to the school, he refused to reveal what the district told him. However, what is clear is that ICE appeared near district schools a second time in a matter of months. That ICE would conduct an operation close to district schools at least twice in a relatively short period of time, also revealed that the district potentially has limited ability to prevent ICE’s actions from affecting schools, communities and children. The district resolution, then, may be a
rhetorical tool that carries little substantive weight beyond denouncing the effects of ICE activity.

If district resolutions like the one in the district where Aurora is located carry little substantive weight beyond serving as rhetorical, political tools, it may appear unsettling to school staff and leaders at first glance to question whether their school district supports their efforts to safeguard undocumented students’ rights. However, in the absence of certainty as to how a district will respond to ICE activity or the influence of other immigration policies, opportunities open up for school leaders and staff to act with autonomy and creativity to enter into the immigration debate. Paradoxically, educators, in shouldering increased responsibility to protect the educational rights of undocumented students, can use their autonomy and experiences—both positive and negative—to make their voices heard about the impact immigration policies or ICE have on their students, school, and community. They can potentially push back against policies that are detrimental to a school’s ability to educate undocumented students—policies that also affect children who are citizens or reside in the country with official documentation.

Educators can stress that the purpose of a school is to educate children. They can use their autonomy to make decisions that create ethical boundaries that depoliticize the school grounds in the immigration debate. With decision making autonomy, educators can also set boundaries around their responsibilities and obligations as educators in the context of ICE activity near a school’s campus or as immigration policies influence the school environment. Therefore, the questionable strength of a school district resolution does not imply that educators at Aurora or in schools nationwide are left without recourse for action. Conversely, educators may have more power to influence local, state, and
national conversations around immigration policy or undocumented students’ educational rights. Educators may have more room influence reforms by centralizing power within the school to provoke collective action (Fuller, 2009) to bring about change on immigration-related issues.

The limited influence of the Aurora district resolution—and potentially the district as well as the city’s power to guarantee undocumented students’ educational access—was also evident in ICE’s response to Linda about their activities. Linda noted that in her conversation with an ICE representative about the incident that the representative suggested that Linda should have called ICE. The representative from ICE told Linda that ICE would have informed her they were conducting an operation near the school had she called, a statement that Linda viewed with skepticism. Whether ICE had awareness of the district’s resolution in response to the 2007 incident is unclear, but the response from the ICE representative following the second incident indicated that, at the very least, ICE’s actions—whether inadvertent or not—provided evidence the agency was insensitive to the context of schools. Further, ICE’s response showed the agency did not take precautions to learn whether a school was in the vicinity of where they operated and anticipate the effects of their actions—contrary to an ICE spokeswoman’s statement after the Aurora incident that ICE is “mindful of the sensitivities associated with schools” (Martinez, 2008; Tucker & Van Derbeken, 2008). The spokeswoman declared that ICE was not at a school, but stated “There may be a situation where a residence is near a school” (O’Brien & Murphy, 2008), making it questionable as to whether ICE would demonstrate sensitivity to the contexts of schools based on the past behavior.
This study did not include interviews with representatives from the school district, but newspaper articles give credibility to the assertion that the district may have some, but limited ability to curb ICE from acting near schools. A 2008 article contains on-the-record responses from district officials saying they were “hesitant to communicate with parents,” and that they emailed all school staff saying the district was dedicated to educating all children, and that staff could not help “facilitate any immigration enforcement actions” (Martinez, 2008). However, in the article, the district acknowledged that ICE activity interrupted students while they were taking standardized tests. At the same time, a district person said of ICE, “They are targeting schools and we are watching them do it” (Martinez, 2008). In other words, district officials recognized that ICE activity interfered with student learning but also intimated the district had little power to do anything about it. In another report, the district indicated that their school police would be on the schools’ campus on the day after ICE activity near schools (O’Brien & Murphy, 2008). However, the extent of the district’s power to prevent immigration officials from coming on or near school property had immigration officials presented more of a challenge is in question. It is probable the district police would have had to act in conjunction with local police authorities and the city to confront federal authorities. Therefore, the district’s level of power to prevent ICE coming near school property is less important than the ability of the city to respond to such activity. As described below, the city quickly got involved in the situation with ICE. The implication for schools nationwide is that districts serving a population of undocumented students may need to work more closely or coordinate with local government actors if their power is limited. Together, local government and school districts would need to monitor any shifts in
federal immigration policy as policy shifts affect how the government deploys immigration enforcement.

The city, with the then-mayor as the key spokesperson, also strongly condemned the effects ICE’s actions had on district schools, saying ICE’s actions were “intimidating,” and “the ugly side of government.” A second city official, the vice mayor, also noted that “students [were] upset and crying” (Martinez, 2008), and that the communities reacted to ICE with fear (Tucker & Van Derbeken, 2008). However, though the city supports undocumented students’ educational access and the city’s then-mayor emphasized that the city is a “sanctuary city” (Martinez, 2008), ICE’s spokesperson stated that ICE sends out teams to look for “immigration fugitives” nearly every day (Tucker & Van Derbeken, 2008).

That ICE continues to operate within the city is not unexpected, but it points to the complicated, tense relationship between local government and federal government on the issue of immigration. Given multiple instances of ICE activity near school property, whether the local government truly has power to influence where the federal government chooses to enforce immigration law in the city is questionable. In turn, this raises another question as to whether the city can prevent ICE coming near schools, whether ICE acts intentionally or simply conducts an operation near a school inadvertently.

What was made clear by city officials was that they condemned ICE activity near school grounds, and they were quick to use the incident with ICE as an opportunity to emphasize the boundaries between city power and federal power to enforce federal immigration law. Again, the then-mayor of the city as well as other political figures went to Aurora’s campus to make political statements, thereby politicizing the school grounds,
and this politicization did not go unnoticed by school staff. Research participants perceived that politicians were using the school campus to politically challenge the federal government. Therefore, the third set of key research findings revealed that

3. *City politicians seized the opportunity of ICE activity near schools to comment on federal immigration policy, politicizing the school grounds. The actions of politicians demonstrate that public schools are more than symbolic grounds in the immigration debate.*

To convey the city’s vehement displeasure with ICE, the then-mayor of the city and other political figures traveled to Aurora’s campus to speak out against ICE. The mayor, in reacting to reports of ICE near school grounds, directly suggested that ICE intentionally came near the school grounds and would potentially try to do so again. He told the news media, “No way children should ever be treated to that kind of harassment or fear,” and stated his belief that ICE agents “would return” (Tucker & Van Derbeken, 2008). Another political official, a state senator who represents the city but was not at Aurora on the day of the event, also weighed in on ICE’s actions. He indicated ICE *specifically* targeted schoolchildren, telling reporters, “There should be an immediate freeze on ICE raids directed at schoolchildren while legislation aiming to fix immigration is considered” (Tucker & Van Derbeken, 2008).

The state senator’s comments were notable on at least two other accounts: He suggested that ICE raids schools, an accusation for which there is no support. ICE strategies have included workplace raids when ICE goes to places of business to look for undocumented workers, but those raids mainly affect children when ICE takes a child’s parent away for questioning (See Capps et al., 2007). Neither research nor common sense
corroborate the assertion that ICE uses raids—which entails using the element of surprise—to go after undocumented children. In addition, the senator used his political power and rhetoric to express that federal immigration policy is broken, rather than on the effects ICE has on children or on undocumented students’ educational rights. Essentially, the senator used ICE activity near school property to emphasize the state disagrees and disapproves of federal immigration policy.

Both politicians contradicted ICE representatives’ statements proclaiming the opposite: that ICE did not and would not target schools, and that ICE operates almost daily in the city without attracting notice. There is no evidence ICE tried to come onto any of the district campuses after the first incident in the district in 2007 or ever directed their operations specifically at schoolchildren. Targeting young, undocumented children is unreasonable. It is highly doubtful that ICE, a federal agency, would have any cause to purposefully go after undocumented schoolchildren, most of whom would be twelve years old or younger. First, primary schoolchildren are unlikely to have committed crimes serious enough to warrant attention from ICE. Second, ICE is unlikely to target young children due to their youthfulness and ability to comprehend law enforcement activity. Third, young children are also highly unlikely to have knowledge or comprehension of their legal status and its significance. Finally, it is an unreasonable assumption that ICE would consider trying to separate elementary-aged children from their families or adult caregivers. The consequences of a federal entity targeting elementary students would be considerable. If ICE had actually targeted schoolchildren in 2008, the outcry from the community, city, and national media would likely have been much greater, and such
activity would probably have been condemned by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, which oversees federal immigration and customs enforcement.

The reaction of city officials to ICE’s presence near a school and how they framed the incident (e.g. the safety and education of children is at stake) demonstrates the depth of discord over U.S. federal immigration policy. Local politicians’ statements also reveal the extent to which political actors will go to maintain local governmental political control as it relates to immigration issues (i.e. the federal government is purposefully victimizing children). The implication for schools, educators, and children is that they can be caught in the middle of a serious political power struggle between different levels of government. If the school grounds are going to be politicized in this way, there is strong incentive for school leaders and educators to have policy awareness and knowledge of how politicians might use policy tools like rhetoric and the social construction of target populations to their advantage (Majone, 1986; McDonnell & Elmore, 1987; Schneider & Ingram, 1993). Aurora staff perceived that city officials’ presence at Aurora was primarily political, and did not indicate their thoughts as to whether the presence of local politicians actually benefitted the school in the long run. They perceived in the short term that politicians’ and the media’s presence at the school hindered their efforts to secure the school grounds and get the school back to its normal operating procedures. However, there have been no reports that ICE has operated near a district school again since 2008, so potentially politicians’ actions benefitted Aurora and other district schools in the longer run. The larger implication is that with awareness of framing and policy tools, educators can better understand how the school can be influenced by the greater policy context and external actors’ motives to use the school.
Educators will be better prepared to understand the context beyond the school walls and respond or clarify a situation if necessary. In addition, educators could be more empowered to use their political knowledge increase their own political capacity to protect undocumented students’ educational rights.

