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UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY EXPLORING  
STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY IN ACADEMIC ADVISING

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Citizenship Challenges.....	2
College Admission Challenges .....	4
Financial Challenges .....	5
Significance of Research.....	6
Economic and Social Value of a College Degree .....	8
Role of Academic Advising.....	8
Research Questions .....	12
Primary Research Question.....	13
Secondary Research Question.....	13
Research Purpose .....	13
Undocumented Students and Education: An Overview of Policy and Legislation .....	15
U.S. Landmark Supreme Court Case .....	16
In-State Tuition Eligibility for Undocumented Students .....	17
Prohibited In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students.....	18
Community College System .....	20
Role of Board of Regents.....	20
Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act .....	21
Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals .....	22
Theoretical Framework .....	23
Conclusion .....	31
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	33
Factors that Shape Street-Level Bureaucracy .....	34
Historical Determinants of Street-Level Discretion .....	37
Street-Level Divergence .....	37
Street-Level Divergence: Rational, Ethical, and Professional Choice .....	37
Street-Level Divergence: Inevitable to Policy Implementation.....	39
Leadership Among Street-Level Bureaucrats .....	40
Leadership: Discretion Over Process.....	43

Leadership: Discretion Over Outcomes .....	44
A Model of Street-Level Leadership .....	46
Institutional Logic and Street-Level Policy Implementation .....	49
Institutional Logic and Embedded Agency .....	49
Components of Field-Level Institutional Logics .....	50
Chief Components of Theoretical Framework .....	51
Literature on Academic Advising .....	54
Types of Advising Methods .....	54
Advising Models (Structures) .....	59
Delivery and Process .....	60
Conclusion .....	61
 3. RESEARCH METHOD .....	 62
Research Goals .....	63
Research Questions .....	64
Primary Research Question .....	64
Secondary Research Question .....	65
Research Design .....	65
Phenomenological Guided Research .....	69
Participants and Sampling .....	69
Institution A .....	72
Institution B .....	73
Institution C .....	73
Recruitment of Study Participants .....	76
Data Collection .....	76
Review of Institutional Documents .....	77
Interviews With Advisors .....	77
On-Site Observations of Center .....	81
Data Analysis .....	82
Limitations .....	85
Institutional Review Board and Informed Consent Protocol .....	86
 4. RESULTS .....	 87
Introduction .....	87
Background .....	88
Demographic Characteristics .....	88
Findings: Primary Research Question .....	92
Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior Shaped by Fundamental Factors .....	96
Importance of Advisor Autonomy .....	97
Policy Context: Discrepancy with Four-Year Graduation Policy .....	101
Encouraging Community College Attendance .....	103
Policy Rejection to Meet Individual Student Needs .....	106
Historical Determinants of Bureaucratic Street-Level Discretion .....	109
Organizational Culture .....	111

Value of Advising .....	113
Help and Assist Students .....	114
Empathy or Ability to Relate .....	115
Desire to Do More .....	117
Beyond Duties and Responsibilities .....	118
Being Proactive or Anticipating Student Needs .....	119
Disposition of Advisor and Student.....	121
Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior Regarding Street-Level Divergence.....	123
Policy .....	125
Professional Development Inequity.....	127
Volunteer or Optional Training .....	129
Diversity Appreciation.....	130
Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior Regarding Acts of Leadership .....	132
Advocate for Students.....	133
Fairness and Justice.....	134
Empowerment of Students.....	136
Care and Concern Beyond Academics .....	138
Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Institutional Logic.....	139
President Messaging .....	141
Professional Advising Model.....	143
NACADA Guided Work and/or Membership .....	145
Accountability to Students.....	146
Shared Experiences as Advisors .....	148
Findings: Secondary Research Question .....	149
Psychological Factors .....	150
Immigration Status Unknown to Advisors .....	151
Advisor Education .....	152
Safe Space.....	153
Conclusion .....	154
 5. DISCUSSION .....	 155
Review of Dissertation Purpose.....	155
Application of Findings to Theoretical Framework.....	156
Public Policy Implications .....	161
Discretion and Policy: Positive Versus Negative .....	163
Recommendations.....	165
Future Research .....	169
Conclusion .....	173
 REFERENCES .....	 175
 APPENDICES	
A. Recruitment E-mail Letter .....	207
B. Consent Form .....	208

C. Interview Questions.....	211
D. Alignment of Research Questions with Interview Questions .....	214
E. Alignment of Interview Questions with the Literature.....	217
F. Demographic Questions.....	220
G. Undocumented Inclusive Office and/or Advising Center Checklist.....	224
H. Additional Data About Three Study Sites.....	225
I. Codebook.....	243



## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

1. Policies and Legislation—Undocumented Students by State and Year.....	19
2. Contrasting Dimensions of Prescriptive and Developmental Approaches to Advising .....	57
3. Characteristics of Participating Institutions in the Research Study .....	75
4. Demographic Characteristics of Sample .....	91
5. Binary Characteristics of Sample .....	92
6. Identified Themes with Corresponding Codes .....	94
7. Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Fundamental Factors .....	96
8. Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Historical Determinants .....	109
9. Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Street-level Divergence.....	124
10. Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Acts of Leadership .....	132
11. Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Institutional Logic .....	140
12. Theoretical Framework Applied to Findings .....	157

## LIST OF FIGURES

## Figure

1. Street-Level Leadership Model .....	47
2. Undocumented Immigrant Population by State.....	63

## Abstract

### UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY EXPLORING STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY IN ACADEMIC ADVISING

By Fai R. Howard

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2017

Major Director: Saltanat Liebert  
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Immigration is arguably among the most divisive global and national issues at present. In the U.S., undocumented persons (the DREAMers) who arrived to the U.S. as children have been the central focus of legislation and debate. As of 2013, the undocumented population has increased from less than a million in 1980, then reaching 12.2 million in 2006, to an estimated population of 11.3 million (Passel, Cohn, Krogstand, & Gonzalez-Barerra, 2014) just a few short years ago. For the numerous undocumented students who have excelled academically and socially, and make positive contributions to their communities, the goal of obtaining a college degree is naturally the next step after high school. While undocumented students face intractable

challenges in the areas of residency/citizenship, the college admission process, and financing their education, many still find their way on college campuses seeking degree completion.

Academic advisors are uniquely positioned to support the persistence and graduation of students, especially undocumented students. Therefore, this research examined perspectives and behaviors of advisors concerning their interactions with undocumented students in public universities utilizing the framework of Michael Lipsky's (1980) understanding of street-level bureaucracy to determine the discretionary behaviors exercised by academic advisors who advise undocumented students. Study participants included college advisors located in the middle southern and western regions of the United States, where undocumented populations are highest.

A qualitative methodology with a case study research design was used in this phenomenological guided research to determine two major study findings: (a) academic advisors are exercising discretionary behavior in advising undocumented students and general population students and (b) the academic advising needs of undocumented students differ from other students. This study has contributed to public administration and higher education advising literature by providing insight into how advisors understand their roles, implement policy, and participate in divergence to meet the needs of students.

## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

Every year tens of thousands of immigrants who have grown up in America graduate from high school with little means to fully participate in American society (Educators for Fair Consideration, 2013). For the numerous undocumented<sup>1</sup> students who have excelled academically and socially, and have made positive contributions to their communities, the goal of obtaining a college degree is naturally the next step after high school. Although federal law<sup>2</sup> guarantees undocumented students a kindergarten through 12th (K-12) grade public education, they face intractable challenges when pursuing higher education. While many of these students appear and even feel American in many ways, the stark reality of their undocumented status truly becomes a barrier to achieving life goals, such as earning a college degree.

Despite the barriers and unique circumstances faced by undocumented students in the pursuit of a postsecondary education, many move forward with the goal of degree attainment even though they encounter three major challenges: residency/citizenship, the college admission process, and acquiring funding for college (discussed later in this chapter). An important factor determining whether students from disadvantaged backgrounds (including undocumented students) graduate from college is high-quality academic advising (American Association of State Colleges and Universities, 1994; Astin, 1977; Cuseo, 2007; Frost, 1991; Habley, 2004;

---

<sup>1</sup> Undocumented is also referred to as alien, illegal, irregular or unauthorized. The Government Accountability Office (2004) uses the term undocumented alien, defined as a person who enters the U.S. without legal permission or fails to leave the U.S. when their permissible time ends. The Immigration and Nationality Act uses the term alien, which is defined as any person not a citizen or national of the U.S (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2013). The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (2012), uses the term unauthorized resident. This study will use the term undocumented.

<sup>2</sup> *Plyler v. Doe*, 457 U.S. 202 (1982) was the Supreme Court case that permitted the education of undocumented children for grades kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade (Olivas, 1995). Details concerning *Plyler v. Doe* are discussed later in the chapter.

Metzner, 1989; Nutt, 2006). This research study examined the self-reported actions and perspectives of professional academic advisors concerning their role in the advising process to determine how undocumented students are supported in achieving their goal of postsecondary degree attainment. Undocumented students typically face three major challenges in pursuing a college education in the United States. Each of the three challenges, listed below, often occur concurrently.

### **Citizenship Challenges**

Obtaining citizenship and/or residency is one of the major challenges faced by undocumented students seeking a college education. Some Americans may wonder why all immigrants do not come to the United States legally or gain residence (obtain a Green Card<sup>3</sup>). Many citizens consider Green Cards to be the obvious answer to permanent residency in the United States, but under current law, this is virtually impossible if the person is undocumented. As summarized by the American Immigration Council (2010), obtaining a Green Card is generally limited to four different routes: employment, certain family ties, refugee or asylee processing, and the Diversity Lottery. An employer can request permission to bring in a qualified foreign worker in certain professions based on job skills and education level if the employer cannot find a qualified United States citizen to take the job first. Most of the qualifying professions are high-skilled and require high levels of education, such as scientists, professors, and multinational executives. A legal, qualified family member in the United States can seek permission (a petition) to bring in certain eligible foreign-born family members.

---

<sup>3</sup> According to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (2011), a Green Card holder (permanent resident) is someone who has been granted authorization to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis. As proof of that status, a person is granted a permanent resident card, commonly called a "Green Card."

American citizens, for example, can petition for a Green Card for their spouses, parents, children, and siblings. Each year, the President, in consultation with Congress, sets a ceiling for the number of refugees who may be admitted to the country. After one year, refugees may apply to become lawful permanent residents. Persons who enter the United States under any category may apply for asylum, but the burden of proof is high. They must prove that any harm that came to them in their home countries amounts to persecution based on race, religion, membership in a particular social group, political opinion, or national origin. Asylum seekers generally must show that they fear further persecution if they return. The annual Diversity Visa program makes 55,000 Green Cards available to persons from countries with low rates of immigration to the United States. People from Mexico, China, the Philippines, India, and other countries with higher levels of immigration to the United States are not eligible to apply for the Diversity Visa program (American Immigration Council, 2010).

Each of these groups includes specific paths, which in turn are subject to specific limitations (i.e., number of visas available and eligibility requirements) and obstacles. Obtaining legal permanent residency is quite challenging for an undocumented student in America, as they do not generally meet the requirements for legal permanent residency. Of note, undocumented youth and traditional college-age students generally have no role in the decision to come to this country. They are often brought to America by their parents or relatives and many have spent the majority of their lives in the United States, not their country of origin (Perez, 2009).

Undocumented students have quite the dilemma in their pursuit of U.S. citizenship. Undocumented persons brought to America as children would have a path to citizenship under the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, but it has not passed and is currently at a standstill. Therefore, President Barack Obama put forth the executive order

the Deferred Action for Child Arrivals<sup>4</sup> (DACA) program aimed to keep undocumented persons in the U.S. under temporary protection if they meet certain criteria.

### **College Admission Challenges**

The second challenge for undocumented persons earning a college degree is navigating the admission process. It is likely undocumented students will need to acquire some amount of documentation, typically needed for the college admission process which may or may not require assistance from parents and family members. This is potentially problematic for parents/family members who live separately or are unfamiliar with the college application process.

Undocumented students often have to rely on help from high school guidance counselors who may or may not be familiar with the process for undocumented students, as it varies among institutions and states (Pérez & Cortés, 2011).

Undocumented students must be prepared to address two major issues on an application and have the knowledge on how best to list their information on a college application. They must provide information about their country of citizenship and be prepared to address inquiries about their social security number (Lopez, 2010). Federal law does not require proof of citizenship for U.S. college admittance. As Lopez (2010) explained, school officials (often admissions personnel) recommend that undocumented students select “no response” if it is an option. This response allows undocumented students to skip other questions about permanent residency and visa status that are not applicable to their status. Questions regarding their social

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<sup>4</sup> After the 112th Congress once again failed to pass the DREAM Act, President Obama directed the Department of Homeland security to initiate the DACA program, which essentially provides guidelines for applying “prosecutorial discretion” when dealing with young undocumented immigrants. Prosecutorial discretion could be interpreted to simply mean not deporting someone without proper legal status if they meet requirements outlined in the DREAM Act for conditional permanent residency (Immigration Policy Center, 2013). A comprehensive review of DACA is provided on page 22.



security number should be skipped, as no other numbers may be used in place of the social security number. Some may fear revealing their undocumented status and fail to apply, while others move forward with the application process. There is no existing U.S. federal law either permitting or prohibiting postsecondary degree attainment among undocumented students and, although some schools are restricting the entry of undocumented students, others permit admission (Manuel, 2016). The vast majority of states do not have any state legislation either permitting or prohibiting the enrollment of undocumented students (Amuedo-Dorantes & Sparber, 2012); therefore, postsecondary institutions are left to make their own policies.

### **Financial Challenges**

The final challenge regarding the pursuit of a college degree for undocumented students is financial. The absence of legal immigration status renders undocumented students ineligible for Federal Student Aid.<sup>5</sup> Federal funding may not be used for undocumented students. States offering tuition equity<sup>6</sup> are generally favored among undocumented students because their financial challenges are reduced compared to schools that charge them the out-of-state tuition rate. Paying in-state tuition is a critical factor when it comes to affording education. Some are lucky and reside in a state with tuition equity, while others must pay the out-of-state rate, which can be three times as high as the in-state tuition rate.

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<sup>5</sup> Federal Student Aid is a part of the U.S. Department of Education. It is the largest provider of student financial aid in the nation. Federal Student Aid is responsible for managing the student financial assistance programs authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. These programs provide grants, loans, and work-study funds to American students and U.S immigrants attending college or career school. Federal Student Aid, An Office of the U.S. Department of Education. (2015).

<sup>6</sup> Tuition equity is a term that is generally used in reference to undocumented students who are allowed to pay in-state tuition for college in the state they have lived for the majority of their lives or where they have attended high school.

Due to the challenges discussed above, the undocumented population must do more research than the typical student, especially to find opportunities of financial support. Many of the resources available online are through the states which grant undocumented students in-state tuition rates. The National Immigration Law Center (2014) provides information regarding how students, who are ineligible to file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), can fund their education. Undocumented students must contact perspective schools and ask questions about the policy on undocumented students and, if they are neither recognized nor accepted, inquire about the enrollment procedure. Sometimes they may be directed to other resources for assistance that are not explicitly stated on the schools' websites, a process which requires time and additional follow up.

As described above, undocumented students face a range of challenges and must overcome many circumstances to earn a college degree. Undocumented status certainly limits a student's choices, but it is possible to find a college or university that accepts undocumented students and provides the sort of funding that makes attending college feasible. Some are fortunate and find themselves on college campuses that allow the payment of in-state tuition, offer undocumented specific academic learning and support programs, and/or have student body organizations that support undocumented students (Pérez & Cortés, 2011). Still, there are many who are not as fortunate and many colleges/universities lack specific academic learning and support services unique to this population.

### **Significance of Research**

Once students, undocumented or otherwise, enroll at any college or university retention and timely graduation become important factors. Student graduation rates and institutional levels support of degree completion has become a central issue within American higher

education in a way which was never seen previously. Higher education is currently experiencing an education quality and accountability period,<sup>7</sup> and the primary focus of higher education administrators, the U.S. Department of Education, and stakeholders is now on accountability and quality at the present time. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan said in a speech at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County on July 27, 2015, “American colleges need to be more accountable for how their students perform.” There is substantial focus on institutions of higher learning concerning what is being done to move the dial in the right direction (i.e., increase graduation and retention) (Drake, 2011; Fike & Fike, 2008; Gansemer-Topf & Schuh, 2006; Morrow & Ackermann, 2012; Shefsky & Sutton, 2015; Tinto, 2006). The reputation and financial implications associated with low student retention and high student attrition figures can be damaging for institutions (Yorke & Longden, 2004), students, and society at large. This discussion begs the question: What is occurring within our institutions of higher learning regarding undocumented persons once enrolled? It is certainly in the best interest of college/university stakeholders to support the retention and graduation of their admitted undocumented students. Plus, having more college educated people (including undocumented students) is not only individually rewarding but it has a positive impact for the economy and society at large.

---

<sup>7</sup> On October 17, 2005, Secretary Margaret Spellings announced the formation of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education. The Commission was created with the goal of launching a national dialogue on the future of higher education and called for an examination of how we can get the most out of our national investment to ensure that our higher education system continues to meet our nation’s needs for an educated and competitive workforce in the 21st century. The Secretary asked the Commission to focus on four key areas in its work: accessibility, affordability, accountability, and quality. U.S. Department of Education Press Release (2006).