Whether city officials or local governments in general truly believe ICE would intentionally come to schools is open to interpretation. However, what is clear in this study is that city officials had political motivations beyond protecting undocumented students’ educational rights behind their decision to go to Aurora. Politicians actively worked to politicize the school grounds to emphasize the city’s stance as a “City of Refuge” and as a “sanctuary city, and challenge the federal government’s right to enforce immigration law and its enforcement strategies. As noted earlier, the ICE spokeswoman said that several teams from ICE routinely conduct operations in the city without earning attention, “virtually every day” (Tucker & Van Derbeken, 2008). Therefore, the federal government does enforce immigration law in the city regularly—activity that could not have been unknown to the city. Additionally, in the city neighboring the one in which Aurora is located, ICE informed local police about the operation they had planned for the day (Tucker & Van Derbeken, 2008). However, a city official who spoke from Aurora school property allegedly stated to the media that in his city, “ICE just rolls in and tells our police department after the fact” (Martinez, 2008), again pointing to the tension between the federal and city governments.

An even stronger testament to the fact that city officials purposefully politicized the school grounds to speak out against the federal government’s immigration policies was further revealed in the then-mayor’s statements. Tellingly, after denouncing ICE for
activity that “[harassed]” children, the mayor exclaimed, “There should be no raids in [the city’”], invoked the city’s sanctuary status, called ICE activity “[intimidating],” and implied ICE treated immigrants with disrespect (Martinez, 2008). Essentially, the mayor quickly shifted the conversation away from ICE activity interfering with undocumented students’ educational access and the city’s determination to protect children. He made the conversation about the broader issues of struggle between the city and federal governments for power to enforce (or not enforce) immigration law. The mayor seized on the sensitive nature of ICE activity near schools to paint ICE in a bad light and use it to the city’s advantage to distinguish the city’s stance on immigration from that of the federal government and to create boundaries.

The fact that the mayor would make his arguments from school property likely also made his statements much more emphatic and powerful than if he had issued such statements from his city office or through a city spokesperson. Instead, the mayor himself and other high-level city officials traveled to the school’s campus even though there was no confirmation ICE came onto school property or confronted Aurora parents. Linda recalled the politician’s presence created political spectacle, calling it a “media show.” ICE’s spokesperson, Virginia Kice, insinuated that ICE recognized city officials were politicizing the school grounds—and resented it—saying the city was responsible for making the situation worse with false claims about the intent behind ICE activity. Kice stated, “I just wish that some of the people in positions of authority had made a few phones calls to confirm whether or not these reports were factual before they moved ahead and caused widespread panic” (Gonzales, 2008).
Research participants also sensed that the presence of city officials on school grounds was politically driven. Linda said that she quickly thought she ascertained a “turf war” between the local and federal governments. Other participants like Felicia, Tom, and Jill also questioned the timing of the politicians’ arrival at Aurora, the kind of support city politicians offered, and ultimately whether the political figures acted with the best interest of the school in mind. Tom, for example, believed the politicians’ presence and statements were adding “fuel to the fire” in the situation with ICE, and did not help mitigate community fears about ICE activity. According to Linda and Officer Gates, the arrival of politicians also made the job of school staff to secure the school grounds more difficult. Officer Gates said that the media that arrived to capture the politicians’ reactions and statements were trying to come into the school, and that he had to ask school staff to help him prevent unknown adults from entering the school building. Linda did not appreciate that she had to respond to the city officials’ presence, remembering it as “sort of a nuisance.” Instead of being with her students in the cafeteria as usual, Linda, as principal, had to acknowledge city officials and thank them for their support—though she felt obligated and pulled to be elsewhere. City officials, and the media the political figures attracted, added another disruptive element to the school’s daily routine on a day where school staff were trying their best to keep students and families calm. Again, however, city officials’ use of rhetoric and symbolic action (Rosen, 2009) may have helped prevent ICE from conducting operations near schools again, thereby benefitting schools, staff, and undocumented students in the long run.

In the moment, Aurora school staff did not perceive that politicians’ presence on campus furthered staff efforts to ensure student well being and safety. Neither did
participants like Linda feel that local politicians sought to learn from school staff what kind of support school staff wanted or thought would be most helpful. Instead, staff thought the presence of city officials proved to be a distraction. It is unclear what kind of support political figures could have offered Aurora school staff that would have been appreciated at that time. Based on their role, however, politicians acted as public figures representing their constituents who supported the city’s stance that undocumented people should have access to public services—including education. Whatever their intentions, politicians relayed the message that they stood behind city policy, and that the city would publicly challenge the federal government when city policy is brushed aside. The city’s message was clear: ICE activity near schools was unwelcome—as were other immigration enforcement strategies like raids.

It is possible that the politicians’ actions helped district schools in the long run by creating political spectacle, even though research participants did not perceive politicians’ actions were helpful at the time or in their later reflections on the events of that day. There have been no more reports of incidents of ICE activity near city schools since 2008. Therefore ICE may be demonstrating greater conscientious about the location of their operations or may have made more effort to better communicate with local police. However, whether the politicians’ statements helped created substantive, distinctive boundaries between the rights of the city government and those of the federal government is speculation. The city did not or could not enact new policies to limit where ICE can operate in the city. ICE still maintains the right to enforce federal immigration law.
Under city policy, no city personnel or resources can be used to help the federal government enforce immigration law, but only the *Plyler* (1982) ruling legally guarantees undocumented students’ right to an education. Yet, while the city’s actual power to ensure ICE activity does not circumscribe undocumented students’ access to education by coming near a school is questionable, city politicians’ presence at a school and their use of the media drew a lot of public attention to the issue of undocumented students’ educational rights—potentially benefitting Aurora and the community it serves. It is reasonable to assume that politicians could use a similar strategy to publicly denounce the impact ICE activity has on schools if ICE conducted operations near city public schools once again. The city politicized the school grounds by going to Aurora, and their strategy was successful. In addition, if the city has continuing concerns about undocumented students’ educational rights in the wake of ICE activity, presumably the city could present legal challenges to the federal government under the *Plyler* (1982) ruling or through other legal reasoning.

Local politicians’ choice to go to the school’s campus to make their arguments against the enforcement of federal immigration policy also presented something of a paradox. Politicians accused the federal government of being insensitive to the contexts of schools—and for scaring children with their enforcement tactics. Yet, by coming onto school property, drawing the media’s attention to their presence, and by making political statements from the school’s campus, local politicians also demonstrated insensitivity to the context of the school. As noted earlier, participants were skeptical that local officials were helping the school’s mission to keep children safe and help return a sense of calm to the school—which would have enabled staff to more quickly get back to the business of
teaching. Local politicians used the school grounds to further the city’s interests—denouncing federal immigration policy and stressing the merits of city policy—without concerns about how their use of school grounds would affect Aurora staff and children.

Outside of political rhetoric and posturing, policies and law, research participants questioned ICE activity near school property on ethical grounds. Participants indicated that they would not face an ethical dilemma when making decisions about how to respond to ICE activity near school property, but they challenged ICE activity on ethical grounds. Therefore, the fourth set of research findings revealed

4. **ICE activity near school property can inhibit the school’s ability to educate all children in the school. Educators believe the purpose of an educator at school is to educate, and ICE activity near a school is unethical.**

This study is the first to explore how educators view immigration and customs enforcement activity near school property, how educators make sense of such a context, and how educators make decisions about how to respond. The study results showed that educators believe that the purpose of a school is to facilitate learning, and educators’ obligations are to educate students, not help enforce immigration law. Educators at Aurora perceived the school should be a “safe zone” for students, and that the school should be safe from the effects of ICE activity. This raises a key question as to what is the responsibility of educators and school districts versus those of government institutions whose policies disagree with one another. Can street level bureaucrats or reformers create alternative ethical spaces to push back against policies with which they disagree?
Professional ethical codes like those of the National Education Association (2012) call for educators to protect children from harm as best they are able, and to not discriminate against a student on the basis of national origin. Although staff had no experience with ICE before 2008 or challenges to providing undocumented students with education, they acted in line with professional ethical codes in the wake of ICE activity by remaining very focused on their students’ mental and physical well being. School staff uniformly believed that the school is a “safe zone” for children, and staff tried to make the school environment as safe as possible for students.

When reports of ICE activity reached the school in 2008, staff perceived that children had some knowledge of ICE based on the children’s reaction. Children cried, were “freaking out,” looked visibly anxious, and showed concern that their parents were vulnerable. Subsequently, the school principal, Linda called for the school to go into lockdown mode. School staff made sure that children remained in the school or in their classrooms, calmed their fears by talking to them, allowed children to call their parents, and reassured students their parents would be fine. Participants perceived that educating children is the primary purpose of a school, and the unanticipated consequences of ICE activity close to the school meant that staff had to address student concerns and worries about ICE activity instead of focusing on classroom instruction. In this sense, there is evidence again that the immigration debate has come through the school doors and has the power to influence educators’ roles and responsibilities for students.

What is clear through this study is that ICE activity near the school changed the course of the school day, influenced how well students concentrated on school work, and whether staff were able to teach Iris, the 3rd grade teacher remarked that a child who was
concerned about ICE would affect her ability to educate that child, saying, “Yeah, how am I going to teach that kid?” Further, as noted previously, the timing of ICE coming within blocks of Aurora’s campus was particularly inconvenient as the students had recently begun taking standardized tests. Felicia, the school resource specialist posited it was difficult for students to concentrate on their tests due to fears about ICE picking up their parents. Again, participants perceived that ICE activity near the school interfered their ability to facilitate student learning.

Instead of focusing on classroom instruction, school staff had to spend their time, energy, and school resources to ameliorate the impact of ICE activity on children. Staff were busy calming student and community fears, spending time on the phone talking with Aurora parents, and making sure that no student was picked up at the end day by someone who would endanger the child. In addition, school staff could not have anticipated that undocumented adults would seek shelter in the school and state they did not want to go back outside so they would not encounter ICE—and staff responded to their community members’ concerns as well. Therefore, with all of these unexpected disruptions at the school, ICE activity indirectly circumvented the Plyler (1982) ruling and undocumented students’ access to education at least mentally, if not physically by drawing school staff’s attention away from teaching and by making the school environment less conducive to learning. Undocumented students did not receive the education to which they are legally entitled, if only for a short while.

One unintended consequence of ICE activity near the school was that school staff were not able to concentrate on educating any of their students, which included documented children or children who are U.S. citizens. Even if ICE activity near a school
was unintentional, such activity had the power to not only affect education for undocumented children but that of U.S. citizens as well, because children of varying legal status are integrated in classrooms. Citizen and documented children also likely experience the same sense of fear, stress, and confusion as their classmates in result. A second unintended consequence for young children who are U.S. citizens or who reside in the U.S. with official authorization is that ICE activity near the school property potentially creates awareness in young children about immigration issues. ICE creates this awareness—and fear of its presence and power—when a teacher explains the context of ICE near school, even when she tries to keep students calm and her explanations are intended to reassure students they are safe. At the very least, citizen and documented children gain new knowledge about the existence of ICE and some sense of why their fellow students react to ICE’s presence in fear.

According to participants, the school quickly returned to normal in the days following this event. However, after the incident with ICE, staff emphasized their belief that a school is a place of learning. Educators’ primary role at a school is to deliver instruction, and educators should not be involved in immigration policy matters. Iris strongly reflected this view when asked about her perceptions of her responsibilities and the ethics of ICE coming near school property, saying, “I’m a teacher, stay out of my classroom.” Further, staff indicated their role is to educate all students regardless of a child’s legal status. Luz, the 2nd grade teacher exemplified the beliefs of other participants in saying that while staff may have awareness of a child’s legal status, it does not influence how she or others act in the classroom. Other participants said a child or
family’s legal status is an “open secret,” but this knowledge does not change whether the school helps a family connect to social services.

The influence of ICE activity near the school on student learning and participants’ ability to deliver instruction was short, rather than long term, but that does not mean that the consequences of such an event disappear entirely. As Tom, the intervention specialist stated, children and community members’ fears about ICE are “nebulous.” However, participants strongly agreed it is possible or even likely that ICE activity will take place near the school again—and that such activity is unethical. Participants reasoned that ICE activity near a school is unethical based on the effect it has on a child’s well being, the school environment, and how it influences staff abilities to educate children and children’s readiness to learn—and all children have the right to an education. ICE activity near the school is unethical as it unfairly victimizes children when enforcement strategies, if used, should be used with adults. Participants also debated the ethics of enforcing immigration policy in general, because they perceived 1.) Undocumented immigrants come to the U.S. when their lives and the lives of their families are at risk in their native country, and therefore they have the right to pursue a better life; 2.) Undocumented immigration is not criminal activity when immigrants work hard and do nothing to attract the notice of law enforcement; and 3.) Undocumented immigrants deserve empathy because they live on the margins of society socially, occupationally, and economically speaking.

Essentially, participants view immigration policy and the enforcement of immigration law as issues that should remain separate from the concerns of a school and an educator’s responsibilities. Participants conveyed the belief that immigration issues—
not just in the context of ICE activity close to schools—should not influence how educators do their jobs, even though they were open to helping undocumented families access social services. Yet, immigration policies like those that were enacted in the states of Alabama (HB 56) and Arizona (SB 1070) in the past couple of years for example, demonstrate that immigration policy has to concern to educators, particularly those working in schools with an undocumented population. In Alabama, for instance, undocumented families removed their children from schools after a provision in the original law aimed to require school officials to check students’ immigration status and report the data annually to the state legislature (Associated Press, 2011). Some families left the state entirely in response to legislation (Gates, 2011).

Not all Aurora staff completely negated the federal government’s right to enforce immigration law, but what participants at Aurora suggested is that the school itself should act as a sanctuary for undocumented children. If ICE activity close to a school is unethical, then a school represents an ICE-free zone. In 2008, undocumented adults were also sheltered in the school building, and therefore they too were protected from potential immigration enforcement. In principle, these goals are admirable, but whether such goals are realistic and or can be achieved at Aurora and other schools nationwide remains to be seen. Linda, the Aurora school principal, stated she was uncertain that she would make the same decisions she did in 2008 if ICE activity were to reoccur near the school. Mainly, she referred to her decision to let adults stay in the Aurora school building, and implied that undocumented adults would not need to rely on the school—or perhaps be able to rely on the school—should ICE present a challenge. Linda was confident that undocumented adults in her community would know their legal rights should ICE
confront them. However, even when school staff are primarily concerned about the well-being of their students, schools cannot divorce student well-being from the well-being of their families. Aurora staff revealed that they were concerned for how ICE’s actions could affect not just students but students’ parents as well in 2008 by alerting parents to reports of ICE and by letting them stay inside the building. What the fifth and final set of research findings showed however, is that staff were primarily concerned to act in the best interests of their students. In actuality, school staff did not divorce the well-being of their students from the well-being of students’ parents, but participants’ decisions—and their subsequent satisfaction with those decisions—were motivated by their concerns for students’ physical safety and psychological well-being. The study evidence revealed that

5. *Participants based their decisions in response to ICE activity on what they perceived as being in the best interests of their students.*

*Participants arrived at their decisions by making sense of their decisions through a variety of lenses that correspond to the multiple ethical paradigms proposed in the Best Interests (BI) Model as well as their personal codes of ethics. Participants’ professional and personal ethical codes were well aligned with each other.*

The research findings showed that participants did not identify a context where they have felt or would feel ethically conflicted about their decision making regarding ICE activity close to the school. In 2008, participants showed in their decision making processes and through their actions that they were first and foremost concerned to act in the best interests of Aurora students. They did not express concern for their own well
being, or how their actions might affect their jobs. Staff demonstrated that students’ physical and mental well being was at the heart of their decisions by keeping students safe in the school or driving students home, and by responding to and calming student fears that ICE would pick up their parents.

Staff overwhelmingly responded they would make the same decisions they made in 2008 should ICE come near the school again. For example, Felicia remarked she wouldn’t hesitate to drive her students home, the same course of action she followed in 2008. Iris stated she would “wait [ICE] out” and “ferry [her] students home one by one” in order to protect her students. Jill’s first concern after hearing that ICE was in the neighborhood was how the school would ensure that children were picked up by an appropriate adult at the end of the school day. Staff were satisfied with the outcomes of their decisions—children were safe and the school environment quickly returned to normal—which influences how staff would make sense of and respond in a similar situation with ICE. Participants’ satisfaction with the outcomes of their decisions also make it less likely that they could perceive a potential ethical conflict with ICE in the future as their responses to ICE activity in 2008 were not met with any challenges.

Participants did not and will not perceive they are in an ethical dilemma with ICE, because they perceived that their primary responsibility—at least while on school property—is to protect the young. The research findings showed that participants almost automatically prioritized the interests of Aurora students in their decision making. Participants did not reflect on their ethical obligations toward students in 2008; they simply acted out of logic, common sense, and instinct to protect the most vulnerable in the school: children. However, participants in this study took responsibility to make
decisions on behalf of children who could not fully comprehend the context of ICE activity near school property. Arguably, school staff’s responses and decisions could have looked very different had they been employed at a high school where students have greater agency and awareness of social and legal policies, and the implications of such policies. In addition, ICE agents never came onto school property. Whether participants and the school would have responded differently had ICE pushed closer onto school grounds—presumably in an attempt to go after an undocumented adult, not a child—is unclear. It is also unclear if that kind of situation would cause participants to then perceive an ethical dilemma.

In placing the interests of children at the center of their decision making process in 2008, research participants reflected the multiple ethical paradigms (i.e. the ethics of the profession, justice, critique, and care) that Shapiro and Stefkovich (2005) first proposed and Stefkovich (2006) later refined in her Best Interests (BI) model. Professional ethical codes, such as the ones outlined by the NEA (2012), obligates educators to do their best to make sure children in a school come to no harm (NEA, 2012). Aurora staff proved they acted in accordance with professional codes of ethics in 2008. Again, staff kept children inside the school building or in the classroom, calmed them down, and made sure no strangers jeopardized student safety.