## **Economic and Social Value of a College Degree**

The Pew Research Center (2014) reported that millennial<sup>8</sup> college graduates ages 25 to 32 who are working full time earn about \$17,500 more annually than employed young adults holding only a high school diploma. College educated millennials also are more likely to be employed full time than their less educated counterparts (89% versus 82%) and significantly less likely to be unemployed (3.8% versus 12.2%). Of course, the economic and career benefits of a college degree are not limited to millennials. A look at the historical data from the Pew Research Center report similar results although the pay gap was significantly smaller in previous generations. If the trend continues, a college degree is going to prove more valuable for future generations. Of note, higher earnings result in high tax remittance to the local, state, and federal government which result in macro level benefits.

Overall, the Pew Survey and economic analyses consistently find that college graduates, regardless of generation, are doing better economically than those with less education (Pew Research Center, 2014). America and the global society may require more people to have the critical thinking skills that a college education provides. Undocumented college students are part of this equation, as they provide added financial benefits to the economy as well the ability to positively contribute to the larger society.

## **Role of Academic Advising**

There are noted benefits to colleges/universities, identified stakeholders, and the economy when students graduate with a degree. Therefore, postsecondary institutions are utilizing student development theory, implementing best practices, and creating new policies to

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<sup>8</sup> Millennials are generally referred to persons born in the early 1980s to the early 2000s.

support academic persistence. To briefly summarize Evans, Forney, and Guido-DiBrito (1998), student development theory is the way in which a student grows, progresses, or increases his or her development capabilities as a result of enrollment in an institution of higher education. There are three main types of student development theory. Psychosocial theory deals with interpersonal and identity development of students. This includes how students define themselves, their relationships with others, and what they want to do with their lives. The second, cognitive-structural theory, illuminate's changes in the way students think and make decisions, both morally and intellectually. The third is typology, which examines individual differences in how students view and relate to the world. Generally speaking, student development theory is used to better understand, support, and serve students in college. Just to ensure clarity, academic persistence is a measure of how many students return from the fall semester to the spring semester with completed credits toward their degree (Anderson, 1987). This includes first years, sophomores, juniors, and seniors.

The use of best practices and policies to support academic persistence has resulted in the improvement of academic advising and a focus on the role of advisors, as they are positioned to significantly improve retention, persistence, and degree completion (Nutt, 2006). The role of advisors and their influence on students has often been attributed to overall student success (retention, persistence, and degree completion) within higher education. Migden (1989) argued that advisors are in the best position to meet student needs because they understand the needs of students, are committed to the retention of students, are more accessible than faculty, and link students with other services available on campus. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) reported that academic advising plays a role in students' decisions to persist and also affects their chances of graduating.

A key factor in successful student retention is an excellent advising program (Tuttle, 2000). Therefore, it is quite commonplace at many institutions to require students to meet with their professional academic advisors, especially during their freshman and/or sophomore years. These required sessions ensure students are positively adjusting to college life, have a clear understanding about their academic programs/classes, have knowledge of college resources, and generally continue with their degree, all of which ultimately results in timely graduation. Unlike other campus employees with advising responsibilities, the primary purpose of academic advisors is to support the overall academic success of their assigned students. As discussed below, professional academic advisors do much more than just scheduling courses and explaining the registration process.

Academic advising might possibly be, as Hunter and White (2004) suggested, the only organized and structured attempts in which university faculty or staff have sustained interactions with students. When one considers the mentoring and counseling aspect of academic advising, it becomes clear that helping students realize their purpose in higher education and reasons for pursuing their current educational goals do not simply occur in one or two visits; hence, academic advising is a process that occurs over time with students building relationships with their advisors. Williams, Glenn, and Wider (2008) elaborated on the benefits of these types of relationships by describing how the relationship between advisors and students can improve the student matriculation processes and provides students with a sense of security. It also allows for student connectedness, in which students feel they are part of the college community and those employed within the college community believe students to be essential to their purpose at the institution. Acknowledging the positive impact of competent and dedicated advisors and their unique position to greatly influence the experiences of all students, especially undocumented

students, is important within the context of public policy and administration within higher education. Thus, advising processes and undocumented students in higher education are the foci of this research study.

There are formidable challenges at every level of the higher education system which confront students who aspire to enroll and succeed in college, but few that match those faced by undocumented students. There is no known research which examines the role of advisors and undocumented students within the scope and theoretical framework of public administration. The literature available reveals that undocumented students have few identified campus resources and limited, if any, financial options (Amuedo-Dorantes & Sparber, 2012; Cavazos-Regh, Zayas, & Spitznagel, 2007; Diaz-Strong, Gómez, Luna-Duarte, & Meiners, 2011; Dozier, 1995; Drachman, 2006; Hernandez, et al., 2010). They face unique challenges, especially in the pursuit of a college education. Perez (2010) explained that institutions of higher learning should organize themselves so undocumented students understand how to navigate college, and the first step is to understand the experiences of undocumented students. By understanding the histories of participation within higher education for undocumented students, college and university practitioners can begin to create culturally relevant outreach and advocacy efforts (Gildersleeve & Ranero, 2010). Perez (2010) also called for an examination of and modification of administrative procedures which may inadvertently stigmatize undocumented students. There are various issues to consider when supporting and providing services for undocumented students. Colleges must pay close attention to their challenges in order to develop efficient strategies for facilitating the college experience of undocumented students (Dozier, 1995).

Colleges can develop workshops to educate administrators, faculty, and counselors about undocumented students and the educational challenges they face. These can provide the historical and legal context, current information on recent/pending legislation at the state

and federal level, and provide concrete procedures on how to better serve undocumented students (Perez, 2010). (p. 35)

Undocumented students have been by and large absent from the discussion concerning the retention and graduation of marginalized student populations within institutions of higher learning in the U.S. As Gildersleeve & Ranero (2010) stated, “Undocumented students are a part of the educational system and no longer should be ignored” (p. 121). Currently, there are no established best practices or national standards pertaining to the advising of undocumented students. Research informing practices to better service undocumented students has the potential to positively influence the experiences and outcomes of undocumented students across the nation. Only 25% of undocumented immigrants ages 25 to 64 have attended college compared to 61% of U.S. born adults and 54% of legal immigrants (Passel & Cohn, 2009). For those that beat the odds and actually make it to college, it is important for colleges and universities to create policies, procedures, and structures targeted at the retention and academic success of undocumented students once admitted, as it benefits not only the individual but society at large.

### **Research Questions**

Arguably, the first steps to creating policies, procedures, and structures targeted at the retention and academic success of undocumented students begins with research. Therefore, this research study examined the perspectives and actions of academic advisors regarding the advising of undocumented students utilizing the theoretical lens of Michael Lipsky’s (1980, 2010) framework on discretionary behavior among street-level bureaucrats<sup>9</sup>. There are minimal or nonexistent guidelines/best practices regarding the advising of undocumented students within

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<sup>9</sup> Lipsky (1980) identified street-level bureaucrats as professionals who interact directly with citizens on behalf of the state.



the academic advising process. Academic advisors, who operate as street-level bureaucrats, are utilizing their discretion and in effect creating policy when working with undocumented students. The research questions are a reflection of the literature presented in Chapter 2 and are as follows:

### **Primary Research Question**

RQ1: What type of discretionary behavior (if any) do academic advisors exercise when advising undocumented students?

### **Secondary Research Question**

RQ2: Do the academic advising needs of undocumented students differ from those of other students? If so, how?

### **Research Purpose**

This research contributed to the body of public administration knowledge through the application of street-level bureaucracy as it relates to the self-reported actions and perspectives of academic advisors. Understanding the actions and behaviors of street-level bureaucrats in advising undocumented students offered insight in terms of both public administration and public policy, and specifically within the field of higher education. This study permitted an *on the ground* examination of knowledge, styles, and behaviors that influence individual student experiences and educational outcomes among this unique population from the perspective of academic advisors. Examining the advising process and gathering data directly from academic advisors was especially important, as advisors significantly impact the academic success of students. As was previously mentioned, once students enroll at any college or university the goal is to retain the student and support their timely graduation. This goal extends to the undocumented student population as well.

This research intended to inform higher education administrators and advisors. It also sought to inform future discussion, research, policy and practice concerning the advising process in institutions of higher education among undocumented students, especially in states which permit tuition-equity for undocumented students. To summarize Petress (1996), administrative ignorance or neglect of advising means that students will receive less than they deserve from their college education, as good advising is a team effort. Advising is a key component of a college career (Petress, 1996).

The issue of student retention and persistence has continued to grow in importance throughout the history of higher education in America and continues to influence federal and state education policies and practices. Early studies (Astin, 1977) focused on the characteristics of students who did not persist and such studies were used as evidence for higher admission standards or more quality control of recruitment. However, beginning in the 1970s, the research began to focus on the reasons students remained enrolled and how colleges could make changes to or develop programs which would increase the retention of their students. Tinto (1987) indicated that the factors in students dropping or *stopping out* include academic difficulty, adjustment problems, a lack of clear academic and career goals, uncertainty, a lack of commitment, poor integration with the college community, incongruence, and isolation. High-quality advising seeks to address all the above mentioned factors. High-quality advising is indeed what many students, especially undocumented students, need to reach their goals of graduation. This study aspires to influence changes and program development in support of undocumented students by gathering data from academic advisors on their self-reported actions and perspectives concerning academic advising for this student population.

In the current education quality and accountability period, many colleges have academic advising programs staffed with professional advisors, as retention can be highly affected by enhancing student interaction with campus personnel, such as academic advisors. Rendon (1995) indicated that two critical factors in a student's decision to remain enrolled are a quality advisement program and making positive connections with college personnel during the first term of enrollment. Professional academic advisors are often one of the few groups of college personnel to continue their relationship with students throughout their college career. Academic advisors provide students with the needed connection to various campus services and build essential connections between these services and the students. In addition, academic advisors offer students the personal connection to the institution that research indicates is vital to student success. Advisors are expected to, "accept that their role is influential in a student's academic persistence and degree completion" (Pizzolato, 2008, p. 19) and thus, act accordingly to support and guide students as they work toward degree attainment. Professional advisors are certainly positioned to support the persistence and graduation of students, especially undocumented students.

### **Undocumented Students and Education: An Overview of Policy and Legislation**

The following section details key legislation, policy, and information concerning undocumented students, specifically regarding higher education. This section provides federal, state, an institutional level information to provide readers with historical foundation and present day understanding of the intersection of public education and undocumented students in the U.S. Keep in mind the focus of this research is to examine discretionary behavior of professional academic advisors regarding undocumented students in higher education.

A review of the first and only Supreme Court case (*Plyler v. Doe* in 1982) regarding undocumented immigrants and education is discussed, followed by information concerning the differences in tuition rates by states. The role of community colleges and the Board of Regents follows. This section concludes with a summary of the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act in addition to a review of the Differed Action for Childhood Arrivals executive action.

### **U.S. Landmark Supreme Court Case**

The federal government has not specifically addressed nor passed any policy pertaining to undocumented students in higher education. Therefore, individual states have begun taking matters into their own hands by passing laws and creating policy that is implemented at the college/university level. However, there is pertinent history addressing this issue in secondary schooling. The Supreme Court case of *Plyler v. Doe* in 1982 made great strides in obtaining social equity for undocumented children that reside in nation. The Supreme Court decision struck down Texas' attempt to prohibit free K-12 education for all noncitizen school-age children (Olivas, 1995). This was the first time that the U.S. Supreme Court dealt with the issue of undocumented immigrants and public education.

This case was hailed by its supporters as a major victory in civil rights and social equity. For over 30 years, undocumented children had been attending public schools for K-12 education as a result of the *Plyler* case. This case was limited to K-12 education and did not provide any legislation for application beyond high school. To date, no cases that have been brought to the U.S. Supreme Court regarding higher education and undocumented students have been heard. As was previously mentioned, states have therefore been left to decide how to address undocumented persons in higher education.

## **In-State Tuition Eligibility for Undocumented Students**

Policymakers in many states have not been successful in passing legislation permitting in-state tuition payment for undocumented students in most states throughout the nation. The Education Commission of States have identified 32 states which considered or passed in-state tuition legislation for undocumented students, indicating widespread national interest in this particular area (Russell, 2011).

According to a report by the National Conference of State Legislators (2014), 18 states currently have provisions allowing in-state tuition rates for undocumented students as of April 2014. California and Texas were the first states to enact legislation in 2001. In 2002, New York and Utah passed similar legislation. During the 2003 and 2004 legislative sessions, Washington, Oklahoma, Illinois, and Kansas all passed such laws. Yet, Oklahoma revoked its law in 2008. In 2005 and 2006, New Mexico and Nebraska signed undocumented student in-state tuition legislation into law, and Wisconsin enacted a similar law in 2009, but then revoked it in 2011. Maryland's governor, Martin O'Malley, signed a law in May 2011 allowing undocumented students meeting the specified requirements to pay in-state tuition at community colleges only. Also in 2011, Connecticut enacted a law allowing in-state tuition for undocumented students. There were four states in 2013 that passed in-state tuition payment legislation for undocumented students: Colorado, Minnesota, Oregon, and New Jersey. Florida approved in-state tuition for undocumented in 2014; the bill is currently awaiting the Governor's signature. The most recent update is from the Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia Attorney General, Mark R. Herring, announced that Virginia students approved for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals now qualify for in-state tuition on April 29, 2014 (Gabriel, 2014). To date, only three states allow undocumented students to receive state financial aid: California, New Mexico, and Texas. The

states which have passed laws to allow undocumented students to receive in-state tuition generally have the following requirements (Amuedo-Dorantes & Sparber, 2012):

1. Students must live in state and attend high school for a specified period, and graduate or receive their GED.
2. Students must be accepted to a public college or university.
3. Students must sign an affidavit stating their intention to file for legal immigration status.

### **Prohibited In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students**

Some states have taken legislative action to prohibit the payment of in-state tuition for undocumented students who have resided within their respective states for high school education or for the majority of their K-12 education. The National Conference of State Legislators (2014) reported that Arizona, Georgia, and Indiana bar undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition rates. Arizona citizens passed Proposition 300 in 2006, which prohibits undocumented students from qualifying for in-state tuition rates and any type of state financial aid. In 2008, the state legislatures in Colorado and Georgia passed bills banning undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition rates. Colorado repealed the ban and passed legislation allowing for in-state tuition rates for undocumented students in 2013. Also in 2008, South Carolina, in legislation titled the Illegal Immigration Reform Act, prohibited undocumented students from enrolling in its state colleges or universities. In 2011, Indiana enacted HB 1402 requiring that students be lawfully present to receive in-state tuition benefits. Alabama joined South Carolina the same year when a law was enacted in June preventing undocumented students from enrolling in public postsecondary institutions. Table 1 provides visual information about undocumented higher education policy and legislation.

Table 1

*Policies and Legislation – Undocumented*

<b>States With In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students</b>		
<b>Year passed</b>	<b>State</b>	
2001	Texas	
2001	California	
2002	Utah	
2002	New York	
2003	Illinois	
2003	Washington	
2004	Kansas	
2005	New Mexico	
2006	Nebraska	
2011	Maryland	
2011	Connecticut	
2013	Colorado	
2013	Minnesota	
2013	Oregon	
2013	New Jersey	
2014	Florida	
<b>States That Prohibit In-State Tuition or Enrollment for Undocumented Students</b>		
<b>Year passed</b>	<b>State</b>	
2006	Arizona	
2008	Colorado	
2008	Georgia	
2008	South Carolina*	
2011	Indiana	
2011	Alabama*	
<b>Amended Law to Prohibit In-State Tuition for Undocumented Students</b>		
<b>State</b>	<b>Year in-state tuition allowed</b>	<b>Year in-state tuition prohibited</b>
Oklahoma	2003	2008
Wisconsin	2009	2011

\*Prohibit enrollment at state colleges or universities.

*Note.* In 2013 Colorado repealed the 2006 ban on in-state tuition for undocumented students.

## **Community College System**

Several community college systems have considered rules and regulations concerning undocumented students and tuition rates. The Alabama Community College System prohibits undocumented students from enrolling in its colleges. Since 2001, the North Carolina Community College System has changed its admissions policy for undocumented students five times. In the past decade, the system has banned undocumented students from enrolling, allowed each campus to decide whether to admit undocumented students, allowed undocumented students, and then again banned undocumented students from enrolling. “Currently, following a 2009 decision, undocumented students who graduated from a North Carolina high school, and who are able to pay out-of-state tuition, are allowed to enroll in the North Carolina Community College System” (National Conference of State Legislators, 2014).

## **Role of Board of Regents**

In the U.S., a board often governs institutions of higher education, including private universities, state universities and community colleges. In each state, boards may govern the state university system, individual colleges and universities, or both. Generally speaking, they operate as a board of directors, and they vary by formal name, size, powers, and membership. Members are even appointed by the governor in some states.