Professional ethical codes also posit that it is unethical for educators to discriminate against students on the basis of a student’s national origin. Aurora staff were adamant that a school’s purpose, and their purpose as educators, is to educate children. If staff knew a student’s legal status, they chose to ignore it or simply did not think about it. Further, the study did not reveal any evidence that staff did or would discriminate against
undocumented students, consistent with the legal obligations under *Plyler* (1982). In participants’ decisions, though they did not indicate their actions were guided by explicit knowledge of law, staff enacted the *ethic of justice* to make sure that all of the school’s students have access to education in their actions to protect all students in the school. Staff acted to uphold what the Supreme Court decided is best for society when it passed a law that states that what is fair and equitable is that everyone, including undocumented children, has access to a free, public K-12 education. Staff’s reasoning that all children should have access to education echoed the reasoning of the Supreme Court: Staff were concerned that limiting any child’s access would harm the child’s economic, occupational, and consequently life prospects. In addition, participants reasoned the more education a child receives, the better it is for the child and for society. Participants’ decisions to enact the ethic of justice were fortified by and echoed in the actions of city politicians, who also spoke out against the potential for ICE activity to disrupt the school’s ability to educate undocumented children. The school district’s resolution, which specifically cited the *Plyler* (1982) ruling, also challenged ICE activity on the basis that ICE activity can circumvent the *Plyler* decision by causing families and students to fear coming to school when trying to avoid immigration enforcement.

Consequently, the combined efforts of research participants, the city government, and the local school board means that together they enacted the ethic of justice to ensure the educational rights of undocumented students at Aurora and potentially in the entire city. Legal challenges under *Plyler* might also be required. The broader implication for schools nationwide, however, is that schools cannot act alone to uphold the *Plyler* decision. Schools and school staff cannot reasonably be expected to act alone either in the
context of ICE activity near school property or if state immigration policies like the ones in Alabama and Arizona cause undocumented parents to pull their children out of school. Therefore, strong communication and concerted efforts to align and coordinate the policies of schools, school districts, cities, and states is likely necessary to fully protect undocumented students’ educational rights.

Several participants like Mariposa, the bilingual office clerk, Tom, the intervention specialist, Olivia, the former adult ESL instructor, and Linda also indicated that their sensemaking of the context of ICE activity near school property stemmed from a disposition to critique the actions of ICE. These participants, as well as others, questioned the purpose of immigration policy and immigration enforcement and the potential impact it has on a vulnerable, marginalized population. Staff questioned whether ICE activity near the school—whether intentional or not—was just. They criticized such activity based on their personal experiences and first hand knowledge that undocumented families and children already struggle to make ends meet economically and occupationally, and that they are marginalized socially due to their legal status as well (e.g. public perceptions of undocumented immigrants can be very negative). School staff recognized that undocumented people’s legal status diminishes their power and voice to challenge how laws are applied, and whether those laws are applied unevenly. Mariposa, for example, questioned whether ICE pays particular attention to Latino immigrants in the local community even though not all undocumented immigrants come from Latino backgrounds. Mariposa’s criticism echoes the criticism of those who challenge whether state immigration policies (i.e. Alabama and Arizona) can be evenly
applied on the basis that policies enable governments to unfairly racially profile specific immigrant groups.

In result of Aurora staff’s criticism about the justness of immigration enforcement near the school, the school acted to change the power dynamics and relationship between undocumented immigrants and the federal government. The school hosted a workshop for Aurora families to learn their legal rights in the face of immigration enforcement, thereby empowering undocumented families with knowledge they can use to make sure the government does not infringe on their rights. By helping Aurora parents learn their rights, school staff further helped protect the well being of school children at school and outside the boundaries of the school by reducing families’ fear and stress about their vulnerability to immigration enforcement, enacting the ethic of critique.

Not all schools or school staff would make the same decisions as Aurora to host an immigration workshop for community members. Indeed, according to Linda, her school member did not initially support the idea of the workshop. Linda used her skills to persuade the board member to move forward with the workshop. However, Aurora is located in a district, city, and state that have policies that are “pro-immigrant” in nature. Therefore, the likelihood that other schools that experience ICE activity near school grounds can enact the ethic of critique by hold the type of workshop Aurora hosted depends largely on the context surrounding the school.

The context surrounding the school, however, does not limit any educator from viewing their decisions in ethically complex situations from a critical lens. As noted in an earlier chapter, Paulo Freire (1993) stated that education is at heart a political act. Educators, by virtue of their professional role, can have a profound impact on the lives of
students, students’ parents, and the community that the school serves. Educators, therefore, should actively continue to question whether or how policies or practices lead to further marginalizing undocumented children. The decision of Aurora staff to host a community workshop to meet with lawyers is one example of a creative decision that intended to and successfully challenged and shifted the power dynamics between a marginalized population and the federal government which has predominant control over immigration policy.

Though staff exhibited the ethics of the profession, justice, and critique in their sensemaking of ICE activity near school grounds, they most readily demonstrated the ethics of care and community in their actions. Participants’ first actions upon hearing reports of ICE were to look after the physical and mental well being of students. In their decision making, participants prioritized their relationships with students and their roles as primary caregivers to children during the school day by addressing student fears and issues related to students’ physical safety. The school also revealed a particularly close relationship with the school community. Participants had made efforts to form strong professional and personal connections with families (e.g. the school has a community liaison, Rosa, and works with an external community organizer, Emmanuel). The strength of the relationship between the school and the community also factored into Linda’s decision to shelter adults in the school; she was sheltering people that she knew. Mariposa, whose role was to supervise children during recess in 2008, called her undocumented friends in the community after hearing reports that ICE was in the neighborhood.
Linda stated she was uncertain she would follow the same procedures she used in 2008 should ICE come near the school again. She responded she did not think the school would have to go into lockdown mode. She also intimated that undocumented adults might not seek safety within the school in result of the immigration policy and enforcement training the community received in the days following the incident with ICE. Linda decided that ICE activity near the school was unintentional, and she did not express concern that ICE would try to come closer to the school or present a threat to students.

What Linda did not say was whether she would shelter undocumented adults inside the school building if ICE did indeed try to come closer to the school or appeared on school property as they did at another district school in 2007. Other participants strongly suggested that they relied on Linda’s decision making in the context of ICE near the school in 2008 and that they would rely on her judgment if ICE came near the school again—which all participants agreed is possible. Based on the close connections participants have with Aurora families, how participants would react to Linda potentially making different decisions, particularly if she did not allow adults to stay in the school, is questionable. Staff view Linda as a strong leader who always remains calm and reasonable. Hypothetically, though, tension could result between some staff and the principal if she did not allow the friends of staff to stay in the school or if Linda decided it was unnecessary to alert Aurora to fresh reports of ICE activity in the local vicinity. Linda did not have reason to constrain participants’ decision making in 2008, because she and the staff were making sense of the context of ICE near the school for the first time. Further, staff trusted Linda and respond to her requests to call families and secure the
school grounds. Finally, Linda and school staff showed through their decisions that they were on the “same page” in that they concentrated on prioritizing the best interests of students as they mentally processed reports of ICE activity.

Participants indicated that they view the school as a safe, ICE-free zone for children. However, Aurora parents are very well known to school staff, and staff empathized in general with undocumented immigrants, making it likely they might support using the school as a sanctuary for undocumented adults. This raises the question as to the extent to which schools, not just Aurora but nationwide, are willing to support undocumented adults. The school-as-a-sanctuary scenario also raises the question as to whether educators would perceive themselves in an ethical or legal dilemma if a principal allowed undocumented adults into a school building and ICE contested the school’s decision to shelter adults. Schools like Aurora help undocumented families connect with and access social services. Part of the rationale in helping adults in this manner is that the physical and mental well being of adults in the family can profoundly influences the well being of children. The well being of a child in turn affects a teacher’s ability to educate a child and the child’s readiness to learn. Would a school like Aurora turn away undocumented adults if they were looking to stay in a school to avoid immigration enforcement? Therefore, to what extent can and will schools help the family members of their students?

Aurora staff were in accord with Linda’s decisions based on their shared understanding (i.e. sensemaking) that the school should prioritize the best interests of their students, that the school highly values relationships with community, and based on their perceptions that ICE activity near schools is unethical. In schools where the
relationship between the school and the families in the community is weaker, the lack of relationship would arguably influence how principals and school staff decide to respond to reports of ICE near school property. For example, schools may not decide it is necessary for the school alert parents to ICE activity, a decision that also could impact children in they event they have knowledge of and are scared of ICE, or fear for their parents’ safety.

The example directly above also points to the importance of relationship between a school’s principal and staff, as well as staff’s relationships with each other. The strength of those relationships greatly influences the decisions that are made and various actors’ satisfaction with those decisions. Participants at Aurora did not perceive that Linda constrained their decision making even though the evidence demonstrated she exerted a strong influence over both their decision making and how they would make sense of future ICE activity. In consequence, there was no tension among participants to prevent them from acting in unison to respond to ICE, and no ethical or legal dilemma either. Therefore, the decisions the school made on behalf of students and the community were relatively straightforward and clear. At a school where there is tension between school leadership and staff, or even among staff, the sensemaking and decision making process behind a school’s response to ICE could look more varied or confusing in terms. It would arguably be less certain in whose best interest the school and educators should or will act, even if there are clear district or school policies place. The implication, then, is that professional and personal relationships within the school are key because those relationships could influence whether an educator perceives a legal or ethical dilemma, and how the school as a whole responds.
Finally, participants at Aurora did not sense a discrepancy between their professional and personal codes of ethics. Participants also acted in accordance with their personal ethical codes in 2008, which presumably reduced the ethical complexity involved in their decision making to respond to ICE activity. It also reduced the likelihood they would perceive themselves in an ethical dilemma, and this was also evident in that participants expressed satisfaction with the outcomes of their decisions. Again, participants’ personal codes included the belief that all children have a right to an education and that Aurora families and undocumented immigrants. Therefore staff perceived they made the “right” decisions in responding to reports of ICE. Aurora staff’s empathy for immigrants and undocumented immigrants, and their perceptions of the injustices these immigrants experience were often based on their own personal histories with immigration or stemmed from their professional interactions with immigrants in the community. Staff therefore had preexisting knowledge, experience, and beliefs about undocumented immigration and immigration policy that shaped how they viewed the context of ICE activity near the school.

The findings of this study would most likely look very different had the study been conducted in a different setting. The experiences, knowledge, and beliefs about undocumented immigrants and education for undocumented children could look quite different if the research were conducted in a state with harsher immigration legislation, city with a shorter history of immigration, a school whose connections and involvement in the community were less of a priority and lastly, with participants whose own personal stories did not so closely resemble those of the community members the school serves.
Implications

Recommendations for Policymakers, Districts, and Schools

The findings from the research have implications for policy and practice, and it also opens paths for new avenues of research. In this next section, I address why the specific context of immigration enforcement activity near school property at one elementary school in Northern California is important to schools and educators nationwide. The key contribution this study makes is in providing evidence that the immigration debate has been carried onto the school grounds. At Aurora, politicians went to a school’s campus to direct statements about immigration policy and enforcement strategy at the federal government, elevating the issue beyond the educational rights of undocumented students. School grounds have and will likely continue to serve as the physical space where ideological conflicts over undocumented people’s ability to access social services will play out.

Aurora served as the site where city officials confronted the federal government to contest whether and how immigration law is enforced. Unexpectedly for school staff, the school grounds at Aurora were politicized. School staff had to adapt to not only securing the school grounds, but they also had to respond to political actors—political actors whom staff perceived did not calm the situation, but purposefully politically charged the situation by claiming a federal agency specifically targets undocumented children. This is proof that schools are more than symbolic ground in the immigration debate. The federal agency, ICE, has stated it is mindful of the sensitivities of schools, but it has operated on or near school grounds enough times to show that school grounds are within its purview. In consequence for schools, educators will need to expect challenges to undocumented
students’ educational rights and be prepared to respond to those challenges, either from ICE, national and state policies concerning undocumented immigration. In addition, the example of Aurora further demonstrates that school can also expect they will increasingly drawn into the political debate and used as a political instrument, even if the school is located in a city or state with liberal, or “pro-immigrant” immigration policies.

The current national climate around undocumented immigration is highly contentious, as evident in the politicization of Aurora’s campus and as exemplified in state legislation such as that of Alabama and Arkansas. In Alabama and Arkansas, the school grounds were also politicized as legislators sought to require school districts to ascertain and report on the legal status of students, and the result was that families pulled their children out of school, circumventing the *Plyler* ruling. Immigration policies shift—as do the ways immigration law is enforced—in response to changes in the national mood: The nation has increasingly favored more restrictive immigration policies due to fears about the economy and increased competition for jobs (Sobczak, 2010). Further, deportations of undocumented immigrants have grown since 2008. Under the present Obama administration, ICE strategies have moved away from mass raids, yet deportations reached all-time high. Under Obama, the government indicated it will not deport younger undocumented people who came to the United States if they fulfill certain requirements. However, Republicans immediately rejected the government’s move, calling it “amnesty” for undocumented immigrants (Cohen, 2012). Further, there has been indication that the Obama administration and ICE have disagreed over what enforcement strategies ICE uses (Becker, 2010). Republicans have also called for a return to large-scale worksite raids (Bennett, 2011), which in the past has resulted in schools
having to provide extra care and resources to students (Capps et al., 2007), and could mean that schools will have to ready to provide more support and resources to students in the future, should enforcement strategies change.

Immigration policies, and how the government enforces immigration law, has the power to directly shape educators’ obligations and responsibilities in today’s politically divisive climate around immigration issues. In the following paragraphs, I make policy recommendations for policymakers, cities, school districts, leaders, and teachers. These recommendations apply across the board as even states with limited numbers of undocumented immigrants (e.g. Alabama) are also passing immigration legislation. National immigration policies intersect with city and school district policies in conjunction with rapidly changing U.S. demographics. Policies can overlap or be at odds with each other, sending different and potentially mixed messages to school leaders about how to policies concerning undocumented students should be implemented. The first recommendation is that

1. *Policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels should declare that schools are ICE-free zones, and recommend specific boundaries around schools where ICE cannot operate.*

Whatever one’s political leanings, no child—undocumented or citizen—should have to fear immigration enforcement while at school. I make this suggestions based on research that shows ICE activity on or near school grounds is emotionally and psychologically traumatic for school children; their school grades suffer, at least in the short term, and educators spend considerable time, energy, and resources to support students in the wake of ICE (Capps et al., 2007). In the case of Aurora, school staff also spent time and energy
supporting community members as well. Current law does not entirely prohibit ICE activity on a school’s campus. The National School Boards Association put out guidelines for school districts and urged schools to call their district’s legal department if ICE comes onto school grounds (Borkowski & Soronen, 2009), but as exemplified at Aurora, the legal department said they were “not supposed to do anything,” even though ICE was in the neighborhood. On the one hand, the example of Aurora proves that local districts have created their own spaces to act and respond to ICE activity. However, ICE came on or near school property on a few occasions in spite of city policy and a school district resolution. In addition, whether a school can be an ICE-free zone for adults as well as children, however, is controversial. Based on the Aurora example, adults actively sought shelter inside the school building—and might be likely do so in the future should schools be declared ICE-free zones, particularly if undocumented parents are concerned for the safety of their children.

Building on the first recommendation, the second recommendation resulting from this study is that

2. *State and local policymakers should communicate and work with school districts to define and align policies to protect undocumented students’ educational rights, and inform personnel of law and policies.*

As evident in this research study, Aurora staff were surprised to see local politicians on school grounds and to hear the statements local politicians directed at the federal government. This study has argued that schools are and will continue to be used by those with political motives to further an ideological position on immigration policy. Aurora
staff were unaware of, or did not mention connections between state and city policies, or school procedures intended to protect undocumented students’ access to education. Therefore, it is likely that states and cities need to coordinate their policies with school districts around ways policymakers and schools can guarantee undocumented students’ educational access as best they can, and anticipate how local governments and school districts will respond to challenges from ICE or immigration legislation that jeopardizes students’ access. Aurora school staff did not know of the connection between local politicians and the local school board on the issues of ICE activity near the school. They demonstrated minimal policy knowledge at the city, state, and school level, and which is somewhat unsurprising in today’s tangled policy environment.

Participants also revealed little knowledge about school procedures related to recurring ICE activity or the school board resolution denouncing ICE operations near schools for a number of reasons. Participants indicated they would rely on the judgment of Aurora’s principal, Linda, to make decisions in another incident with ICE, or they would follow the same procedures they had in 2008. Linda indicated she would not necessarily use the same procedures in the future. Linda herself was uncertain what district policy stated about ICE activity near school grounds; she was only aware that her school could not take a child’s immigration status into account during enrollment or for any other purpose. Therefore, the third recommendation is that

3. **School districts should hold ongoing professional development on federal and state immigration policies and education for undocumented students for school administrators and staff.**
leaders should also train staff on policies related to education for undocumented children.

School leaders should also ensure that workshops are held at the school so that school staff know city, district, and school policies regarding challenges to undocumented students’ educational rights and the school’s response.

The fourth recommendation is similar to the third recommendation. However, given today’s political climate around undocumented immigration and contention over undocumented immigrants’ access to social services, the fourth recommendation suggests

4. *Ongoing professional development for school leaders should include both political and law courses. School leaders and teachers should also be provided with opportunities to participate in ethical training workshops.*

Aurora’s principal, Linda, had some awareness of California legislation and her legal obligations toward undocumented students, because she took an education law course in her principal leadership training program. Other school leaders could benefit from education law courses that address the legalities around undocumented students’ rights so that leaders’ decision making in legally complex circumstances is enhanced. Linda knew that her school was responsible to educate any student who walked through Aurora’s doors. However, the incident with ICE in 2008 was completely unexpected as was the arrival of local politicians and media at Aurora’s campus, to which Linda then had to also respond. The implication for school leaders nationwide is that they could also benefit from training in communication and crisis management and from exposure to concepts like “agenda setting” in political courses. Both education law courses and political
courses can help educational leaders particularly if city or district policies related to undocumented immigrants or undocumented students are unclear, or to supplement city and district support for school leaders and schools. These types of courses are also timely and relevant at this moment as school leaders are also learning and struggling to find ways to respond not just to ICE activity but to policies like those in Alabama and Arizona where undocumented students were kept out of schools—sometimes permanently. Similar courses may also be necessary in teacher preparation programs so that teachers also have greater awareness of issues affecting immigrant students, and how those issues might intersect with teachers’ ability to deliver instruction.

Study participants were able to clearly reflect on their decision making on the day of the ICE incident in 2008, and it was also clear they acted in the best interests of student. Yet, participants did not articulate as well how they thought through the ethical implications and ethical complexity of this type of event, and thus school leaders and teachers could benefit from participation in ethical training workshops. It is unreasonable to expect school leaders and teachers to anticipate every possible type of event they may encounter through the course of the school day, including ICE activity. However, if administrators and teachers had knowledge of a framework like the Best Interests (BI) model (Stefkovich, 2006) to draw on and help foster reflective processes, educators could be better prepared to react in legally ethically complex situations, such as when immigration policies cause undocumented families and students to avoid school.