The following information details how this Board of Regents has exerted their authority concerning the payment of in-state versus out-of-state tuition by undocumented students. The state of Oklahoma provided in-state tuition to undocumented students from 2003 to 2008. In 2008, the Oklahoma Taxpayer and Citizen Protection Act was passed, placing the burden of whether to provide in-state tuition to undocumented students on the Oklahoma Board of Regents. The Board of Regents currently still allows undocumented students who meet Oklahoma's



original statutory requirements, to receive in-state tuition. In October 2010, Georgia's State Board of Regents passed new rules regulating the admission of undocumented students. "The 35 institutions in the University System of Georgia must verify the 'lawful presence' of all students seeking in-state tuition rates" (National, Conference of State Legislators, 2014). Additionally, any institution that has not admitted all academically qualified applicants in the two most recent years is not allowed to enroll undocumented students.

In September 2011, Rhode Island's Board of Governors for Higher Education approved a policy allowing undocumented students to pay in-state tuition at Rhode Island's colleges if they attended high school in the state for at least 3 years and graduated. The students must sign an affidavit stating they are pursuing legal status. This policy went into effect in 2012 (National Conference of State Legislators, 2014).

In 2013, the University of Hawaii's Board of Regents adopted a similar policy. Similarly, the governing "boards of several Michigan public universities and community colleges, including the University of Michigan, exercised their constitutional autonomy and formally adopted in-state tuition for undocumented students" (National Conference of State Legislators, 2014).

### **Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors Act**

At the congressional level, the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, which goes several steps further than the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals executive order<sup>10</sup> to provide undocumented students with a pathway to permanent residency status and access to federal benefits, such as aid for college, has stalled on several occasions. The DREAM Act would provide a pathway to legal status for the thousands of undocumented students who graduate from high school each year. "The overall goal of the DREAM Act is

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<sup>10</sup> The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals executive order is discussed in detail in the following section of this Chapter.

twofold: (a) eliminate federal provisions that penalize states for granting undocumented students in-state tuition and (b) provide qualified undocumented individuals a path toward conditional permanent residency” (Mahatmya & Gring-Pemle, 2014, p. 80). According to the National Immigration Law Center (2011):

Under the DREAM Act, most students who came to the U.S. at age 15 or younger at least five years before the date of the bill’s enactment and who have maintained good moral character since entering the U.S. would qualify for conditional permanent resident status upon acceptance to college, graduation from a U.S. high school, or being awarded a GED in the U.S. Students would not qualify for this relief if they had committed crimes, were a security risk, or were inadmissible or removable on certain other grounds. Under the Senate bill qualifying students must be under age 35, whereas under the House bill they must be under age 32 (National Immigration Law Center, 2011). (p. 1)

To date, the DREAM Act has not been passed. “Each time the Act itself had bi-partisan support, but the comprehensive immigration reform bill as well as the Act presented as a stand-alone bill failed to garner enough votes” (Mahatmya & Gring-Pemle, 2014, p. 80).

### **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals**

The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program was implemented in 2012.

A person may qualify for deferred action if he or she:

1. “was under the age of 31 as of June 15, 2012;
2. came to the United States before turning 16;
3. has continuously resided in the United States since June 15, 2007;
4. was physically present in the United States on June 15, 2012, and at the time of making a request for DACA;
5. is currently in school, has graduated or obtained a certificate of completion from high school, has obtained a GED, or is an honorably discharged veteran; and

6. has not been convicted of a felony, significant misdemeanor, three or more other misdemeanors, or does not otherwise pose a threat to national security or public safety” (Migration Policy Institute, 2013, pp. 1-2).

Individuals may also apply for DACA once they are in the custody of immigration authorities, as a defense against their deportation. The U.S. Citizen and Immigration Services (USCIS) reported that it accepted for processing 1,267,761 complete (initial and renewal applications combined) DACA applications between August 2012 and September 30, 2015 (Migration Policy Institute, 2013). Approximately 90% were approved, about 5% were denied, and the remainder are awaiting a decision (Migration Policy Institute, 2013). In many respects, the DACA program is accomplishing what the DREAM Act has failed to do for immigrants brought to the United States as children.

As of March 1, 2017 the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program was still available. The government was accepting and approving new and renewal DACA (Immigrant Legal Resource Center, 2017) applications. There is no known research or literature to confirm any changes in DACA to date. However, the program could be terminated at any time, as DACA is an executive order by former U.S. President Obama. The 45th President of the United States, Donald J. Trump, has the authority to end the program at any time.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This research sought to examine the role of advisors (from their perspective) concerning their interactions with undocumented students in public higher education through the framework of Michael Lipsky’s (1980) understanding of street-level bureaucracy. Lipsky and his colleagues sought to show that the behavior of public service workers could best be understood in terms of

the work-related pressures (Hawley & Lipsky, 1976). In Lipsky's account, employees of public services considered to be street-level bureaucrats are those workers:

Who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work. Typical street-level bureaucrats are teachers, police officers, and other law enforcement personnel, social workers, judges, public lawyers and other court officials and many other public officials who grant access to government programs and provide services within them (Lipsky, 1980). (p. 3)

As mentioned above, Lipsky details employees who typically fall in the category of street-level bureaucrats. Academic advisors also belong in the same category. Due to the nature of services provided, the work of academic advisors cannot have an automatic prescribed response. Street-level bureaucrats must utilize their individual judgment to decide on an appropriate response from a range of possible actions to provide adequate services.

Lipsky's (1980) account of street-level bureaucracy is complex and multidimensional. For the purposes of the framework applied at hand, this work focuses on the conditions within which street-level bureaucracies operate through the implementation of policy and through their use of discretion. The use of discretion is arguably the most insightful part of understanding public bureaucracies and the individuals who work within them. Lipsky (1980) made the argument that managers in street-level bureaucracies are limited in their ability to control street-level workers, while those on the front line are left to deal with ambiguous goals and inadequate resources daily. Consequently, street-level bureaucrats must work out practical versions of public policy which may often look different from the official process or procedure. When such distortions of policy are discovered, public employees are "often castigated for thwarting policy intentions" (Evans & Harris, 2004, p. 876) yet, in contrast to this common response to the problem of policy implementation, Lipsky locates the difficulty at a structural level, in the defining characteristics of street-level bureaucrats work (Lipsky, 1980, p. xv). Shortcuts and

policy distortions developed at street-level are often tacitly accepted by managers as real world solutions for getting the job done (Lipsky, 1980, p. 18).

To continue, academic advisors have varied caseloads<sup>11</sup> of students, depending on the institution type, specific university or college, division, department, program, and so on. Many advisors not only have the responsibility of advising, but also other duties such as teaching first-year seminars, holding workshops, performing committee work, working at institutional events, and undertaking various other commitments that take time away from direct advising with students (Robbins, 2013). This large number of responsibilities likely requires them to develop shortcuts and interpret policy as they see fit to balance their advising load and perform other duties. It is also possible that managers of advisors are aware of their competing priorities and accept that advisors are utilizing their discretion which may result in shortcuts and policy distortions. This research will explore this occurrence as it relates to the advising of undocumented students.

Although advisors generally meet with advisees as a result of institution mandated advising sessions to ensure student success, several advising sessions can be held at the student's request. It is not uncommon for students to visit their advisor when something is wrong or when they need guidance. These requested meetings by students address a wide range of issues. When a student expresses uncertainty with a program of study, for example, an advisor may direct him or her to immediately change their major, meet with faculty members in their current

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<sup>11</sup> Based on NACADA 2011 National Survey of Academic Advising (Carlstrom & Miller, 2013), the median case load of advisees per full-time professional academic advisor is 296, or a ratio of 296 students to one full-time advisor. By institutional size, the median individual advisor caseloads are 233, 333, and 600 advisees for small, medium, and large institutions, respectively. Direct comparisons of advisor caseloads in institutions of the same type (e.g., 2-year colleges; 4-year, public, bachelor-degree granting universities; 4-year, private, bachelor-degree granting colleges) with similar student populations, programs, or geographical area are complicated by differences in campus climate, politics, institutional mission and goals, and other factors (Robbins, 2013).

major for consultation, speak with upperclassmen in their major, participate in university programs designed to aid in the selection of an appropriate major, or perhaps all of the above to address one area of concern. Advisors must assess what is best for each individual student utilizing their expertise and discretion.

Perhaps a student is having academic challenges in one class. He or she may be initially advised to simply drop the course. Further inquiry into the student's situation, however, may warrant the use of institutional policy for a medical withdrawal. Perhaps a referral for tutoring may be needed, or even a consultation with the campus office for students with learning disabilities. There is rarely a one size fits all response in the profession of academic advising, especially when advisors are faced with extremely sensitive information such as student disclosure concerning an addiction to illegal or legal substances or experiences of domestic violence. An advisor may immediately report or refer a student to an office such as campus wellness to get in a substance abuse program or campus police, or advise a student drop out until their situation improves or is remedied. The goal of many institutions is to retain students, but advisors sometimes recommend that students leave the institution if it is in the best interest of the student. Therefore, academic advisors may have to operate in ways that are sometimes in conflict with overall institutional goals and policies which primarily focus on retention and graduation.

As exhibited by advisors, street-level bureaucrats have discretion because the nature of service provision calls for human judgment which cannot be programmed and for which machines cannot substitute (Lipsky, 1980, 2010). "Street-level bureaucrats have responsibility for making unique and fully appropriate responses to individual clients and their situations" (Lipsky, 1980, p. 161). It is possible that undocumented students may express concerns about

resources unique to their inability to obtain financial aid or their concerns about deportation. The response from an advisor has the potential to help or harm the overall experience undocumented students have in their pursuit of degree completion. Utilizing the framework of street-level bureaucracy, professional advisors have a responsibility to, “*at least to be open to the possibility* [emphasis added]” that each student, especially undocumented students, “presents special circumstances and opportunities that may require fresh thinking and flexible action” (Lipsky, 2010, p. 161). Undocumented students undeniably have special circumstances unlike other under-represented or marginalized populations on college campuses.

The conditions of the work experiences of street-level bureaucrats, Lipsky (1980, 2010) argued, were characterized by inadequate levels of resources and agency goals which were often vague, conflicting, and ambiguous and, therefore difficult to specify and measure. As a result, street-level bureaucrats worked with high caseloads in a context of uncertainty. They had fragmented contact with their clients, worked with people from diverse backgrounds, and needed to make rapid decisions, typically under limited time and incomplete information. The services that street-level bureaucracies provided were effectively subject to high demand. “Resources were rarely sufficient and any increase in funding was taken up by previously unmet demand rather than improving the quality of service” (Lipsky, 1980, p. 32). Lipsky saw the problem of scarce resources compounded by imprecise organizational goals and unrealistically high expectations of public agencies and their employees. Policy objectives tended to be ambitious, ambiguous, vague, or conflicting, therefore impacting “managers’ ability to exercise control over policy” (Lipsky, 1980, p. 40).

This is evident in the world of academic advising, for scarce resources often include personnel and limited/nonexistent student data technology systems. Many advisors carry high

caseloads, while having the responsibility of monitoring progress for every student. Much of the accountability and performance measures from management are directly from the user-end perspective (i.e., students).

Too often, institutions depend on satisfaction surveys and volume of student contact (number of students seen) to measure the success of the enterprise. While satisfaction surveys used by many institutions assess the delivery of advising services, they do not address the outcome of advising, namely, student learning (Macaruso, 2004).

This is inherently problematic as advisors may have to provide information and direction to students that are in their best interest, but not in line with what students may want to hear. It is unlikely students will rate high satisfaction if they receive information they perceive as negative. Plus, students may not understand the purpose and role of an advisor.

Advisors are tasked with ensuring that students are academically successful, persistent, and graduate in a timely manner. It is not unusual to find overarching institutional or unit-specific policy and/or practices for advising, especially in an advising center. Many colleges do not address the wide variance in services and knowledge required to adequately address the diversity that exists within the student body (Wimbish, 2006). Existing policy and unit-specific goals most likely do not consider students who may be in fear of deportation or are unable to pursue the typical venues for financial resources, as may be the case with undocumented students. Advisors must therefore interpret policy as they see fit to meet the needs of this population.

Of note, street-level bureaucrats, such as advisors, have the potential to impact life chances and opportunities of the public, especially vulnerable population like undocumented students within public institutions of higher learning. As Lipsky (1980) noted, front-line workers often adapt two main approaches: 1) discretion accompanied by autonomy, or 2) compliance,



which has different consequences for vulnerable populations. Lipsky (1980) pointed out that like everyone else, street-level bureaucrats develop “personal standards of whether or not someone is deserving” based on their individual experiences (p. 23). Thus, street-level bureaucrats are required to use professional judgment in ways that often modify policy regulations (Evans & Harris, 2004; Lipsky, 1980) contributing to the outcomes and life chances of marginalized and/or vulnerable populations. This professional judgement to comply or utilize discretion has the potential to impact opportunities and resources received by undocumented students. The theory of representative bureaucracy, which is not the theoretical focus for this research, offers additional insight on the connection between life chances and the role of street-level bureaucrats.

Representative bureaucracy theory maintains that function of a bureaucracy can be made more responsive to the interests/needs of the public if the demographics and commitments of personnel reflects the demographic characteristics and interest of persons/communities served (Krislov 1974; Meier 1975, 1993; Thielemann and Stewart 1996; Selden, 1997; Sowa and Selden 2003). This responsiveness to the public lies in the potential matching of values and beliefs between bureaucrats and clients that share demographic characteristics such as race, ethnicity, and gender (Krislov and Rosenbloom 1981). Subsequently, academic advisors operating as front-line bureaucrats have the potential to impact the life chances of undocumented students within their respective colleges/universities through their discretion or policy compliance regarding the sharing of information, opportunities, and support as utilized in the advising process to ensure degree completion and persistence.

Lipsky (1980, 2010) addresses the role of management within his theoretical framework on street-level bureaucracy as well. Lipsky (1980) considered that management techniques controlling the work of street-level bureaucrats were difficult to measure because it was

impossible to define a *good* service, and because there was the constant risk that imposing crude performance measures would distort service delivery. Street-level bureaucracies, such as an academic advising center, are difficult organizations to measure with management and advisors disagreeing on the development and application of performance measures. Managers are rarely, if ever, present during an advising session. Advising sessions with students take place in private. Much of what is discussed is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act Regulations so there is great autonomy which exists within academic advising. This autonomy has the potential for tensions between managers and advisors. Lipsky explored the tension between street-level bureaucrats and their managers, as they have potentially conflicting concerns. However, in negotiating this tension, Lipsky considered that the sanctions available to managers to control street-level bureaucrats are limited and he regarded managerial control as “inherently problematic because of the significant levels of autonomy that street-level bureaucrats have in carrying out their work” (Lipsky, 1980, p. 161-162). Within this context, three factors were identified that shape street-level bureaucrats experience of discretion: the degree of freedom afforded to them by the agency that is necessary to do the job, the practical requirement to make their own practice or policy decision because of nebulous agency policy, and the ability on the part of the street-level bureaucrat to subvert policy (Evans & Harris, 2004). Each of the identified factors are further discussed in the Chapter 2, the Literature Review section of this study.

As a final point, there are several authors who have examined discretion and street-level bureaucracy. However, this study intentionally heavily relies on Lipsky’s account of discretion and street-level bureaucracy. Lipsky was the first to note this behavioral occurrence among street-level workers and its connection to policy. Discretionary behavior has not been applied to

work of academic advisors. This research would like to examine if there is any applicability of Lipsky's account of street-level bureaucracy to academic advisors. If this research study reveals advisors are indeed exhibiting discretionary behavior and creating policy, then further research will expand the theoretical framework to include other authors who have examined street-level discretion.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter provides an introduction to the proposed research topic concerning the role of discretion among academic advisors as it relates to undocumented students in public institutions of higher learning. This work focuses on the role of street-level bureaucrats, identified as academic advisors, in public colleges and universities in the United States. The significance of this research describes the demand and importance of this study. Furthermore, as a higher education professional administrator in the areas of retention and academic support services for the last 14 years, my position requires the application of theory, policy, and practice to ensure students are provided with the tools required to reach their goal of degree completion. My profession and vested interest regarding students has led me to do this research.

Chapter 1 details government legislation and policies at the federal and state levels concerning the education of undocumented students. Given the significant differences across states, this research aims to provide more informed decision making at the institutional level and aspires to influence the broader discussion and future research. An examination of Lipsky's (1980, 2010) street-level bureaucracy is applied to academic advisors and their utilization of discretion in higher education has never been explored within public administration. This research has informed discussion, policy/practice, and future inquiry regarding the role of academic advisors on the retention and persistence of undocumented students.

Chapter 2 will provide literature about the general role of street-level bureaucrats<sup>12</sup> and specifically advisors to provide readers with an informed background about the study participants. Chapter 3 details the research methodology for the proposed dissertation study. The research goals are revealed, followed by the research design which is guided by phenomenological methodology. Information regarding the study participants, sampling procedures, and data collection will also be discussed in Chapter 3. Chapter 3 provides interview site demographics and specifies the data analysis. Finally, the study limitations and particulars of the necessary permissions required to conduct research will be presented.

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<sup>12</sup> Street-level bureaucrats are also referred to as front-line workers, human service workers, public servants, or public administrators.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

Chapter 2 presents information pertaining to the role of street-level bureaucrats and provides readers with an informed background about the study participants, academic advisors. Professional advisors are indeed street-level workers within institutions of higher education. “Bureaucratic discretion is an important topic for the field of public administration” (Scott, 1997, p. 36). The role of public employees, specifically street-level bureaucrats, is of concern to many American citizens as are funding sources which support government or public institutions in some form or fashion. The actions of academic advisors are of importance to citizens, so much so that in the state of Texas on March 31, 2011, the Texas Senate unanimously voted to develop an objective system that can fairly assess and evaluate academic advising at Texas colleges and universities to support timely degree completion.