Areas for Future Research
This study questioned how educators made sense of and responded to immigration and customs enforcement activity near school property. The study also inquired in whose best interests educators would act when responding to ICE activity, and also how educators perceive education for undocumented students. This study has asked critical questions about the ways schools and educators have become involved in the immigration debate, and there are more critical questions for researchers to ask.

First, one key area of study that educational researchers should examine is trends international immigration policies. Research should investigate how those policies affect how schools perceive immigrant and undocumented students’ access to equitable education, and how educators across the world are responding to challenges to these students’ educational access. Researchers could compare and contrast U.S. policy with that of Western European nations in particular, and see if policy borrowing is occurring. Western European nations—including those more traditionally inclusive of immigrants—have begun tightening their immigration policies in response to global economic fears, and are changing their approaches to how they incorporate immigrants into society (Collett, 2011; Zakaria, 2012). In Italy, for example, all children have the legal right to education from the primary through postsecondary levels. However, in Italy undocumented immigration is considered illegal activity under law. In 2009, the country passed a law that would require all public officials, including teachers, to report on crimes they encounter in the course of their duties (Komada, 2011). Educators are public officials, and therefore under law would presumably be required to report undocumented children to authorities.
A second avenue for researchers is to examine how undocumented immigrants form community networks, and how those networks intersect with schools and potentially influence how educators respond to changing immigration policies. As previously noted, the relationship between Aurora staff and local community members was particularly strong. For example, many school staff had personal histories of immigration in their families that enabled them to relate to the families of Aurora students. Mariposa, the bilingual office clerk, called her friends upon hearing reports that ICE vans were seen in the vicinity of the school. Olivia, the adult ESL teacher also stated that she currently receives texts from her undocumented friends when they notice ICE activity in their local neighborhoods. Therefore, educational researchers can look at the role social networking and technology might play in immigrant communities, and if these networks and means of communication help better protect undocumented students’ educational rights. Aurora provided many services to its community. One reason the school provided services was due to community need to have access to social services like health care. However, Aurora went beyond connecting community members with social services and sought to build close connections with the families of the school students in other ways. For example, the school hosted a weekly farmer’s market in front of the school building. The school’s community liaison, Rosa, coordinates efforts to run the market with Aurora parents. Rosa will also help translate English documents into Spanish for community members who need it. Another avenue educational researchers can pursue exploring is whether there is a trend for schools serving sizeable immigrant populations, including populations of undocumented students, to become community schools. If these schools
are becoming “community schools,” what does it mean to support the community, and what forms of support will schools and educators offer?

Third, research should explore the connections between schools and community organizations that take a stance on immigration issues, whether that stance includes favoring more rights for undocumented families and children or restricting their access to services like education. Emmanuel, the community organizer, was very involved at Aurora and helped create links between the school and community, like running meetings for parents in the school cafeteria. More important, Emmanuel was involved in arranging for community members to meet with immigration lawyers in the days following the incident with ICE, and he also indicated he helped contact political officials after hearing ICE was close to the school’s campus. Educational researchers could specifically look more closely at how faith-based organizations support immigrants’ rights and advocate for their access to social services like education, as faith-based organizations like the Catholic Church are actively involved in what they consider to be social justice issues.

**Conclusion**

The findings from this study show that educators fiercely believe that the purpose of a school is to educate any child that walks the doors of the school building, including those students whose legal status is precarious. Educators, as evidenced in the context of immigration enforcement near school property, will continue to need to adapt to and anticipate how the shifting political landscape of federal and state immigration policies will intersect with schools and how educators fulfill their roles. This study provides ways that educators view their legal and ethical obligations toward undocumented students, even in the absence of a legal or ethical dilemma. This study also suggests ways that
policy makers, school districts, practitioners, and educational researchers can be more responsive to the needs of undocumented students as schools become increasingly politicized—more than symbolic ground—in the immigration debate.
REFERENCES

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**Appendix A: Research Participants and their School Roles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>School Role</th>
<th>Years at Aurora</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javier</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Teacher (kinder)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher (2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher (5&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher (3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt;)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Intervention specialist</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>School psychologist</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Security officer</td>
<td>(role for 17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paz</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Community liaison</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Resource specialist</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariposa</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Bilingual office clerk</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Former ESL teacher/community activist</td>
<td>10.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emmanuel</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Community organizer/activist</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 14</strong></td>
<td>F= 10</td>
<td>Administrator =1</td>
<td>Average years: 8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M= 4</td>
<td>Specialists = 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers = 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Support staff = 4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>External support = 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: PARTICIPANT MEMO

Participant: Tom
Role: Intervention Specialist

Keywords: Empathy, pragmatism/rationality, working without expecting reward, diversity, equality

Principal communicated ICE probably wasn't targeting school; Tom went to talk to people outside about what was going on.

Tom is a very purposeful individual who values meaningful work and meaningful relationships. He wants to apply what he knows to a real-life situation, and he's aware the he's applying his knowledge to an actual person. He's relational; he wants to be dealing with people. Tom loses interest in activities that he doesn't see as having direct application to everyday life. He is willing to work very hard (going to school while working full-time) to achieve a goal he views as worthwhile. He struck me as pragmatic, thoughtful, and quietly confident. He isn't out to seek recognition either. He is willing to put in work to accomplish his goals though others might not see it.

Tom values relationships and building trust with school families and students. He conscientiously observes people and tries to gauge their comfort level with him. He is aware of how his positionality as a white male is perceived by those who view him as an outsider to his community. Tom serves his community and views his work as an act of service. He wants to "give back". He'll be satisfied is one of his students has positive outcomes. Tom's working for the futures of others---working with them to give them the chance for success.

Tom is very sensitive to the emotions and anxieties of his students. A large part of his work is helping provide a safe space for children. He wants to really know a child and how the child is doing--he's very attentive/observant. In general, recognizing the other is important to him.

Since a young age, Tom as valued diversity and reaching out to people different from him. This is evidenced by his choice to study Spanish, which he tries to practice to this day though he has felt embarrassed and uncomfortable. He first began learning Spanish from his neighbors, who were immigrants from Mexico.

Tom actively seeks out new experiences and exposure to other cultures, as evidenced by his choice to live in and stay in a diverse community. He gains first-hand knowledge of situations by talking to people and seeking knowledge for himself. I get the sense Tom values being independent and formulating opinions for himself. Even when ICE was near school, he was in the community observing what was going on and talking to people. He's relational.
Tom is dismissive of people who put on affectations and status markers, but takes pride in that he considers himself—as family members have told him—as intellectually capable. Tom is self-directed and motivated. He values equality—and wants to make sure his child doesn't think of any one culture as superior to others. People can from one community from many cultures—that can be normal. Everyone is a human being, and as such, they are equal.

Tom values self-expression and enabling others to express themselves. He uses various methods to help children find ways to express themselves. In his official role, he helps kids develop boundaries in order for them to function within the school, but he wants them to open up and articulate themselves and not be afraid.

Tom is incredulous about the US immigration system, citing extreme examples about what it takes for people to achieve US residency. He thinks the immigration system is dysfunctional—and how it's operating now is un-American. Tom values people who work hard, are independent from relying on government services, and sees them as people who just trying to make it—just like he is. The circumstances for undocumented immigrants are unfair. There's too much "needless trauma". They can be targeted for minor traffic infractions and they face high risks for their decision to illegally immigrate, though Tom makes comparisons between himself and them. Simple things easily become life-changing for the undocumented. Tom is relational—and empathetic—he imagines what it's like to be in another person's shoes.

Tom is skeptical of city politicians and their interest in helping his school, and he views different types of law enforcement opposing each other as counter-productive. Still, he doesn't view ICE as intentionally coming near school—he also thinks the principal wouldn't ascribe the word "evil" to characterize ICE.

Tom spends time contextualizing how the neighborhood around the school is very rough. People are really struggling, are exposed to unfair circumstances, and are unfairly targeted. The impact of ICE near school is a "nebulous fear." ICE drums up anxiety and creates fear in people; a "bogeyman" that lives in the recesses of people's mind (making it effective in this sense)—but Tom and co-workers have too much other crap to deal with for ICE's impact to be of a lasting concern.

Tom admires the principal and how she handles herself in potentially stressful situations and that she tries to take a multifaceted view of things and put herself in others' shoes to see how they view what's going on. Like Tom, she validates how people are feeling—empathizing—and she's rational/pragmatic. She understands feelings but keeps them in check, similar to the work Tom does with his students.
Appendix C: FIRST IMPRESSIONS MEMO

WEDNESDAY, 9/14/11
1:30 p.m.

To get to Aurora, I traveled down a major freeway for 20 miles and then took my exit. Almost immediately, the landscape around me changed. The concrete streets were wide and mostly empty of parked cars, and I crossed over train tracks. Graffiti covers street signs. I noticed that on the street where the school is located there is a recycling center. A 20-foot tall chain link fence surrounds the center. Green plastic covers the fence. At the top of the fence, curly barbed wire stretches over the entire perimeter.