Professional academic advisors influence degree persistence and timely graduation of students. They have discretion in their role as street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010) within the structure of higher education. When employees have discretion over how they deliver public services and the people to whom they will be delivered, the discretionary choices shape the character, effects, and perceptions of government policies among citizens (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996). There are “numerous factors that may influence how discretion is exercised in public organizations. Variables such as the task at hand, the decisional context, workload pressures, internal culture, rules and regulations, and an organization’s external environment are among the more salient” (Scott, 1997, p. 37). This chapter provides deeper insight into the world of discretion and policy making among street-level bureaucrats through a review of literature which explores the *how* and *why* of street-level discretion followed by information about professional advisors.

### **Factors that Shape Street-Level Bureaucracy**

Three main factors shape street-level bureaucracy. First, Lipsky (1980) saw discretion as fundamental in street-level bureaucracies because street-level bureaucrats work with people who are unpredictable, diverse, and have different needs. By definition, human service workers must be able to respond in different ways, depending on the particular issues presented for their attention. The situations they face are too complex to reduce to prescribed responses, despite pressures to do so, because such responses would render them unable to do the job well. Workers operate as individuals, with individuals, in unobserved and unobservable settings which create a space for them to act with some autonomy (Lipsky, 1980). Moreover, when street-level bureaucrats are professionals such as academic advisors, Lipsky maintained “they are regularly deferred to in their specialized areas of work and are relatively free from interference by supervisors or scrutiny by clients” (p. 14).

The second set of factors promoting the use of discretion arises from the policy context of street-level bureaucracies. The autonomy of street-level bureaucrats is limited by organizational rules and occupational norms and practices. This is similar to how advisors have to constantly juggle the interest of their institutions along with the best interest of every student they advise. Sometimes these perspectives are in direct conflict. Street-level bureaucrats end up making policy through the process of interpreting and implementing their duties and responsibilities when working with the public. The nature of human services can also throw up situations for which policy has not yet been developed, which can therefore result in street-level bureaucrats having to decide policy for themselves. This is precisely the foundation for the research at hand. From Lipsky (1980):

It is desirable to clarify objectives if they are needlessly and irrelevantly fuzzy or contradictory. However, while agency goals may be unclear or contradictory for reasons

of neglect and historical inertia, they may also be unclear or contradictory because they reflect the contradictory impulses of the society the agency serves. The dilemma for accountability is to know when goal clarification is desirable, because continued ambivalence and contradiction are unproductive, and when it will result in a reduction in the scope and mission of public services. (p. 165)

The final factor constructing the space for discretion builds upon the previous two. The degree of freedom that street-level bureaucrats need to do their job at all, in responding to individual need, and the space for discretion,

created by confusion, conflict, omission or obfuscation in the articulation of policy, give them the leeway not only to work in accordance with their interpretation of organizational goals, but also to operate in ways which contravene or subvert those goals, making it relatively easy for workers to tailor their behavior to avoid accountability (Lipsky, 1980). (p. 163)

Street-level bureaucrats resist organizational pressures with their own resources. There is a range of tactics which street-level bureaucrats can use to circumvent supervision, such as “control of information upwards, playing on the essentially private nature of their work and exploitation of management’s reliance on their good will and initiative on which continuing service provision depends” (Lipsky, 1980, pp. 23-25). This is certainly applicable in the autonomous world of academic advising.

Discretion is an intricate component in street-level bureaucrat’s work that cannot be eliminated by managers. Inevitably public sector employees, such as advisors working in public institutions, will have at least some discretion. “Laws, statutes, and/organizational rules cannot anticipate every decision situation which bureaucrats will encounter in the course of doing their work, and so bureaucrats will retain some measure of individual control over workplace decision making” (Marvel & Resh, 2015, p. 284). Lipsky (1980) explained that “public policy is not best understood as made in legislatures or top-floor suites of high-ranking administrators, because in important ways it is actually made in the crowded offices and daily encounters of street-level

workers” (p. xii). “Rather than formal laws and policy decrees, it is the decisions of street-level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures that effectively *become* the public policies they carry out” (Lipsky, 1980, p. xii).

Public institutions of higher education are indeed bureaucracies and the work of academic advisors is applicable to the framework of street-level bureaucracy in every sense. Institutions of higher education are bureaucracies with street-level bureaucrats working within them 12 months of the year. There is a clear chain of command which begins with the president/chancellor and leads down to employees such as advisors. Positions within these institutions all have job descriptions with varied amounts of expertise and specialization. Institutional mission and vision is available, providing a guide of daily operations and a roadmap for the future. There are policies and procedures for how the institution operates (i.e., degree requirements, bulletins, student handbooks, advising policy, etc.). Persons are hired once they participate in the interview process and permit reference and background checks in accordance with policy. Advisor performance is often reviewed nationwide as well as at the institutional level. This research focuses on the work of academic advisors concerning undocumented students in pursuit of a secondary degree. Understanding the actions and behaviors of academic advisors in the advising of undocumented students offers insight in terms of both public administration and public policy at many levels, but specifically within higher education. It permits an on the ground examination of knowledge and behaviors which influence individual student experiences and educational outcomes among this unique population from the perspective of academic advisors.



## **Historical Determinants of Bureaucratic Street-Level Discretion**

Earlier studies (Goodsell, 1980; Hasenfeld & Steinmetz, 1981; Tripi 1984) on street-level bureaucracies reported findings on employee and client types. Goodsell (1980) found that clients who exhibited greater levels of need tended to receive proportionally greater benefits. In contrast, another study showed that clients who were viewed as more difficult or troublesome received fewer benefits because service providers withheld information, evaded questions, and engaged in other tactics designed to make the application process difficult (Hasenfeld & Steinmetz, 1981). Tripi's (1984) research indicated that more articulate and knowledgeable clients tended to receive proportionally greater benefits, largely because of their ability to generate pressure on agency officials to modify bureaucratic routines to their advantage. Equally important, earlier studies on the discretion of street-level workers suggest three broad sets of factors which influence discretion in street-level bureaucracies: (a) characteristics of the clients, (b) organizational characteristics, and (c) attributes of the provider.

## **Street-Level Divergence**

### **Street-Level Divergence: Rational, Ethical, and Professional Choice**

This section details street-level divergence as it relates to individual ethos of front-line workers. Street-level divergence occurs when the behavior of front-line workers is inconsistent with established organizational policy and policy principles (Gofen, 2013). O'Leary (2010) noted that policy divergence is complex and challenging, as it relates to "what it means to act responsibly, ethically, and with integrity as a public servant" (p. 8). Policy divergence is considered to be an integral part of street-level work (Brodkin, 2003; Lipsky, 1980), and often times the actions of street-level workers diverge from the intentions of higher level administrators (May & Winter, 2009). Scholars generally portray street-level divergence either

as a “choice of the individual street-level worker” or as “inevitable in policy implementation” (Gofen, 2013, p. 475).

Illustrating street-level divergence as a choice of the street-level worker may refer to a person’s rational choice, ethical choice, and professional choice (Gofen, 2013). Within the scope of rational choice, street-level divergence may serve as a coping mechanism to overcome barriers to job performance such as limited resources and stressful work settings (Brodkin 2007, 2011; Lipsky, 1980, 2010). As a result of having limited resources and challenges managing stress, people have “little choice but to bend the rules, in order to get the job done” (Carey & Foster, 2011, p. 10). Divergence may also derive from street-level bureaucrats’ dispositions (Brehm & Gages 1997; Brodkin 2011). Street-level divergence utilizing rational choice is also explained as an agency dilemma, which occurs when one person or entity is able to make decisions on behalf of, or that impact, another person or entity (May & Winter, 2009). Consequently, divergence of street-level actions may derive from shirking (Wilson 1989), meaning not having the proper skills to adequately implement policy or from following the rational motivation of street-level bureaucrats, as well as some bureaucrats in general, to maximize leisure and minimize workload (Gofen, 2013).

Public servants, such as academic advisors working for public institutions of higher learning, are compelled to uphold different ethical obligations in general (Waldo, 1988). Street-level bureaucrats are consistently involved in ethical decision making and respond to guidelines as reflected in stated policy, organizational directives, and legislative requirements (at state and federal levels) from a position of moral autonomy (Carey & Foster, 2011; Hutchinson, 1990). They are often required to weigh competing moral principles within the context of mutually exclusive courses of action (Kaptein & van Reenen, 2001). Hence, street-level divergence,

which follows an ethical decision, refers to rights, responsibilities, and obligations which have a moral and value-based foundation (Banks, 2001) and in which street-level workers bend, break, or ignore rules to provide justice for their clients (Evans & Harris, 2004; Loyens & Maesschalck, 2010; Peter, Macfarlane, & O'Brien-Pallas, 2004).

Finally, street-level divergence may follow a professional decision, as occupational and professional identity is central to the understanding of street-level practices (Lipsky 1980, 2010), both on the individual level and among groups. In addition, it is influenced by bureaucratic culture attributes, such as sense of mission or role (Wilson, 1989). Specifically, street-level workers often see themselves

as governed by occupational or professional ideologies and frequently expect to be treated as professionals in as much as they claim that they should be trusted by their managers to use discretion to tackle their work in an adaptive way. (Hupe & Hill, 2007, p. 282).

Therefore, divergence may reflect a professional imperative (Haynes & Licata, 1995). If a street-level worker perceives that policy and rules hinder the ability to act in accordance with professional knowledge, they will tend to decide to act divergently. Furthermore, street-level bureaucrats define their work not in terms of policy and rules but rather in terms of relationships with their clients, and thus their personal commitments to clients who are perceived as worthy may lead to a decision to act divergently (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003).

### **Street-Level Divergence: Inevitable to Policy Implementation**

Street-level divergence is often considered inevitable in the implementation of policy (Majone & Wildavsky, 1978) because of its ambiguity and vagueness (Brodin, 2003; Lipsky, 1980, 2010). "Policy as written often fails to teach implementers what they need to know to *do* policy" (Hill, 2006, p. 265). More generally, street-level divergence is considered inevitable following bounded rationality (Simon, 1947), which suggests that there exists a bounded ability

to make rational decisions related to factors such as skills, habits, values, motives, loyalties, and the inevitable incompleteness of relevant knowledge (Jones, 2003), especially in the ambiguity that characterizes street-level work (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Thus, divergence of street-level actions is related to information processing of street-level bureaucrats, which is influenced by things such as their personal perceptions, emotions, attitudes, and experiences (Jones, 2003; Keiser, 2010). Personal values also play a role in divergence (Sabatier, Loomis, and McCarthy, 1995; Whitford, 2002), as do the perceptions and knowledge of others in their policy network (Keiser, 2010). In the same way, when decisions have to be made quickly they are more likely to result in biased outcomes as a result of speedy decision making (Jones, 2001).

### **Leadership Among Street-Level Bureaucrats**

Vinzant and Crothers (1996) argued that leadership provides a workable theoretical basis for integrating the notions of discretion, legitimacy, and accountability into a model of street-level public service within the context of situational leadership and value-based models, which are “particularly powerful to analyzing and evaluating bureaucratic discretion” (p. 473). They provide several reasons regarding why leadership theories, which are typically associated with individuals who occupy top positions in organizations, could in fact be the basis for an appropriate and useful theoretical framework to analyze the work of street-level bureaucrats. The following paragraphs summarize their work.

According to Vinzant and Crothers (1996), there are five main areas to consider when understanding acts of leadership, as it “can be seen to encompass a wide variety of behaviors” (p. 464). First, street-level bureaucrats are (more or less) independent actors who exercise discretion, like their executive-level counterparts, in complex and fluid environments. Leaders, for example, may exercise unilateral authority and power to achieve some goal in some

circumstances. On the other hand, they may act to inspire and empower individuals or groups to articulate and/or achieve goals themselves. This ability to accommodate a wide range of behaviors and strategies is important because “public servants are expected to employ numerous approaches to accomplishing public objectives” (p. 464).

Second, the choices made by both leaders and workers are often difficult because they could have drastic consequences for individuals, organizations, and even communities. As Denhardt (1984) pointed out, “Public administration is concerned with managing change processes in pursuit of publicly defined society values” (p. 17). The notion of leadership provides the means to consider values in the context of bureaucracy and accountability. Leadership “perhaps demands a consideration of values” (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996, p. 464), as street-level bureaucrats are unable to solely act in isolation to clarify values and determine desired outcomes. Rather, they act as leaders in many situations. Their work may facilitate value clarification, helping to draw norms and preferences from the communities in which they reside and “enact them within the boundaries of law, departmental rules, and professional ethics” (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996, p. 465). The leadership model permits focus on accountability and the role of values in understanding administrative discretion.

Third, “leadership models provide concepts and standards by which we can evaluate the appropriateness and legitimacy of specific actions” (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996, p. 465). Street-level leaders can be more or less successful in achieving the goals that their society, community, organization, and/or policies expect them to achieve. This relative success or failure can be evaluated in reference to standards embodied in specific models of leadership.

Fourth is a review of “the positive and important role of street-level public servants... and the need to consider this role in a larger context” (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996, p. 465). The

actions of leaders and workers are influenced by a range of circumstantial and varied factors in the context of values, norms, and other constraints. Leaders do not operate in a vacuum, nor do street-level bureaucrats who are accountable to their supervisors and colleagues. They are influenced by circumstances and varied factors, often acting as leaders. Street-level bureaucrats often operate in environments which are often highly conflictual and require negotiation and balance among competing demands, organizational rules, personal and professional values, and the demands of the situation at hand. There is a great degree of independence their work, which provides opportunities for independent decision making. The challenges and demands faced by street-level bureaucrats cannot be singularly “a matter of morality, ethics, institutional and regime values, bureaucratic responsibility, professionalism, or good judgment” (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996, p. 465). It is all of these things simultaneously which demand a special form of leadership.

Finally, the framework of leadership theory is insightful to understanding the role of street-level public administrators, as it identifies two types of discretion: “discretion over means [or process] and discretion over ends [or outcomes]” (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996, p. 465). This is important because street-level bureaucrats must decide on what to do and how to do it, even when seeking the exact same result in different circumstances<sup>13</sup>. Their discretion may vary. Serving the public interest requires ongoing concern with not only what is done but also how it is done (Barth, 1992).

Street-level bureaucrats may be called on to make choices about process, outcomes, or both. Process discretion exists whenever a worker is required to decide how best to achieve a

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<sup>13</sup> While the distinction between means and ends may be regarded as artificial, it has been shown to be an analytically useful way to think about the kinds of choices that street-level public servants are called upon to make (Crothers & Vinzant, 1994).

specified goal. Academic advisors, for example, may utilize discretion when students request a new advisor because they are not satisfied with their services. They may deny the student access to other advisors, or they may speak with a colleague and ask him or her to take the student. If a student is visibly upset there is great discretion regarding how to act. Some advisors have the ability to calm students down to get to the root of the problem, while others may request students return once they are composed.

Outcome discretion, in contrast, exists when public employees are called upon to decide what action to take, or whether to take any action at all. Many street-level public employees have the discretionary power to decide what outcomes and objectives they should seek in a given circumstance. Academic advisors exercise discretion if they discover a student has been drinking underage. Advisors may report it to the campus police, follow up with their resident assistant, or decide no action is needed if they deem the behavior was a one-time incident. Students may disclose to an advisor that they are abusing drugs. This discretion over intended outcomes is not easily eliminated and perhaps it should not be. Several different outcomes may be acceptable under the law, agency rules, or institutional standards.

### **Leadership: Discretion Over Process**

Discretion over process lends itself to models of situational leadership among street-level bureaucrats (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996). It is useful in describing and prescribing what leaders do as they try to achieve a particular goal and provide standards by which the appropriateness of leader actions can be judged. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) explained this model. The leader must alter his or her leadership behavior based on the situational characteristics in order to be effective. The leader provides what is missing or needed in an applicable situation, such as direction or support for their followers. Sometimes choices about how to accomplish an

objective are made within a larger environmental context that includes departmental/institutional procedures, organizational culture, and community norms. Situational leadership models provide evaluative standards by which others may judge the effectiveness and appropriateness of a leader's actions. In the Hersey and Blanchard (1988) model, the leader provides the level of guidance, direction, and support necessary to empower the individual or group to achieve a goal. Followers may be students, any individual, or group that interacts with street-level public servants. The Hersey and Blanchard (1988) model of situational leadership compliments process discretion in that leaders make choices about the process or approach they will use to achieve a particular goal based on their evaluation of the situation.

### **Leadership: Discretion Over Outcomes**

To understand how street-level leaders choose goals and make choices about outcomes, normative or value-based leadership models are applied (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996). These models aid in providing explanation regarding how leaders formulate goals and choose between competing values in determining outcomes. Burns (1978) described what he defined as transformational leadership as fundamentally grounded in society's organizational values, ideals, and goals. According to Burns, transformational leaders those who work to shift the purposes and ends of the organizations, groups, or communities they lead to another, higher set of goals and values. This is contrasted with transactional leadership in which leaders give followers something they want in exchange for their performance and support.