I walk past the school. There is a long line of cars pulled over to the curb; I assume parents are picking up their kids. The street is crowded with waiting cars. School is letting out for the day and there are tons of kids and families out front. I drive to a side street to park my car so that I can walk through the local neighborhoods. All of the houses are one story, and there is little space between lots. Most of the houses are pastel colored. All of the houses are enclosed by chain link fences and have bars on the windows and doors. As I get out of the car, two smallish bulldogs come to the front of the fence to see who is making noise. Later on I see a Chihuahua. It feels like I’m in central Fresno. Certainly, this neighborhood is very different from the nice, middle-class neighborhood where I am staying. It’s definitely a different city; it somehow feels urban and sort of isolated. There’s not much around the school except for the houses.

At first glance, everyone appears to be of Latino descent. On the street in front of the school, an older man is selling ice cream from a push cart. As the children and parents chat, I hear Spanish. I notice that there seems to be a lot of fathers/male caretakers picking children up as well. One of the first things to strike me is that I don’t hear any English at all. Everything is in Spanish. Also, I stand out with my blond hair and backpack. Even so, people don’t pay much attention to me. I notice that a man in what appears to be a police-style uniform stands in front of the blue gate, casually chatting with parents. I assume that he is a police officer or a SRO. He is a tall black man, and it looks like he is wearing padding on his chest. My first thought is, “Is that a bullet-proof vest?” He directs me to the specific school I need. My school is one of three schools side-by-side. Each one is brightly colored, and I notice murals cover them. After I learn where I need to go, I start to walk through the neighborhood. There is a lot of concrete.

As I pass the houses, I note that the yards are small. It looks like grass doesn’t grow well; there are small green tufts spaced sporadically in the yard. The rest is dirt and rock. However, some families have beautiful, brightly colored flowers growing within the limited space. Brilliant fuchsia roses are growing. I notice this in contrast to the random litter, glass, or even lone unwrapped condom I see as I walk. Several homes post signs that warn “Beware of Dog.” The cars on the street are not fancy, but I do see a man driving a Jaguar at one point—which is entirely out of place in such a neighborhood. Every once in awhile I notice adults on their front porch, presumably speaking with a friend or neighbor. A few adults are working on cars or engaged in a form of home repair. A few people track me as I walk down the street; I read curiosity in their eyes since I’m so clearly out of place.
Shortly after walking down a residential street, I arrive at what appears to be a major street. There are several automotive repair shops and “checks cashed here” shops as well. I notice a teal-colored bakery that advertises its goods in Spanish. There is a convenience store on one corner, and three or four adults appear to be hanging around out front. It looks like a good place to talk to community members. I also spotted a Baptist church that serves different populations. The signs say that one is Tongan, and the other is American Indian. What role does this church play in the community, and how might it respond to community needs?
### Appendix D: INITIAL CODING CATEGORIES

#### CHALLENGES

- Adaptation
- Dreaming
- Consequences
  - For lack of education
  - Of decision to immigrate
- Paths to academic success
- Perceiving boundaries
- Pushing boundaries
- Recognizing gray areas
- Recognizing language or cultural barriers
- Social mobility
- Struggling
- To authority
- To expectations

#### COMMUNITY

- As victims
- Community character
- Network
- Parental-school involvement
- Reliance on school
- Satisfaction with community
- Self-protection
- School as microcosm for community

#### ETHICS

- Empowerment
- ICE near school
- Justice/Injustice
- Perception of obligations or responsibilities
- Rights and Respect

#### FEELINGS

- Empathy
- Feeling conflict
- Feeling helpless

#### IMMIGRATION ENFORCEMENT, ICE AND LAW

- Circumventing authority
- Law enforcement tension
- Media presence
- Perception of impact of ICE
- Perception of ICE Intentions
- Perception of city response
- Perception of community response to ICE
- Perception of immigration system or law
- Perception of law enforcement
- Perception of school response
- Principal leadership
- Repercussions for students
- Staff reaction to ICE
- Student reactions to ICE
- Timeline for ICE activity

#### POLICY AND MESSAGES

- Communication to staff about undocumented
- Messages about school policy
- Perception of obligations or responsibilities
- School message to community about ICE

#### PRIORITIES

- Fostering positive self-image
- Fostering a child's potential
- Fulfilling obligation or responsibility
- Making a tangible difference
- Mediating for students
- Mitigating fear
- Protecting the vulnerable
- Providing for students
- Providing stability
- Security
- School is safe zone
- Social services

#### RELATIONSHIPS

- Celebrating or respecting culture
- Collaboration
Holistic education
Knowing the community
Knowing the child
Like-mindedness
Perception native country
Perception of parents
Perception of the school district
Perception of students
Perception of the undocumented
Persuading others
Principal - staff relationship
Religious presence
Recognizing interrelatedness
School outreach-relationship building

SCHOOL CONTEXT
School chain of communication
Demographics
Lockdown
Perception of school relationships
Perception of school environs
Personal connection to immigration
Student growing awareness of environs
Violence

VALUES
Activism
Accountability and taking responsibility
Availability
Big picture
Boundaries
Commitment
Diplomacy
Diversity
Empathy
Equality and excellence
Exceeding expectations
Exposure to opportunity
Frugality
Giving back
Harmony
Honesty and Sincerity
Humility
Inclusion
Independence
Autonomy
From system
Listening
Perseverance, Resilience, Resourcefulness
Purposefulness
Efficiency and order
Industriousness
Initiative
Making a tangible difference
Role modeling
Self-reflection
Self-sacrifice
Support
Trustworthiness
Voice
## Appendix E: MODIFIED DATA ANALYSIS MATRIX

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organ. level</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Action if ICE recurs</th>
<th>Interaction ICE and OPD/law</th>
<th>Support on day 2008</th>
<th>Principal influence on sense.</th>
<th>Reliance principal judgment</th>
<th>School as safe zone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>No lockdown</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>Consult fellow principal; legal dept.</td>
<td>Talked with two other principals</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Unclear (would be a big deal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Javier</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Teacher (kinder)</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>sees absence police in community despite violence</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A (reasoned for home visits)</td>
<td>N/A; maybe as she seems logical</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luz</td>
<td>Teacher (2nd)</td>
<td>Teacher (2nd)</td>
<td>Could recur due political climate</td>
<td>N/A; suspicious law enforce.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A for ICE</td>
<td>Some (Lockdown if ICE recur; principal's call)</td>
<td>Yes; kids shouldn't see enforce.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iris</td>
<td>Teacher (3rd)</td>
<td>Teacher (3rd)</td>
<td>Assumes lockdown; would ferry kids</td>
<td>N/A (s politicians may pay 'lip service)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
<td>Teacher (5th)</td>
<td>Teacher (5th)</td>
<td>Could happen; . Like lockdown</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>With students all day.</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>Unclear (would keep kids inside, procedure)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Support services</td>
<td>Intervention Specialist</td>
<td>yes, says it's a nebulous fear</td>
<td>Sees as part of same system that has to work together</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Mixed; leadership, clear views on immig. Policies</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Yes; people unfairly targeted, trying to work hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>School Psych.</td>
<td>School Psych.</td>
<td>Could recur, issue families dealing with</td>
<td>N/A (wants tighter links between local police and community)</td>
<td>Yes (making phone calls to family in front office)</td>
<td>Yes (in 2008. in 2012 would default to principal in future)</td>
<td>No; says would be interested to hear what principal has to say</td>
<td>Yes (her room safe space kids)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Organ. level</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Action if ICE recurs</td>
<td>Interaction ICE and OPD/law</td>
<td>Support on day 2008</td>
<td>Principal influence on sense.</td>
<td>Reliance principal judgment</td>
<td>School as safe zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td></td>
<td>Resource specialist</td>
<td>Same actions; follow Lockdown</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes (Gave her students a ride home)</td>
<td>Likely(very strong connection with principals)</td>
<td>Potentially</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gates</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Security officer</td>
<td>Will recur (follow same procedure)</td>
<td>Maybe(job connected to both district and local police)</td>
<td>Yes; supported principals</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes(will do anything they ask him to do)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paz</td>
<td></td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>Doesn't know</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>No evidence</td>
<td>Likely</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rosa</td>
<td>Administrative</td>
<td>Community liaison</td>
<td>Emailed 4/28/12</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Made calls</td>
<td>Probably; Talks about principals being in charge</td>
<td>Probably</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mariposa</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bilingual office clerk</td>
<td>Doesn't know what would do. Thinks could recur</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>Called friends</td>
<td>Unclear in 2008; Says would need to ask</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>External/Extra support</td>
<td>Former ESL teacher/community activist</td>
<td>Could recur</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>Helped shelter adults</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
<td>No evidence</td>
<td>Yes(doesn't like raids around schools)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuel</td>
<td></td>
<td>Community organizer</td>
<td>Same actions as before</td>
<td>No; city police chief said local law not working with ICE</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Most likely some</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix F: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. What is it like working in the X Unified School District?

2. Do you feel support or lack of support for your work? Please use examples to help illustrate.

3. What is it like teaching at Aurora?

4. What is it like teaching undocumented students? Do you have any other experiences working with undocumented people?

5. Do you have any experience working with ICE?

6. Could you give me an example of how you had to interact with ICE?

   ** Respondents who have not interacted with ICE will be asked what they would do, hypothetically, if they had to interact with ICE in a situation similar to the events of 2008.