Transformational leaders help members of the community articulate those goals and take action to help achieve the outcomes. The appropriateness or legitimacy of these actions are then judged through reference to these underlying values, goals, and ideals. The leader's actions are viewed as legitimate when he or she is working to advance an agenda within this context.



However, if the leader pushes forward on plans and projects that do not derive from contextual values or is in contrast to a community's ideals and goals, the leader's actions are seen as illegitimate.

Additional normative models, such as Terry's (1990) view of conservatorship and Kass' (1990) model of stewardship are also useful in understanding the demands of street-level bureaucrats when making decisions about outcomes. As explained by Rohr (1978), similar to transformative models, these models primarily depend on the ability of front-line workers to understand and act on a combination of organizational, cultural, and at times political values. Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) also argued that leadership behavior is based on personal value systems which include commitment to justice and integrity. These are the types of internalized professional and regime values that public service workers are expected to act upon. While some may see this as an unrealistically heavy burden to place on street-level public servants, it is in many cases precisely the challenges they face (Crothers & Vinzant, 1994) from time to time.

Street-level bureaucrats may not be exactly the type of leader envisioned in these value-based models. Some aspects of value-based leadership models are more useful than others. Keep in mind that Lipsky (1980) changed the level of application/analysis when he adapted the concept of policy making to describe the work of street-level public servants, so the notion of leadership may be adapted to offer insight (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996) regarding leadership among the same population. Burns (1978) assumed that transformational leaders would be at the hierarchical peak of their organizations or communities capable of using moral exhortation to transform collective goals and aspirations. Terry (1990) and Kass (1990) also focused their analysis of discretion primarily at the administrative and executive level. Nevertheless, "Such models highlight how street-level leaders draw values from the community, their organizations,

their profession, and the needs of people with whom they interact” (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996, p. 468). Both high level leaders as well as street-level bureaucrats may be called upon to decide which values and goals are most important in a particular situation. Value-based leadership models have their place and may be appropriately applied at times. The concept of value-based leadership corresponds closely with the expectations of street-level leaders in the exercise of discretion over goals or outcomes. Street-level leaders act within a context of competing pressures, goals, ideals, and values, and they apply social, organizational, and moral standards in making choices about what ought to be done. Vinzant and Crothers (1996) argued that when this occurred, street-level leader’s decisions, “can be judged by drawing standards from value-based leadership models” (p. 469).

### **A Model of Street-Level Leadership**

Vinzant and Crothers (1996) developed their own model of street-level leadership. They suggested two basic principles through which discretionary action may be understood. First, effective street-level bureaucrats who enjoy broad discretion to carry out their tasks act, in effect, as situational and/or value-based leaders. Second, the actions street-level bureaucrats take can and ought to be evaluated in terms of leadership. Figure 1 depicts the street-level leadership model<sup>14</sup> which displays specific leadership models on the two dimensions of discretion identified above: process discretion and outcome discretion (Crothers & Vinzant, 1994). This model does not suggest that discretion and leadership are related in a linear way where more discretion leads to increased leadership.

Instead, the model seeks to convey how four types of situations create differing types of challenges and opportunities for street-level public servants in exercising leadership: (a) those involving no substantial discretion, (b) those involving choices, (c) those requiring

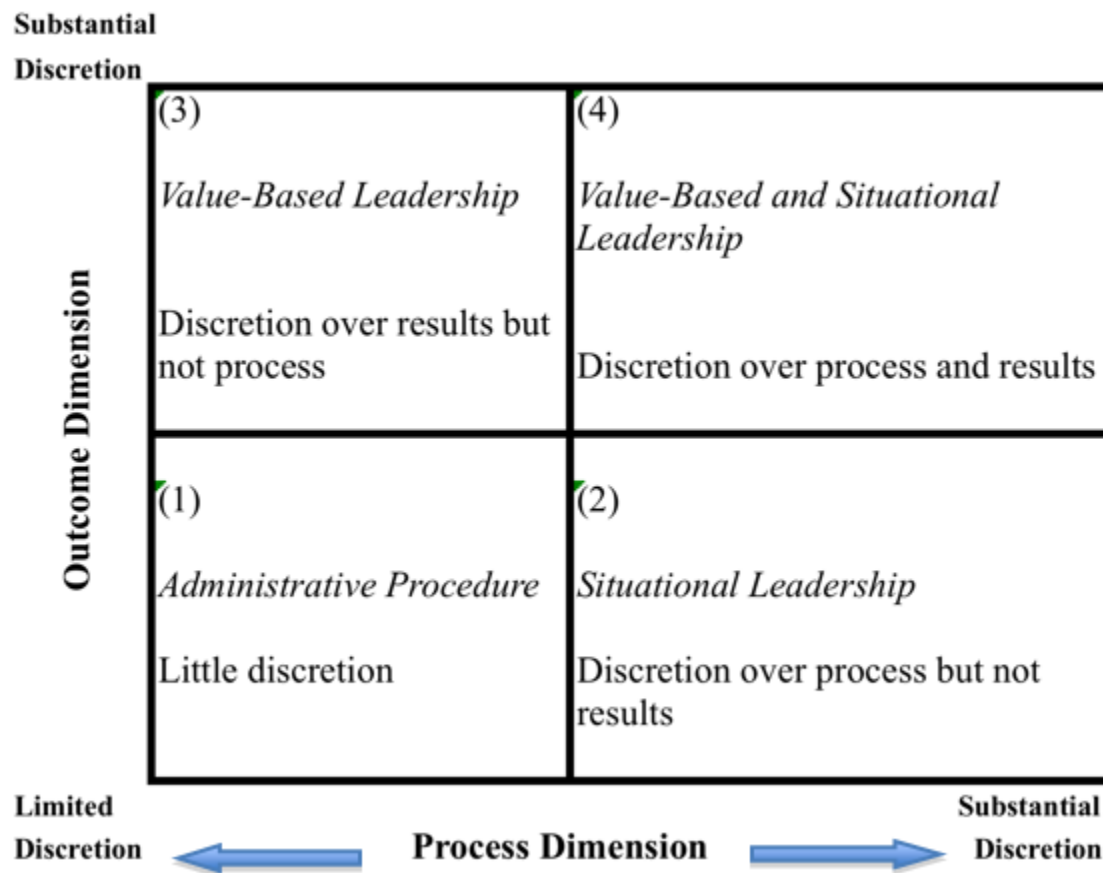
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<sup>14</sup> This model was originally developed based on more than 800 hours of observational research with street-level bureaucrats, specifically patrol officers, in Huntsville, AL, police department and the Spokane County, WA, sheriff’s department.

decisions about outcomes, or (d) those demanding choices about process and outcomes. (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996, p. 469)

In Quadrant 1, workers exercise little discretion in either the process or outcome dimensions, which occurs when there is little discretion required and the regulating policy/practice effectively determines behavior. Therefore, in keeping with Lipsky's (1980) framework, the "variables in the human dimensions are minimal and the expected behaviors are predictable and simple" (Vinzant & Crothers, 1996, p. 470).

*Figure 1. Street-Level Leadership Model*



Hence, the actions of individual workers in such situations can be reduced to programmatic formats. In Quadrant 2, street-level bureaucrats have some discretion over how to resolve a situation and the specific goal they are to accomplish is fairly clear. This occurs when

the outcome is clear but their discretion (choices) in how to achieve the goal is not clearly defined. In Quadrant 3, street-level leaders have discretion over what outcome ought to be achieved but little discretion over the process to achieve the goal. The final quadrant, Quadrant 4, explains when street-level workers make discretionary choices about both the goals to be achieved and the means chosen to reach them. The legitimacy of both the goals and the means can be considered within this model of street-level leadership.

This model of street-level leadership is applicable to the research at hand. Academic advisors who exhibit prescriptive advising,<sup>15</sup> have very clearly defined outcomes/processes, and exercise little to no discretion when working with students, including undocumented students, are reflected in Quadrant 1. Academic advisors who have discretion in their choices or actions to obtain distinct end goals or outcomes concerning the advising of students are in Quadrant 2. The advisors in Quadrant 2 have no control over the outcome. Academic advisors in Quadrant 3 have discretion over the final results of their advising sessions, but little variance over the advising process set forth by their respective institution. In the final Quadrant, academic advisors have discretion over both the outcomes/end goals, as well as the methods or actions utilized to reach them.

In Quadrant 2, street-level bureaucrats have some discretion over how to resolve a situation and the specific goal they are to accomplish is fairly clear. This occurs when the outcome is clear but their discretion (choices) in how to achieve the goal is not clearly defined. It is important to note that the action(s) taken can be evaluated in terms of situational leadership.

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<sup>15</sup> Prescriptive advising accepts that advisors have the knowledge and authority to provide advising information to students in a regulatory manner. This advising method will be discussed further in the review of literature on academic advising.

## **Institutional Logic and Street-Level Policy Implementation**

In this section, institutional logic and its influence on street-level policy implementation is explored. Research on street-level policy implementation has generally highlighted how individual and/organizational level variables shape discretion at the frontline of policy implementation. Garrow and Grusky (2012) noted that most

research on street-level bureaucracy has examined how street-level workers use their discretion to respond to shared conditions of work in predictable ways but has largely neglected to consider how and why workers' discretionary behavior may differ systematically across wider contexts. (p. 122)

Research on 216 frontline practitioners by Friedland and Alford (1991), “demonstrated that frontline workers differed from one another in administering a standard protocol and that the differences are related to the underlying institutional logic, or set of organizing principles” (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248).

The framework applied by Garrow and Grusky (1991) delimits the actions of workers by applying one of the key insights from institutional theory. By utilizing the work of Friedland and Alford (1991) and Thornton and Ocasio, (2008), street-level workers are not only agents with objective interest and preferences, but rather institutionally constructed actors whose values, interests, and practices are partially determined by the institutional logics that structure the organizational fields in which they operate (Garrow & Grusky, 1991).

### **Institutional Logic and Embedded Agency**

Street-level bureaucrats are exposed to professional-level institutional logics through their participation in and knowledge of the organizational field, and most directly through their membership in organizations in which known logic is embedded. Hence, decisions, courses of action, and frontline outcomes of practice result from embedded agency, otherwise known as embedded action, which is constrained and enabled by the institutional logics structuring the

organizational field and the organizations that constitute it (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). From an institutional logic perspective, discretionary practices on the frontlines of policy implementation are embedded in a broad meaning system, reflected by the dominant field-level or professional level logic, which defines the “interest, identities, values, and assumptions of individuals and/organizations” (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008, p. 103).

Embedded agency implies the interplay of agency and institutional logics and calls into question the assumption of individualistic interests which underlie much of the research on street-level discretion. On the one hand, front-line workers use their discretion to maneuver and optimize their interests. In response to limited resources, conditions of work, organizational context, and their interest and judgments, workers modify policy through their practices (Lipsky, 1980, 2010). Street-level bureaucrats may use their discretion to disentitle clients (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Smith & Donovan, 2003), act as citizen agents rather than state agents (Keiser, 1999), or enforce rules and hierarchy (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Yet, on the other hand, because their interest and available repertoire of practices are constituted by dominant field-level logics, street-level workers’ behaviors are shaped by institutional structure in predictable ways. As noted by Thornton and Ocasio (2008) institutional logics

affect the allocation of attention to alternative schemas for perceiving, interpreting, evaluating, and responding to environmental situations. . .by providing a set of values that order the legitimacy, importance, and relevance of issues and solutions. . .and provide decision makers with an understanding of their interest and identities. (p. 114)

### **Components of Field-Level Institutional Logics**

Field-level institutional logics are important empirical and theoretical constructs because they provide members of the organizational field with cohesion and a sense of common purpose and unity, which aids in explaining their connections and guides street-level worker interactions.

Organizational fields are thought to coalesce around dominant institutional logics, (Scott, 2008; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999) although multiple logics may coexist.

Garrow and Grusky (2012) indicated that institutional logics may influence policy implementation by providing cultural and material inventories that shape workers' understandings of the means and ends of their interest.

Logics allocate the attention of workers by defining the purpose of their organizations, the nature of the problems they face, appropriate organizational responses to these problems, the relevant attributes of clients, the value of tasks, and their own roles and scope of work. When policies are consistent with core field-level institutional logics, it is more likely that implementation will be consistent with policy intent, even when accounting for variations in individual-and/organizational-level factors shown to influence street-level discretion (Garrow and Grusky, 2012). (p. 122)

Accepting discretion as institutionally delimited shifts the focus of inquiry from individual or organizational contexts to the organization's environment. Institutional logics have been described in a variety of ways and can occur at societal, industrial, field (professional), or organizational levels.

### **Chief Components of Theoretical Framework**

The literature provided on street-level bureaucracy directs the study at hand, which focuses on discretion among academic advisors who are identified as street-level bureaucrats. A guiding principal revealed in the literature is the position that discretion among street-level workers is fundamental. Street-level bureaucrats report discretionary behavior and in effect are creating policy. Therefore, academic advisors are in a position to demonstrate discretionary behavior and create policy.

The literature detailed the occurrence of street-level discretion by examining the *how* and *why* of discretionary behavior. It was revealed that several factors may shape discretionary behavior among academic advisors to primarily include an institutional culture, norms, practices,

and policies/procedures. In addition, discretion is impacted by personal values and attributes of the public (i.e., advisees). Subsequently, there is the advisor's interpretation of the described factors which influence their discretion. Finally, organizational pressures and available resources also influence discretionary behavior among street-level workers.

Academic advisors may exhibit or be influenced by one or a combination of the following identified variables: street-level divergence, leadership, and/or institutional logic. Street-level divergence will likely occur if advisors perceive the current policy, structure, rules, etc. as preventing them from acting according to their professional knowledge. Divergence may result from the way in which street-level bureaucrats (advisors) often regard relationship building (the relationship between advisor and advisee) as more significant or important than policy and practice. Street-level work, (i.e., academic advising) consistently invokes ethical decision making within the scope of autonomy. Divergence typically occurs when employees bend or even break the rules for students often because advisors are acting in a manner that they believe to be just or right. In many respects divergence transpires as a result of how street-level bureaucrats process and interpret the environment in which they work as it relates to their own decision making process.

The leadership perspective/model provides a foundation and theoretical basis for discretionary behavior among street-level bureaucrats, and allows us to analyze the work of academic advisors and similar front-line occupations. This framework makes the argument that advisors displaying discretionary behavior may act to inspire and empower fellow advisors and/or seek to accomplish their own goals for the greater good of the public. Additionally, while acting as leaders advisors recognize their discretion comes with difficult decision making processes which may have drastic consequences for not just their institutions, but also for



themselves and even perhaps for the community. There is an accountability factor which comes with the leadership model, which invokes a deeper understanding of administrative discretion that accounts for personal and professional values, institutional rules, and the demands of the situation at hand. The leadership model accepts that street-level bureaucrats are acting as leaders as they create policy through their discretionary behavior. Perhaps the most insightful component of this model identifies the two types of discretion among academic advisors and other street-level workers: discretion over process and discretion over outcomes.

Institutional logic is used to explain another layer of discretion among academic advisors. This framework focuses on how broader belief systems shape the cognition and behavior of street-level workers. It calls attention to how and why discretionary behavior differs systematically in a broader context. The discretion expected among academic advisors is not objective and based on personal preferences, but rather subjective and determined (at least in part) by institutional logics which structure the college or university. Within the context of this perspective, academic advisors rely on any number of factors which influence their discretion, but those factors are institutionally conditioned in systematic ways. Therefore, the individual interest of discretionary actions of street-level bureaucrats is called into question. There is a greater focus on the institutional environment when examining discretionary behavior and policy making within this framework.

This study used literature on street-level discretion to guide the research questions. A review of applicable academic advising literature was necessary to ensure a comprehensive review of literature pertinent to this study. Therefore, the following section contains information on advising to provide readers with an understanding of the profession of academic advising in addition to their knowledge of street-level discretionary behavior.

## Literature on Academic Advising

### Types of Advising Methods

The Global Community for Academic Advising<sup>16</sup> (NACADA), highlights three main types of advising in the academy: developmental, prescriptive, and intrusive (Gordon, Habley, Grites, & National Academic Advising Association, 2008). “Developmental advising is and continues to be one of the most fundamental and comprehensive approaches to academic advising” (Grites, 2013). The term *developmental academic advising* began to gain traction and use in 1984, “but the application and theory of developmental advising was in place long before it was defined as such and grew out of the work of many theorists” (Grites, 2013, p. 64). Yet, Burns Crookston was the first person to coin the term and pointed out its relationship to advising with a comparison to prescriptive advising in the 1972 article entitled, “A Developmental View of Academic Advising as Teaching.” Crookston’s application was the result of his concern for college students of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and his articulation of developmental advising was constructed from two basic assumptions of student development theory.

First, that the higher learning is to be viewed as an opportunity in which the developing person may plan to achieve a self-fulfilling life; that the perspective of work and professional training more properly should be placed within the development of a life plan instead of the current tendency to prepare one’s self for a profession and then build one’s life around it. Second, that learning includes any experience in the learning community in which teacher<sup>17</sup> and student interact that contributes to individual, group, or community growth and development and can be evaluated (Crookston, 2009). (p. 78)

O’Banion’s (1972) work focused on the community college, but it greatly impacted the profession of advising and suggested a developmental view and application of advising.

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<sup>16</sup> The Global Community for Academic Advising (NACADA), was formerly known as the National Association of Academic Advising. The name was changed to the Global Community for Academic Advising, maintaining the same NACADA acronym, on October 6, 2016. Any reference to National Association of Academic Advising reflects citation prior to October 6, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> The use of the word *teacher* is applicable to both advisors and faculty.

O'Banion (1972) set forth what he identified as four steps for "the dimensions of the process of academic advising" (p. 11). They are as follows: (a) exploration of life goals, (b) program choice, (c) course choice, and (d) scheduling of classes. This type of advising is not primarily focused on the time a student spends in college, but instead incorporates life-long and career goals. O'Banion's logical sequences and "description of the requisite skills, knowledge, and attitudes also provided a perspective that that hinted at developmental academic advising" (Grites, 2013, p. 67). "Fostering a relationship between the advisor and student is critical to this model, which is based primarily on adult development theory and student development theory" (Crookston, 2009, p. 7). Crookston believed that students and advisors have a shared responsibility concerning the overall quality and application of the advising experience.

The "developmental academic advising" was first used in the book, *Developmental Approaches to Academic Advising* (Winston, Ender, & Miller, 1982). According to Grites (2013), "developmental academic advising stimulates and supports students in their quest for an enriched quality of life; it is a systematic process based on a close student-advisor relationship intended to aid students in achieving educational and personal goals through the utilization of the full range of institutional and community resources" (p. 8). As described by Grites (2013, p. 12 - 13), this approach to academic advising has four main factors:

1. Developmental academic advising is not a theory, but instead it is a method put into practice, an advising strategy (i.e., a way of doing advising).
2. It is holistic. This advising model includes the education and development of students, acknowledging that areas such as future career goals, personal aspects, education, and so on, cannot be treated independently but indeed impacts all aspects of students.

3. Developmental academic advising is based on a students' growth (success). Growth takes place among all students. This is true of all students, even among those regarded as well prepared for college.
4. This practice is a shared activity. Both students and advisors contribute to this effort.

Prescriptive academic advising is titled as such because of the academic advising practices associated with this type of advising. Prescriptive advising is narrowly focused on a student's academic degree plan (Jeschke, Johnson, & Williams, 2001). "Prescriptive advising is generally initiated by the student because the goal of this approach is to address immediate questions to facilitate the student's progress through his/her academic program; it is often referred to as the doctor-patient relationship model" (Crookston, 2009, p. 80). The advisor-advisee relationship is based on the authority and knowledge of advisors providing descriptive information to students. Using the prescriptive advising approach, advisors react to student inquiries for advice on matters concerning major selection and course schedules. Advisors respond to immediate questions/concerns. Prescriptive advising sessions are more structured than a developmental advising session and the intention is to provide accurate academic information to facilitate and expedite students' progress through their degree program (Jeschke et al., 2001). Table 2 provides a comparison of developmental and prescriptive advising for further understanding of these types of advising methods.

Of note, within the practice of prescriptive advising, the student views the advisor as knowledgeable and able to determine what is best for him or her. Prescriptive advising does not allow for additional probing into the lives of students from the advisor. This type of advising generally addresses academic performance and requirements to ensure students abide by the

degree plan. This form of advising is certainly quick and efficient in terms of degree progression and course selection.

Table 2

*Contrasting Dimensions of Prescription and Developmental Approaches to Advising*

<b>In terms of</b>	<b>Developmental</b>	<b>Prescriptive</b>
Abilities	Focus on potentials.	Focus on limitations.
Motivation	Students are active, striving.	Students are lazy, need prodding.
Rewards	Achievement, master, acceptance, status, recognition, fulfillment.	Grades, credit, income.
Maturity	Growing, maturing, responsible, capable of self-direction.	Immature, irresponsible; must be closely supervised and carefully checked.
Initiative	Either or both may take initiative.	Advisor takes initiative on fulfilling requirements; rest up to student.
Control	Negotiated.	By advisor.
Responsibility	Negotiated.	By advisor to advise.
Learning output	Shared.	Primarily in student.
Evaluation	Collaborative.	By advisor to student.
Relationship	Based on nature of tasks, competencies, situations, high trust.	Based on status, strategies, games, low trust.

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Source. "A Developmental View of Academic Advising as Teaching," by B. B. Crookston, 2009. *NACADA Journal*, 29, p. 78-82.

While intrusive<sup>18</sup> advising shares the individualized characteristics of developmental advising there is a proactive approach that is facilitated by the advisor. In this practice, interaction with the student is quite inevitable. Advisors will seek out students and initiate requests for an advising sessions. Advisors are encouraged to actively pursue and reach out to particular groups of students who have been identified as at risk or who require additional assistance; students are targeted during critical periods in their academic study, such as first year, when it is time to register for classes, or when graduation is near (Jeschke et al., 2001). Subsequent advising sessions are aimed at encouraging student development beyond college. Advisors provide appropriate challenges or questions to help students plan and think about career and life goals. The approach is deliberate, mimicking the developmental model, but advisors actively seek out students in various ways (e-mail, phone calls, or social media) instead of waiting for students to make contact. When applied, intrusive academic advising has been shown to have a positive impact on academic achievement (Vander Schee, 2007). This approach is particularly useful for students who otherwise may not seek advising. Thus, this advising model tends to be preferred among students in need of more assistance than the *standard*, whereas other students find this approach invasive (Jeschke et al., 2001). Glennon (1975) was the first to identify this form of academic advising in his article entitled, “Intrusive College Counseling,” published in the *College Student Journal*. In this article, Glennon examined intrusive counseling with college students building on developmental advising theory.

Appreciative advising is the final advising method presented in this section. This model has gained quite a following and is supported by NACADA. Appreciative advising “provides a framework which is designed to enhance the advisor advisee relationship for both parties in one-

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<sup>18</sup>Intrusive advising is also referred to as proactive advising.

on-one and group advising” (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 11). The origins of appreciative advising came from the application of organizational development theory by a then doctoral student, David Cooperrider, who applied this theory to his work at Case Western Reserve University (Cooperrider, Whitney, & Stavros, 2003). Appreciative advising is influenced by social psychology tying in “positive psychology, social constructivist theory, and choice theory” (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 14). There are six phases of appreciative advising: (a) disarm, (b) discover, (c) dream, (d) design, (e) deliver, and (f) don’t settle.

The disarm phase involves making a positive first impression with students and allaying any fear or suspicion they might have of meeting with the advisor. The discover phase is spent continuing to build rapport with students and learning about the students’ strengths, skills, and abilities through utilizing effective and positive open-ended questions that encourage narratives. The dream phase involves uncovering students’ hopes and dreams for their futures. The design phase is spent co-creating a plan to make their hopes and dreams come true. The deliver phase is the implementation phase where students carry out their plan and the advisor’s role is to support them as they encounter roadblocks. The final phase, don’t settle, involves challenging students to achieve their full potential and supporting them along their journey (Bloom, Hutson, & He, 2008, p. 25-26).

It is important to remember that the above types of advising are not mutually exclusive; they undoubtedly have the ability to complement one another and often do. Intrusive, prescriptive, developmental, and appreciative advising may be practiced by advisors with the same student throughout the student’s academic career; rarely is just one method utilized from entry to exit. This use of a combination of practices is often required to provide high quality advising to support student success among a diverse group of students.

### **Advising Models (Structures)**

There are five dominant advising models at institutions of higher education in the nation. The following is a summary of the five models based on the work of Habley and Morales (1998). The *faculty-only model* utilizes faculty to advise students. With this model, advising services are

not available from any source other than faculty members. A *split model* generally includes an advising center for a designated group of students (e.g., first-generation, undeclared, etc.) and all other students are assigned to their academic departments or programs. The third model is called a *supplementary model*, in which all students have a designated faculty member in addition to a general advising office provided by the institution. The *total intake model* utilizes professional advisors for all students during a designated time period, after which point students are transferred to their department or program. The fifth and final model is the *satellite model*, in which each academic unit is responsible for its own advising. It is not uncommon to find institutions using an amalgamation of models to meet the needs of students.

### **Delivery and Process**

Advising generally takes place through in person, one-on-one meetings (King, 2008). As the number of advisees has increased, group advising has become more popular. Group advising allows for large numbers of students to be advised together so that information may be provided to a large group at one time. The information provided is general, which may require one-on-one follow-up sessions to discuss detailed information with each student (King, 2008).

Over the years, the most significant change to the delivery of advising is the use of technology. The use of technology has increasingly become another mechanism for advising (Leonard, 2008). The World Wide Web, e-mail, text messaging, Facebook, and webinars, just to name a few, have all become commonplace as tools for academic advising. In some cases the use of technology is the only means of delivery and communication, but this is not the norm. Instead, technology is oftentimes used to supplement in-person advising. Ideally, the use of technology aids and enhances the advising process for both advisors and students. The process between advisor and advisee is one “which students themselves reach their own academic



potential through communication and information exchange with an academic advisor” (Drake, 2011, p.10).

## **Conclusion**

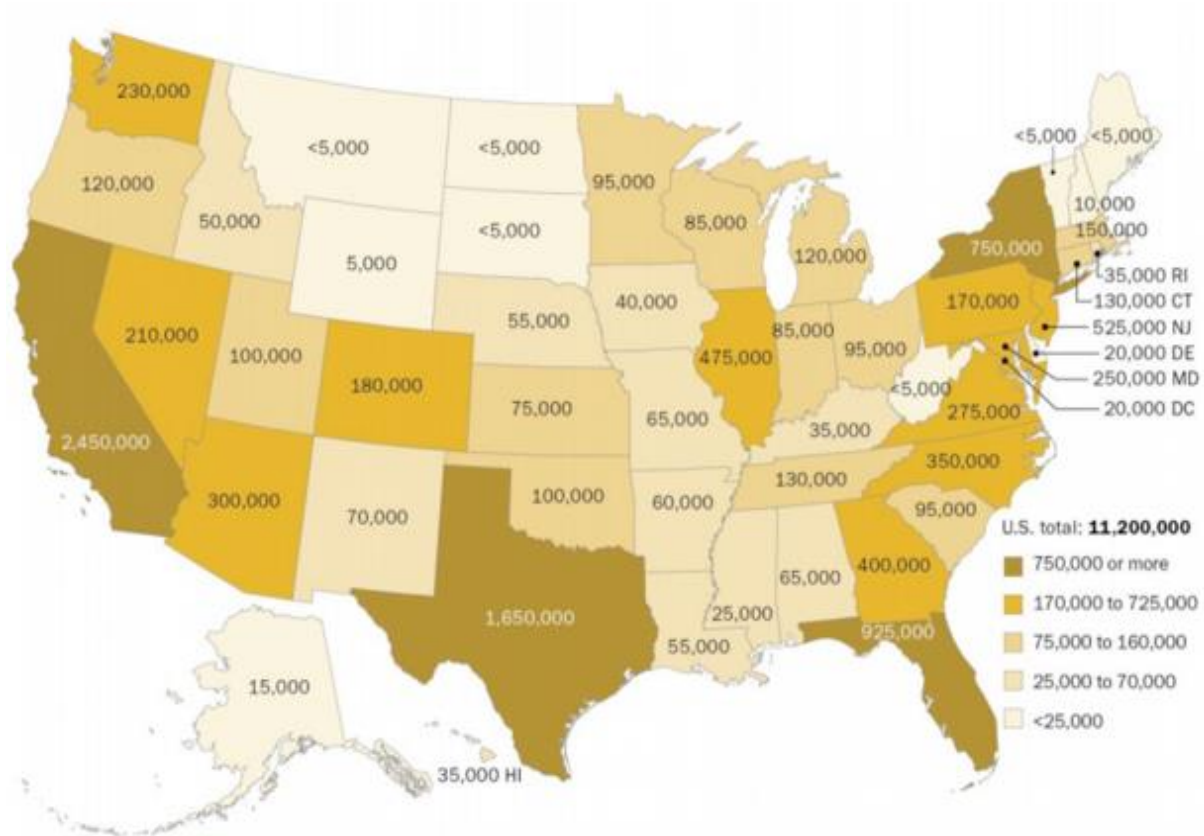
Chapter 2 has provided a comprehensive review of literature on street-level bureaucrats, discretionary behavior, and academic advising. The research questions (as listed in Chapters 1 and 3) have emerged from the literature regarding factors which shape street-level bureaucracy and the intricacies of front-line discretion. Correspondingly, the advising literature has provided demographic information to be gathered about the advisors in the research study. Chapter 2 has provided a guiding framework for the research methodology to be discussed next.

### **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD**

This research study examined discretionary behavior of professional academic advisors to determine how undocumented students are supported in the advising process, thus promoting persistence and degree completion, by gathering data on existing documents pertaining to undocumented students, academic advising policies and the reported actions and perspectives of advisors. While there have been many studies focusing on the discretion of street-level bureaucrats, none to my knowledge have explored the level of discretion and actions exhibited within public institutions of higher learning among academic advisors providing academic services to students. Therefore, this research was designed to provide insight into the discretion utilized within the process of academic advising applying the conceptual framework of Lipsky's (1980, 2010) seminal work on street-level workers, the role of discretion, and policy implementation. In the education quality and accountability period of higher education, this work employed the understanding of public administration to gain further insight into how one population of street-level bureaucrats may influence persistence, retention, and timely graduation among a specific student population-undocumented students, in higher education.

A case study of three public research universities in the western and middle southern regions of the United States took place. The middle southern and western regions, as seen in Figure 2, have the highest populations of undocumented persons in the United States. These are also the regions which permit tuition equity for undocumented students. It was reasonable to believe that academic advisors in the selected regions for this research would have an increased likelihood of working with undocumented students and possess knowledge of the unique challenges faced by this population compared to other regions of the United States.

Figure 2. Undocumented immigrant population, by state, 2012.



Note: Population figures are rounded.

Source. "Pew Research Center Estimates for 2013 Based on Augmented American Community Survey Data" from Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS).

## Research Goals

The goals for this study were to: (a) capture the discretionary perspectives, methods, and behaviors of professional academic advisors regarding the advising of undocumented students; (b) identify the perspectives, methods, and behaviors of academic advisors which may promote academic success among undocumented students; (c) determine if the factors identified in the literature which influence discretionary perspectives, methods, and behaviors among street-level bureaucrats is found among academic advisors; (d) recommend higher education policy

regarding how colleges and universities may aid in promoting the academic success of undocumented students; and (e) identify areas of future research.

### **Research Questions**

The primary and secondary research questions for this dissertation study are listed below.

#### **Primary Research Question**

RQ1: What type of discretionary behavior (if any) do academic advisors exercise when advising undocumented students?

This question explored how advisors were exhibiting discretionary behavior. Discretion in this study is a reflection of Lipsky's (1980) framework on street-level bureaucracy and therefore occurs in one of two ways: (a) academic advisors work out practical versions of existing policy/procedures which may often look unlike the official process/procedure and (b) academic advisors use their discretion when there is no existing applicable process/procedure.

Research Question 1 is expanded into several subparts as follows:

RQ1a How are the identified fundamental factors that shape street-level bureaucracy, as described by Lipsky (1980), influencing discretionary behavior among academic advisors, if at all?

RQ1b How are the established historical determinants of bureaucratic street-level discretion influencing the behaviors and perspectives of academic advisors, if at all?

RQ1c In what ways is street-level divergence influencing the discretionary behavior of academic advisors, if at all?

RQ1d In what ways are acts of leadership influencing discretionary behavior among academic advisors, if at all?

RQ1e How does institutional logic guide or influence the behavior and perspectives of academic advisors, if at all?

### **Secondary Research Question**

RQ2: Do the academic advising needs of undocumented students differ from those of other students? If so, how?

The reported findings in response to this question allowed for the development of recommendations regarding how to customize academic advising for undocumented students within institutions of higher learning to ensure they thrive during their college education and subsequently graduate. Undocumented students face challenges unlike their American-born or documented peers. The development of clear guidelines and policies regarding the advising of undocumented students has the potential to not only improve the experiences of undocumented student populations, but also increase student retention and graduation rates, especially among colleges and universities with a high number of undocumented students. The findings also permitted recommendations to guide research questions for future studies regarding the advising of undocumented students.

### **Research Design**

This research utilized qualitative research methodology with a case study research design. The research lent itself to a qualitative method for several reasons, including the ability for qualitative research to aid with (a) understanding meaning, (b) understanding context, (c) identifying unanticipated phenomena and influences, (d) understanding process, and (e) understanding causal explanations (Stake, 1995). Qualitative research differs from quantitative methods in that it seeks to understand rather than explain phenomena. For that reason, meaning and context are important components of qualitative research which provide the researcher with

an opportunity to explore phenomena in their natural setting and interpret their findings based on observations in the field. This interpretation often calls upon the researcher to be fully involved and connected to the study in a more personal way than quantitative methods (Stake, 1995). I am a higher education administrator in academic affairs, specifically in the area of academic success and retention. I was a professional advisor for several years before transitioning to more senior positions. I understand the profession of academic advising and during my tenure as an advisor I exerted discretion and identified loopholes to help my students persist and graduate. Stake (1995) described case study methodology as a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher explores in-depth a program, event, activity, or process (such as academic advising) of one or more individuals.