7. What was your reaction to learning ICE vehicles were parked across the street from Aurora?

8. How did you make decisions about what to do? Please walk me through your thought process. How did you feel?

9. What helped you make those decisions?

10. What were the outcomes of those decisions?

11. Would you make the same decisions if you had to go through the same experience again? If not, why?

12. Do you think ICE coming near school is an ethical issue?

13. Is there anything we haven’t talked about yet that you think would be important for me to know regarding your experiences with ICE?
Appendix G: RESEARCH PROTECTIONS

Date: April 28, 2011

From: Joyel D. Moeller, Compliance Coordinator

To: Emily R. Crawford

Subject: Results of Review of Proposal - Expedited (IRB #36742)

Approval Expiration Date: April 20, 2012

“In Whose Best Interest?: How Educators Make Sense of Contexts Involving Immigration and Customs Enforcement at School”

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed and approved your proposal for use of human participants in your research. By accepting this decision, you agree to obtain prior approval from the IRB for any changes to your study. Unanticipated participant events that are encountered during the conduct of this research must be reported in a timely fashion.

Attached is/are the dated, IRB-approved informed consent(s) to be used when recruiting participants for this research. Participants must receive a copy of the approved informed consent form to keep for their records.

If signed consent is obtained, the principal investigator is expected to maintain the original signed consent forms along with the IRB research records for this research at least three (3) years after termination of IRB approval. For projects that involve protected health information (PHI) and are regulated by HIPAA, records are to be maintained for six (6) years. The principal investigator must determine and adhere to additional requirements established by the FDA and any outside sponsors.

If this study will extend beyond the above noted approval expiration date, the principal investigator must submit a completed Continuing Progress Report to the Office for Research Protections (ORP) to request renewed approval for this research.

On behalf of the IRB and the University, thank you for your efforts to conduct your research in compliance with the federal regulations that have been established for the protection of human participants.

Please Note: The ORP encourages you to subscribe to the ORP listserv for protocol and research-related information. Send a blank email to: L-ORP-Research-L-subscribe-request@lists.psu.edu

JDM/jdm
Attachment
cc: Dana L. Mitra
Appendix H: INFORMED CONSENT

Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research
The Pennsylvania State University

Title of Project: “In Whose Best Interest? How Educators Make Sense of Contexts Involving Immigration and Customs Enforcement at School”

Principal Investigator: Emily Crawford Educational Theory & Policy 301 Rackley Building University Park, PA 16802. Erc152@psu.edu, 503-473-2919

Research Advisor: Dr. Dana Mitra Education Policy Studies 300 Rackley Building University Park, PA 16802. Dhd2@psu.edu, 814-863 7020

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to explore how educators make sense of immigration and customs enforcement activity on or near school property, the impact it had on the school climate (or the perceived it might have if the participant was not employed by the school in 2008), and the influence this activity had (or might have) on educators’ decision making. Data will be collected through a one-on-one semi-structured interviews. I will inquire about your perspectives on public education for undocumented students, your experiences as an educator teaching a diverse body of students, and lastly, your knowledge and possible experience with immigration and customs enforcement.

2. Procedures to be followed: You will be asked to participate in a 1-1 ½ hour recorded interview and to review a transcript of the interview for accuracy. I will also ask that you be available for follow up questions if more information is needed or if I need help understanding an answer given during the formal interview. The interview will be recorded with a digital recording device, and the principal investigator will be the only person with access to this recording. The principal investigator will transcribe the interview and then return it to you to check that the transcription is an accurate reflection of what was said in the interview.

I will also request to quietly shadow you at the school for 2-3 days to observe your daily routines and interactions with other school staff. The observations will last from 4-6 hours each. I hope to engage you in informal conversations about your work life and perspective on school climate.

Finally, after I have analyzed data, I will ask you to review my research findings and how I have interpreted the data collected to learn if they make sense to you and you could agree with the conclusions I have drawn from data.

3. Discomforts and Risks: Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort, and you are in no way compelled to answer any question. The principal investigator will take the highest precaution to minimize any risk to you. The principal investigator will use a pseudonym for you, and your true name will not be recorded in any way. The principal investigator will not collect any other personal identification information from you that could lead to your identification by someone other than herself.

This study is being conducted primarily for dissertation-related research, though the findings of the study may be later submitted for publication to a scholarly journal or presented at conferences. Though the research findings may be disseminated in different formats as those immediately listed above, the participant’s personally identifiable information will not be revealed; pseudonyms will continue to be used at all times.

4. Benefits: The benefits to you include an opportunity to share how educators view education for undocumented students and the impact that immigration and customs enforcement can have on educators and the school environment. This is an area of research that has not yet been studied in depth. As the topic
of education for undocumented students becomes a greater part of broader national discussion, it is increasingly important that educators’ perspectives are known. In addition, immigration and customs enforcement activity on or near school property and its impact and outcomes on educators, students, and school climate have not been thoroughly studied.

5. Duration/Time: Participants will be asked to participate in a 1-1 ½ interview, with the possibility of a second interview of slightly shorter duration. It is also likely that an additional 15 minute commitment will be needed to verify accuracy of the transcribed interview.

6. Statement of Confidentiality: Your participation in this research is confidential. The data will be stored and secured in the primary investigator’s home in a locked drawer. In order to minimize the risk of legal liability for research participants, no personal identification information will be collected from research participants. You will be given pseudonyms, and their real names will not be recorded. In addition, you will not be asked your legal status, nor will you be asked about the legal status of other people with whom you have contact. Any and all electronic documents will be kept in password-protected files that are accessible only to the principal investigator. The principal investigator will be the only with access to the digital recording of interviews given by you. The recording device will be kept in a locked drawer, and the recordings will be kept on the recording device. The Internet might be used to schedule meeting times between you and the principal investigator. The Internet will be used by the principal investigator to transmit a transcription of the interview to you. The purpose of the transmission is so that you can verify that the transcription is an accurate reflection of what you said in the interview. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections and Institutional Review Board, and the Office for Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services may review records related to this project. In the event of a publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared.

All participant records will be held confidential and all participants will be assigned a pseudonym. All documents will be in password protected files and destroyed after 3 years.

7. Right to Ask Questions: Please contact Emily Crawford at (503) 473-2919 with questions, complaints or concerns about this research. You can also call this number if you feel this study has harmed you. If you have any questions, concerns, problems about your rights as a research participant or would like to offer input, please contact The Pennsylvania State University’s Office for Research Protections (ORP) at (814) 865-1775. The ORP cannot answer questions about research procedures. Questions about research procedures can be answered by the research team.

8. Voluntary Participation: Your decision to participate in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer. Refusal to take part in or withdrawing from this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits you would receive otherwise.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to take part in this research study. If you agree to take part in this research study and the information outlined above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form for your records.

_____________________________________________  ________________
Participant Signature  Date
Person Obtaining Consent  Date
Appendix I: RECRUITMENT

Participant Inclusion Criteria

The criteria for participants included

1. Employed full-time by the district
2. Works at the elementary school where Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) appeared close to school property in 2008.
3. Willing to discuss their perspectives on immigration in general and undocumented immigration in particular
4. Willing to discuss impressions of ICE
5. If employed in 2008, willing to discuss the day ICE appeared close to school property, their reaction to this event, and the decisions they subsequently made. If not employed during 2008, research participants will be asked how they might react if they noted that ICE had come near the school.

Recruitment Flyer

Greetings!

My name is Emily Crawford, and I am a doctoral student at Penn State in Education Policy Studies. I am hoping to conduct research for my dissertation in X Unified School District. My research aims to understand how educators view education for undocumented students, perceive immigration and customs enforcement (ICE), and make sense of its impact on school climate. This is an area research has not yet fully explored, and it's possible that similar issues involving ICE and schools may become more common.

Criteria for participation include:

1. You are employed by the district
2. You are an employee of Aurora.
3. You are willing to discuss your perspective on immigration in general and undocumented immigration in particular.
4. You are willing to discuss impressions of ICE
5. If you were employed in 2008, you are willing to discuss the day ICE appeared close to school property, your reaction to this event, and the decisions you subsequently made. If you were not employed during 2008, you are willing to be asked how you might react if you saw ICE near school property

I would be happy to share any additional information with you about myself or my research plans. If you would be willing to speak with me for a brief, 15-minute conversation about this study and your possible involvement, please contact me at

Emily Crawford
Erc152@psu.edu
Appendix I: RECRUITMENT (Cont’d)

Follow Up Recruitment Letter for Staff

Thank you for the opportunity to tell you about my study on how educators view education for undocumented students and make sense of immigration and customs enforcement near school property. If you would like to participate in the study, or simply learn more about the study, you can contact me via email at erc152@psu.edu, by phone at X, or in person when you see me at the school!

With thanks,
Emily
Appendix J: Vita

EDUCATION:
The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA August 2008 – August 2012
Doctorate in Educational Theory and Policy; Minor in Comparative & International Comparative Education
Dissertation, “In Whose Best Interest? How Educators Make Sense of Contexts Involving Immigration and Customs Enforcement at School”

Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA June 2001
Bachelor of Arts in Communication, Minor in Spanish

PUBLICATIONS:

REFEREED CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

TEACHING EXPERIENCE: Spring 2012
Educational Theory & Policy 420: Education and Public Policy

RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:
American Journal of Education August 2009 – Present
Managing Editor
• Manage and facilitate the work flow process of an academic journal
• Edit, proofread, and format manuscripts and book reviews
• Communicate with and respond to authors, reviewers, and the publisher
• Recruit scholars to write on emerging research areas in the field of education policy

PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICE:
Comparative and International Education Society (Proposal Reviewer) November 2011
University Council for Educational Administration (Proposal Reviewer) June 2011
American Educational Research Association August 2008 – Present
Comparative and International Education Society August 2008 – Present