My research aimed to answer how and why a phenomenon is occurring (Yin, 2014) and sought to contribute to knowledge within a specific organization (higher education) and among a particular group (academic advisors), and the decision to propose a qualitative case study research design is a direct result of the research questions which derived from the literature. There is no existing research on the discretionary behaviors of academic advisors regarding the advising of undocumented students. Hence, a qualitative approach was used to generate themes and findings within and across the participating institutions. For this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the discretionary behavior of advisors within the academic advising process in higher education regarding undocumented students. I did not seek to control a particular behavior but rather focus on contemporary events.

This research was guided by the theoretical application of Lipsky's (1980, 2010) street-level bureaucracy and I examined how street-level bureaucrats operate within this context. Therefore, a detailed discussion from their perspective was required. A case study offered great

insight for this particular kind of research, as it shed light on the actions of street-level workers operating within the bureaucracy of higher education.

The use of case study research is a powerful means to understand institutions of higher education as socially constructed organizations and composed of large and small bureaucracy's. This cannot be done through armchair research but only through intimate contact with daily institutional life. . . .By departing from traditional lines of inquiry, our exploration of these...institutions allows us to attempt a multifaceted interpretation of organizational life (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988). (p. 13)

As Yin (2014) noted, the case study must have “in-depth inquiry,” a phenomenon being studied as the “case,” and the “triangulation of evidence” and having “more variables of interest than data points.” (p. 24). I conducted detailed and in-depth interviews with academic advisors to gather information about the phenomenon of advising undocumented students in higher education. I also observed the setting in which the advising process took place and reviewed all applicable policy for additional data points.

The most appropriate questions for this type of qualitative case study research are *how* and *why* forms of questions. An experiment is not appropriate as I do not require the controlling of behavioral events or variables. Survey research was not selected because it only permits participants to select from a series of predetermined responses. Although developing a survey based on literature is possible, it does not provide an in-depth response to allow for understanding of the advisor perspective nor does it allow for a detailed explanation of how or why they do what they do as academic advisors.

The second component of case study research design is to clearly define the study purpose. This component is most commonly recognized as the purpose statement. The proposed research examined the discretion of academic advisors regarding the advising of undocumented students. This case study gathered information about the academic advising processes from each institution, made observations, and obtained the perspective of academic advisors to determine

how undocumented students are supported, or not, in the process of degree attainment utilizing Lipsky's (1980) framework concerning the work of street-level bureaucrats.

The third component of the case study research design is the unit of analysis. Yin (2009) described the unit of analysis as the area of focus that a case study analyzes. Yin wrote that an appropriate unit of analysis is determined when primary research is accurately specified. The unit of analysis is directly tied to the research questions developed by the researcher. In this research, the unit of analysis is the academic advisor. I identified the specific information to be collected guided by my theoretical framework as recommended by Yin (2014) to prevent the temptation to cover everything about the individuals, which is impossible to do. The research questions were determined for the three public universities within their respective advising centers and offices to define the boundaries of my case as recommended by Yin (2014).

The fourth component of case study research design is to connect data to propositions. This connection is made following the data collection phase as themes emerge. As data are analyzed, I matched patterns that appeared in the data to the theoretical propositions of Lipsky (1980) and additional researchers reviewed in Chapter 2, to that of the case study. The goal during data analysis is to link the data collected back to the literature.

The fifth component of case study design is the criteria for interpreting findings. Commonly, the case study researcher codes the data prior to developing themes (Yin, 2009, 2014). This case examined advisors at three public universities. As previously stated in Chapter 1, higher education is experiencing an education quality and accountability era. One of the most important items in higher education is to ensure degree completion is not the result of happenstance. Once students enroll at any college or university, the goal is to retain and support the timely graduation of all students. This goal extends to the undocumented student population.



## **Phenomenological Guided Research**

The use of phenomenology is applicable to this research because at its core this study sought to describe the discretionary behaviors of academic advisors. The modern phenomenological method is credited to German philosopher and mathematician, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938). Husserl advocated through his research that objects exist independently and that observations and experiences involving these objects are reliable suggesting an individual's perceptions are accurate representations of their consciousness (Fouche, 1993).

A phenomenological inquiry "is an attempt to deal with inner experiences unprobed in everyday life" (Merriam, 2002, p. 7). This method helps to identify meaning behind the human experience as it related to a phenomenon or notable collective occurrence (Creswell, 2009). The phenomenon of interest is discretionary behavior of advisors in the academic advising process regarding the advising of undocumented students. Moreover, the guiding phenomenological approach of this study "aims at attaining a profound understanding of the nature or meaning of...daily experiences" (Crotty, 1998, p. 25) among academic advisors. This approach will help determine "how complex meanings are built out of simple units of direct experience" (Merriam, 2002, p. 7). Phenomenology helps lead a comprehensive account of lived experiences from which "general or universal meanings are derived" (Creswell, 1998, p. 53).

## **Participants and Sampling**

The criteria for study inclusion for participants included the following: employed as an advisor with primary duties/responsibilities as an advisor. This research utilized purposive sampling, a type of nonprobabilistic sampling commonly used for research that is field oriented in nature and not concerned with statistical generalizability (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Purposive sampling focuses on specific characteristics of a population to answer the research

questions. It is unnecessary for the sample being studied to be representative of the larger population. The common thread in purposive sampling “is that participants are selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research objective” (Guest et al., 2006, p. 61). The current study focused on one category of street-level bureaucrats, academic advisors.

Furthermore, purposive sampling is appropriate because this research required a particular occupation. The study participants must be advisors employed within an institution of higher learning. These individuals have firsthand knowledge of the identified phenomenon of discretionary behavior in advising. Additionally, study participants are located in regions with high numbers of undocumented persons to increase the probability of having previous experience in advising undocumented students. Purposive sampling was used to obtain the research goals.

Determining the sample size of qualitative research requires selecting a number of interviews that will meet the requirements of theoretical saturation, (Guest et al., 2006; Morse, 1995; Sandelowski, 1995) which occurs when no new information or themes are observed in the data. As noted by Morse (1994) “saturation is the key to excellent qualitative work” (p. 60). Both Morse (1994) and Sandelowski (1995) suggest that phenomenologies concerned with the essence of experiences include no less than about six participants. Guest et al. (2006), made evidence based recommendations regarding nonprobabilistic sample size for interviews. Their research determined that “if the goal is to describe a shared perception, belief, or behavior among a relatively homogenous group, then a sample of twelve will likely be sufficient” (p. 76).

The participants for this study, advisors, are largely a homogenous group of individuals as determined by the scope of duties and responsibilities within their chosen profession. A total of approximately 890 academic advisors received an invitation to participate in this research

study. It is important to note that although the invitation was sent to all advisors on the advising list serves at each respective institution, many of the recipients never worked with undocumented students or were unaware of when they advised undocumented students.

A recommended sample size, 24 interviews (minimum) was the final recommendation by the dissertation committee. This research study concluded with a sample size of 19. Although, this study did not achieve the goal of 24 participants saturation was met. As previously noted, Morse (1994) and Sandelowski (1995) suggest that phenomenologies concerned with the essence of experiences include no less than about six participants. Guest et al. (2006), determined that “if the goal is to describe a shared perception, belief, or behavior among a relatively homogenous group, then a sample of twelve will likely be sufficient” (p. 76). The recommendation of 24 interviews was to ensure I had enough data to meet saturation without question. I assessed that saturation was met at the conclusion of the 15th interview; nevertheless, I continued to collect data with all scheduled participants.

Before the interview process I created a codebook based on the literature and after each interview began to note the identified themes and patterns. After the completion of all interviews, I reviewed all of my materials and audio recorded interviews to align them with the existing codebook, adding/subtracting codes and identifying themes at the end of each day. I concluded new information was still being collected after the sixth interview, but I did not identify any new information after the twelfth interview. In an effort to be certain I thoroughly reviewed interviews 13 through 15 to ensure saturation was met. Then, I went back all the interviews just to certain. It was then, I was able to affirm I was no longer adding new broad codes/themes identified at that time, but instead added quotations from the interviews to illustrate the existing codes.

There were other factors that may have resulted in the collection of 19 interviews versus 24. As was discovered during the data collection process, it is quite uncommon for academic advisors to know when they are advising undocumented students. As is reported in the findings in Chapter 4, undocumented student status disclosure during an advising appointment is a rare occurrence. To add, this research took place in states with undocumented student tuition equity (in-state tuition) and in areas with high populations of undocumented students. Be that as it may, the advisors I spoke with reported having a small number of students disclose their status. The main focus for the sample selection in this research design was to ensure that the data collected were sufficiently rich enough to bring clarity and understanding to an experience, not to get the highest number of participants (Polkinghorne, 2005) beyond saturation. The data collected from 19 participants met the research design purpose; data saturation was reached.

### **Institution A**

Institution A is a public flagship university located in the western region of the United States and grants degrees ranging from certificates to doctorates. The primary degree types are baccalaureate or above. This institution has a Carnegie classification<sup>19</sup> of doctoral university with the highest research activity. The campus is located in a midsized city. There are approximately 52,000 students enrolled with men comprising of about 57% of the total population and women are about 43% of the population. This institution is predominantly White (50%) with the second highest reported race/ethnicity representing nonresident alien and Hispanic tied at 17% each. Eighty-eight percent of the undergraduate population are age 24 and

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<sup>19</sup> The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is a framework for classifying colleges and universities in the United States. The framework primarily serves educational and research purposes, where it is often important to identify groups of roughly comparable institutions.

under. Institution A participates in Title IV federal financial aid programs<sup>20</sup>. The first to second year retention rate of first-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduates is 86%. The 4-year graduation rate is approximately 40% and the 6-year graduation rate is 60%. Approximately 200 academic advisors received an invitation to participate in my research study. I had a total of seven participants from institution A.

### **Institution B**

Institution B is located in the middle southern region of the United States. It is a public flagship university and grants degrees ranging from certificates to doctorates. The primary degree types are baccalaureate and above. This university has a Carnegie classification of highest research activity. The campus is located in a large city. There are approximately 51,000 students enrolled with men comprising of about 49% with women representing 51% of the population. Institution B is a predominantly White institution (PWI) with 45% of population identifying as White. The Hispanic population is the second largest ethnicity at 20% and Asian students are the third largest population at 17%. Institution B participates in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The first to second year retention rate of first-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduates is 95%. The 4-year graduation rate is approximately 51% and the 6-year graduation rate is 79%. Approximately 600 academic advisors received an invitation to participate in my research study. I had a total of seven participants from institution B.

### **Institution C**

Institution C is located in the western region of the United States and part of a state system of universities. It is a public university and grants degrees ranging from bachelor's to

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<sup>20</sup> Title IV financial aid is federally funded aid such as Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct Loans.

doctorates. The primary degree types are baccalaureate and above. This university has a Carnegie classification of Master's Colleges and Universities large programs<sup>21</sup>. The campus is located in a suburban large city. There are approximately 24,000 students enrolled with men comprising of about 55% with women representing 45% of the population. Institution B is a predominantly Hispanic institution (PHI) with 40% of the population identifying as Hispanic. The Asian population is the second largest race/ethnicity at 25% and White students are the third largest population at 20%. Institution C participates in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The first to second year retention rate of first-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduates is 90%. The 4-year graduation rate is approximately 10% and the 6-year graduation rate is 52%. Approximately 28 academic advisors received an invitation to participate in my research study. I had a total of five participants from institution C. Table 3 provides details for all three institutions.

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<sup>21</sup> The Carnegie classification of Master's Colleges and Universities ranking has three categories: large, medium, and small programs.

Table 3

*Characteristics of Participating Institutions in Research Study*

Characteristics	Institution A	Institution B	Institution C
<b>Total Undergraduate Enrollment (N)</b>	44,136	39,619	22,157
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment Status (N)</b>			
Full-time	38,212	36,565	19,615
Part-time	3,616	3,054	2,542
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment by Gender (%)</b>			
Female	18,093	19,247	9,808
Male	23,735	17,318	12,349
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment by Age (%)</b>			
24 and under	88	96	81
25 and over	12	4	19
<b>Undergraduate Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity (%)</b>			
American Indian or Alaska Native	1		
Asian	6	17	24
Black or African American	4	4	3
Hispanic/Latino	17	20	39
White	50	45	20
Non-resident Alien	17	10	6
Race or Ethnicity Unknown	1	1	4
Two or More Races	4	3	4
<b>Undergraduate Pell Grant (%)</b>	31	25	43
<b>Undergraduate Retention Rate (%)</b>			
Full-time	86	95	89
Part-time	43	80	69
<b>Graduation Rate (%)</b>			
4-year	38	51	10
6-year	59	79	52

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences (2015). *Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) College data 2014-2015*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

NOTES: Retention Rate – the percentage of first-time bachelor’s degree seeking students who began their studies in the Fall 2014 and returned in Fall 2015.

### **Recruitment of Study Participants**

I contacted several members of my NACADA and professional network who were employed by public institutions of higher learning in the western and middle southern regions of the U.S. I was able to obtain agreement from three universities. Each university contact person e-mailed my recruitment letter to their university advisor list serve. My letter was tailored to include the specific week I would be at each school. Advisors contacted me prior to my arrival and scheduled appointments. My university contacts sent out a minimum of two reminder e-mails prior to my arrival. Then, they sent out another reminder e-mail once I was on campus to encourage participation from advisors who were interested, but had not contacted me prior to my arrival. My contacts at each of the three schools believed this work was important research with the potential to influence the academic success of undocumented students at their university.

Before arriving on each campus, I reviewed all policy and documents pertaining to undocumented students as well as reviewed the academic advising, admissions, and financial aid information available online. Prior to my arrival, I e-mailed all participants the consent form and provided a hardcopy before the interview started. Some participants declined to accept the hardcopy consent form, since they had an electronic version available for their review.

### **Data Collection**

Data was obtained by conducting in-depth interviews among advisors. This study gathered information about the behaviors and perspectives of academic advisors, the advising processes, and applicable institutional policy at each institution to determine if divergence or discretionary behavior occurred among advisors. In addition, the study sought to examine how undocumented students were supported, or not, in the advising process. For this study I reviewed policy and documents available online and literature available at the research site. I



kept notes and journaled my observations and experiences at each advising center and/or office to have additional data points for analysis.

### **Review of Institutional Documents**

I reviewed the advising webpage for each institution to gather information about the mission or goal and any additional information which detailed the purpose or function of the office. I also reviewed information available on the webpage pertaining to undocumented students at each university as well. This information aided me in understanding of advisor roles within each university and individual representative units. Any information about academic advising that is generally provided to the public or students in the form of newsletters, flyers, handouts, and website information was also reviewed onsite. My review of documents in electronic and hardcopy form was important to understand the basic academic advising process students generally received. Findings from the review of institutional documents are available in Appendix H.

### **Interviews with Advisors**

I conducted in-person, in-depth, interviews with academic advisors. An academic advisor for the purpose of this study is any person that has a significant responsibility of advising students about their academic degree program or support programs (i.e., honors programs, grant funding programs for first-generation students, etc.). All key participants were provided with a consent form via e-mail approximately one week in advance of my visit (see Appendix B). The interviews were semi-structured (see Appendix C) allowing for some flexibility to provide participants with the freedom to provide any information they find useful. Appendix D and E are tables which provide detail on the alignment of research questions and interview questions as well as the alignment of interview questions to the literature. In addition to completing a consent

form, I had participants complete a general demographic questionnaire (see Appendix F) that gathered standard information about age, education, race, and years in their position, as well as job satisfaction<sup>22</sup>. Participants had the option of completing this in advance of the onsite interview or immediately following the completion of the interview. All participant interviews remain confidential. Numerical identifiers were assigned at the start of every interview.

Additionally, I pilot tested<sup>23</sup> the interview protocol to help refine the data collection plans with respect to both the content of the data and the procedures to be followed (Yin, 2014). The purpose of the pilot study was to inform the interview protocol. This ensured the interview questions were appropriately worded to solicit substantive information. I sought to get approximately four to five advisors to participate in the pilot, and snowball sampling<sup>24</sup> was utilized for this portion of the study. I recruited some colleagues in my network who advise undocumented students and requested that they ask some of their fellow co-workers. This is acceptable, as convenience, access, and geographic proximity can be the main criteria for selecting participants for the pilot (Yin, 2014).

I conducted a five-person pilot study. The pilot interviews proved to be quite valuable, as it dictated minor changes in verb tense and adjustments to question order, which aided the flow and clarity of participant interviews. I found the pilot interviews also prepared me as an interviewer. The pilot study helped me to be less robotic in my interviews and have more of a natural flowing conversation. It also improved my comfort level with natural pauses in conversations. I found this was when I needed to remain silent before moving on to the next question, as participants often needed time to think to determine if they needed or wanted to

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<sup>22</sup> The job satisfaction questions are adopted from the Gallup Q12, which is the standard assessment of job satisfaction for the last 30 years (Harter, Schmidt, Killham, & Asplund, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> Pilot testing is a small-scale trial of the study to point out any potential problems or revisions.

<sup>24</sup> Snowball sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where study participants recruit future subjects.

provide me with additional information. It appeared that as I became increasingly comfortable with the interview process so did the participants in the pilot study. The pilot study greatly enhanced my interviewing abilities for the research study at hand.

All participant interviews in the research study were voice recorded for transcription. Primary interviews took place on-site at the institution within a designated time-frame. This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU). Detailed from the IRB Office at VCU are provided later in the chapter. I conducted interviews during each institution's official spring break. Advisors work 12-months during the year and do not have spring break off as faculty members do. As a former advisor I know that spring break is a time of low volume in student appointments. Several advisors mentioned it was a good idea to visit during spring break, as they would have never been able to see me when their students were on campus. I visited each campus for approximately one week. I did not conduct any interviews by phone or e-mail. All interviews were conducted in-person and on site at each respective university.

Interview participants were able to recall advising sessions and conversations with undocumented students, but they also discussed advising pertaining to general population students as well. As this study determined, many advisors have unknowingly worked with undocumented students. Undocumented students do not always disclose their status. This study sought to contribute to changes (minor or major change) in policy and practice among advising practices in a similar fashion that occurred when research among another marginalized population occurred in higher education. For example, in learning how to provide quality advising early in my career, my professional development focused on how to create a safe and inclusive environment for our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and queer (LGBTQ)

community. Research among this population and the advising community led to nationwide changes at the institutional level and beyond.

Advisors learned how to be supportive and inclusive, and I was able to increase my knowledge about this population, change my behavior, and create a welcoming environment for these students. My terminology and language became inclusive, my office displayed materials to welcome the LGBTQ community, and I provided a safe environment for dialogue that was unique to the community. Many students did indeed disclose their LGBTQ identity, which led to a directed approach in academic support services unique from the general population. Policy and practice changes occurred after researchers and advocates led the charge with research and demands for institutional support. This current research study takes place in states that have tuition equity for undocumented students to increase the likelihood that participants have knowledge of when they are advising undocumented students.

A small number of participants agreed to speak with me. I believe this is primarily due to the incredibly low numbers of advisors who knowingly advise undocumented students. I strongly believe that many individuals who may have had experience with advising undocumented students perhaps did not want to discuss it. My study (to include the pilot through the conclusion of data collection) began during the period prior to a new presidential election and concluded after the election of a new U.S. President. Furthermore, during this time, the Supreme Court announced their deadlocked decision of President Obama's proposal, which would have expanded programs for undocumented parents and children (Park & Parlapiano, 2016). Although this ruling did not include youth and young adults that had qualified for the initial DACA program, it was a difficult time for many who support undocumented students. I include this information to provide context. This is a sensitive topic and it is reasonable to

believe that the timing of my interviews resulted in decreased participation. Some of my participants were very emotional. I had participants take a moment to gather themselves to prevent crying, some expressed anger, some -- frustration, uncertainty, and various combinations of emotions, while others were very pragmatic. It is reasonable to conclude that the political climate and national conversation on immigration effected the number of advisors who decided to participate. Thus, this study concluded with a total of 19 interviews, shy of the target of 24. Most important, saturation was met as detailed in the Participant and Sampling section of this chapter.

Of note, member checking did not occur due to the nature of the research. I had conversations with advisors about their divergence and discretionary behavior. Member checking is a generally accepted practice by which the researcher provides participants with the transcript of their interview to allow for any corrections or to clarify information was not included in the research design. Advisors are reported when they operated outside standard procedures and policies. This is sensitive information which may have caused participants to change their response or opt out of the study.

### **On-Site Observations of Centers and Offices**

The observation of centers and offices added another layer of data. It was important to view the settings and note the information that was readily available to students as they utilize advising services. On-site observation did not include the observance of any actual advising session between undocumented students and advisors due to privacy considerations. Instead I observed the employees' physical space, student in-take, materials readily available to students, student out-take, etc. I also utilized my checklist (see Appendix G) to determine if the center or individual offices provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for undocumented students.

Observation of advising centers and offices helped to determine what items were met on the checklist. Findings from the on-site observations are available in Appendix H.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative research studies involve a continuous interplay between data collection and data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). For this reason, I began analyzing data immediately following the each interview to begin identifying patterns and to facilitate subsequent data collection (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I spent 30 - 45 minutes after each interview to capture key points being discussed. At the conclusion of interviews for each day, I reviewed all audio recordings to continue the data analysis process. This would range from three hours to approximately five and half hours depending on number of interviews to review, length of interviews, and style of conversation (speech patterns) of the participants. Qualitative analysis is a form of intellectual craftsmanship; there is no single way to accomplish qualitative research, because data analysis is a process of making meaning. It is a creative process, not a mechanical one (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Similarly, a qualitative study capitalizes on ordinary ways of making sense (Stake, 1995). Stake reminds qualitative researchers that, “there is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis [he explains] essentially means taking something apart” (p. 71), which in this case, not only means understanding the *how* and *why* in which academic advisors utilize discretion regarding the advising of undocumented students, but also identifying and defining the patterns that emerge. Qualitative data analysis, then, gives meaning to first impressions and final compilations. It is an analysis that tells the story of academic advisors’ intentions of discretionary action, and their perceived results, regarding the advising of undocumented students.

Esterberg (2002) suggested “getting intimate with data” and describes the main objective of immersing oneself in interview transcripts to “load up your memory with the collected data” (p. 157). This dissertation research followed the data analysis and coding procedures suggested by Creswell (2009) and Esterberg (2002). Specifically, Esterberg (2002) suggested that open coding is a process where “you work intensively with your data, line by line, identifying themes and categories that seem of interest” (p. 158). Additionally, Creswell (2009) mandated the traditional approach that allows the codes to emerge during the data analysis (p. 187). Once the data from this research was examined thoroughly through the open coding process, I reviewed the codes for emerging themes. This research study followed Creswell’s (2009) six steps, listed below, during the data analysis process and, although these steps are described in linear order, Creswell described “an interactive practice” to analysis. That is, there is a recursive element to following these steps. The process is not simply a static, linear order of analysis.

Step 1: Organize and prepare the data for analysis (p. 185). During this step, I reviewed audio tapes from interviews and transcribed them.

Step 2: Read through the data (p. 185). This step also aligns with Esterberg’s directive to “get to know your data”. I reflected on the overall meaning to gain a general sense of the information and ideas that the participants conveyed.

Step 3: Begin detailed analysis with the coding process (p. 186).

I followed Creswell’s (2009) procedure of organizing the material into segments by taking the text data and segmenting sentences into categories. I then labeled those categories with terms based on the actual language from the participants and identified what is in conjunction with the literature.

Step 4: Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories for these for analysis. (p. 189). I applied this process to generate codes for the descriptions, which then lead to generalizing a small number of categories or themes. Next, I analyzed the themes that emerged and gather the various cases into a general description for reported results.

Step 5: Advance how the description of the themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative (p. 189). For this step, I applied the emergent themes into narrative passages. This allowed for findings to emerge logically from the participant's responses.

Step 6: Interpret the meaning of the data (p. 189). Creswell recognizes that a researcher's own background plays just as important a part of the meaning making process as a researcher's fidelity to a theoretical lens. During the interpretation process, my experience as an academic advisor greatly informed my understanding of the participant's stories. In the same way, my experience helped convey the participant's perceptions of their experiences accurately.

I organized all applicable findings surrounding discretion and policy implementation among street-level workers as directed by the literature in the followings topic areas: (a) historical determinants of street-level discretion, (b) the application of street-level divergence, (c) through the understanding of leadership among street level bureaucrats, and (d) the application of institutional logic. The use of these theoretically based topics aid in credibility of the forthcoming study conclusions.

Finally, the data analysis for this research utilized other data points (as seen in Appendix H), as previously noted. It is an important method in qualitative research that seeks convergence of findings using various methods of collection from different sources at different times (McMillan, 2012). The varied methods of data collection in this study allowed analysis of



findings within and across cases to provide diversity of perspectives that enhance credibility (Stake, 2006).

### **Limitations**

The findings of this research focused on the academic advisors interviewed at the three participating 4-year public universities. The findings are not generalizable to all academic advisors working at 4-year public institutions in the region or even in the nation. Findings represent the advising process examined in this sample. This research study provides a description of what has occurred at the three participating institutions in regards to academic advising, specifically as it concerns undocumented students. The findings and data from this study reflected the opinions, perspectives, ideas, and policies/procedures of academic advisors at the time of data collection. Additionally, the study results are reported in aggregate. I did not disaggregate data for each respective university. All data was combined. Therefore, I was unable to isolate differences in institutional culture, norms, influences, directives, etc. Thus, there is no reporting on personal advisor perspectives versus institutional differences within the context of individual advisor choice and discretion in this study.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that given the research design of the study, advisors may have been more likely to report positive acts of discretion and divergent behavior rather than negative discretion/behavior. Plus, subjectivity is present in this study. It is possible that although advisors viewed their behavior and discretion as positive and/or in the best interest of students, their institution may view it as negative. There are differences in perspectives which exist at the institutional, professional, and personal viewpoint regarding positive and negative discretion. This study does not address these varied layers in the examination of discretion.

### **Institutional Review Board and Informed Consent Protocol**

In accordance with federal law, VCU IRB reviews all research protocols involving human participants to ensure research is conducted ethically and in compliance with federal, state, and local regulations. I followed the protocol set forth by the VCU IRB for this study. I strictly followed the research methodology provided in this chapter and complied with the IRB at VCU. The necessary consent forms were distributed electronically and in hard copy prior to the interviews. I did not collect signed consent forms, as it was not required for my research per the VCU IRB. Participants were only required to receive a copy, which they did. The participants were provided with opportunities to ask questions or voice concerns prior to the interview and throughout the study. They also had the ability to decline participation before, during, or after the study. There was no known conflict of interest and I disclosed my previous employment as an academic advisor as well as my current role at the time of the study, the Assistant Vice President of Academic Success and Student Retention with Edinboro University. I also made my membership to NACADA known to all participants as well to provide transparency.

## **CHAPTER IV. RESULTS**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore the self-reported actions and perspectives of academic advisors regarding individual advising sessions and the advising process of undocumented students in public institutions of higher learning. This research focused on the discretionary behavior of advisors, the identified street-level bureaucrats in this study, and how they operate within the institutional policies and procedures present at their institutions when advising undocumented students. This research study used the framework of Lipsky's (1980) account of street-level bureaucracy. This framework focused on the conditions within which street level bureaucracies operate when implementing policy in the advising process, particularly when utilizing discretion. As previously stated, the use of discretion is arguably the most insightful part of understanding public bureaucracies and the individuals who work within them. Lipsky's (1980) identified lens makes the case that front-line employees, such as academic advisors, work out practical versions of public policy, which may often look different from the official process or procedure.

Chapter 4 reports on findings and themes that address the primary and secondary research questions. The chapter provides readers with background information on the study sample, as well as information on their demographic characteristics. Findings are reported and/organized around the research questions, which were created to align with the theoretical framework of this study. The chapter concludes with a review of academic advising needs and differences pertaining to undocumented students.

## **Background**

The participants in this study included 19 advisors representing three public post-secondary universities in the western and middle southern regions of the United States. Every person had experience advising and/or working with undocumented students. Each participant participated in face-to-face interviews that averaged 60 minutes. The majority of interviews (79%,  $n = 19$ ) were conducted in the offices of participants, 10.5% ( $n = 2$ ) were conducted at a campus coffee shop, and 10.5% ( $n = 2$ ) were conducted on campus in a public seating area outdoors, within fairly close proximity to participants' offices.

On-site observations and a review of institutional advising documents were conducted as well. This was a necessary step in the analysis of findings and outlined in Chapter 3. I was able to determine that the information provided by study participants was supported and confirmed by the utilization of additional data points. Findings from the review of institutional documents and on-site observations are available for review in Appendix H.

## **Demographic Characteristics**

*Years of experience.* In the study sample, as indicated in Table 4, the years of advising experience is approximately evenly distributed among 2 to 5 years (31.5%,  $n = 6$ ), 6 to 9 years (26.3%,  $n = 5$ ), and 10 or more (31.5%,  $n = 6$ ) years. The smallest population (10.5%,  $n = 2$ ) corresponds to less than 2 years of advising experience.

*Positions.* Participants were provided an opportunity to volunteer their position titles. Coordinators had the highest percentage (15.7%,  $n = 4$ ) represented in the sample, followed by senior academic advisors (15.7%,  $n = 3$ ), and academic success specialists (10.5%,  $n = 2$ ). The remaining disclosed titles only represent one participant each (5.2%): assistant director, biology academic advisor, graduate advisor, program coordinator, and supplemental advisor.

*Advising practice(s).* The majority of advisors (63.1%,  $n = 12$ ) reported using more than one model of advising practice. Five (41.6 %) identified the using all four models: prescriptive, developmental, intrusive/proactive, and appreciative advising. Three (33.3 %) noted they use developmental and intrusive models. Three (25.0%) reporting using the following combinations: developmental and prescriptive; developmental, intrusive, and appreciative; and developmental, intrusive, and prescriptive. Developmental advising was the most dominant reported advising practice. Two participants (10.4 %) noted intrusive as their only advising practice. Five (26.3%) did not answer or indicated that they were unfamiliar with the four advising practices.

*Advising model(s).* The majority of participants (36.8%,  $n = 7$ ) identified the singular use of a split model. Two (10.5%) identified the use of split and satellite models. One (5.2%) noted that her/his unit uses all four: split, supplementary, total intake, and satellite models. Another (5.2%) used all models except supplementary. One (5.2%) selected supplementary and another (5.2%,  $n = 1$ ) selected total intake as the only model in place. One participant (5.2%) selected “other” on the questionnaire and identified a dual model, which utilized faculty and staff advisors with the use of supplementary model for specific populations. There were five respondents (26.3%) who did not select an answer.

*Education.* All participants earned, at a minimum, an undergraduate degree. The majority of participants (47.3%,  $n = 9$ ) earned a master’s degree. Less than half of participants (42.1%,  $n = 8$ ) have a bachelor’s degree, while the remaining have earned a doctorate degree (10.5%,  $n = 2$ ).

*Age.* The majority of participants are aged twenty-five to thirty-four (47.3 percent,  $n = 9$ ) years. Ages 35 to 44 (15.7 percent,  $n = 3$ ) and ages 45 to 54 (15.7 percent,  $n = 3$ ) held equal

representation in the sample. Approximately eleven percent ( $n = 2$ ) have an age of 55 to 64. One participant (5.2 percent) disclosed an age ranging from 18 to 22 years.

*Ethnic and racial background.* Participants also had an opportunity to disclose their race and ethnicity. The two largest populations by race and ethnicity in the sample are Hispanic (36.8%,  $n = 7$ ) and non-Hispanic White (47.3%,  $n = 9$ ). One participant (5.2%) identified as Black/African American, another participant (5.2%) identified as Asian American and Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and a third participant (5.2%) listed their race and ethnicity as other.

*First-generation college graduate.* Several participants (57.9%,  $n = 11$ ) disclosed they were the first in their families to earn a college degree.

*Migration of parent(s) or grandparent(s).* The majority (63.2%,  $n = 12$ ) of participants were descendants of a parent or grandparent who migrated to the United States.

*Philanthropic activity.* Most participants (63.2%,  $n = 12$ ) participated in philanthropic activities or volunteered within a year of their interview.

*Job satisfaction.* As a final point of demographic data, participants answered questions<sup>25</sup> about their job satisfaction. Employees who are satisfied with their employment typically indicate “strongly agree” or “agree” when asked specific questions adopted from the Gallup Q12, the standard assessment of job satisfaction (Harter, Schmidt, Killham, & Asplund, 2006). The survey questions pertaining to job satisfaction revealed that the great majority (78.9%,  $n = 15$ ) of participants answered *strongly agree* or *agree* to all 12 questions. Two (10.5%) participant provided a *neutral* response to two and *strongly agree* or *agree* to the others. One (5.2%) indicated a response of *disagree* to three questions and *strongly agree* or *agree* to the others.

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<sup>25</sup> See Appendix F, questions 9 through 20.

Tables 4 and 5 provide a visual representation of participant's demographic characteristics.

Table 4

*Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N=19)*

	Frequency	Percent
<b>Position Titles:</b>		
Academic Success Specialist	2	10.5
Coordinator/Advising Center Coordinator	4	21.0
Senior Academic Advisor	3	15.7
Assistant Director	1	5.2
Biology Academic Advisor	1	5.2
Graduate Advisor	1	5.2
Program Coordinator	1	5.2
Supplemental Advisor	1	5.2
Did Not Disclose	5	26.3
<b>Years Advising:</b>		
Less Than 2	2	10.5
2 - 5	6	31.5
6 - 9	5	26.3
10 +	6	31.5
<b>Highest Degree Earned:</b>		
Bachelor	8	42.1
Master	9	47.3
Doctorate	2	10.5
<b>Gender:</b>		
Female	14	73.6
Male	5	26.3
<b>Age:</b>		
18 – 24	1	5.2
25 – 34	9	47.3
35 – 44	3	15.7
45 – 54	3	15.7
55 – 64	2	10.5
<b>Race/Ethnicity:</b>		
African American or Black	1	5.2
Hispanic	7	36.8
Non-Hispanic White	9	47.3
Asian or Asian American/Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	5.2
Other	1	5.2

Table 5

*Binary Characteristics of Sample (N=19)*

Characteristics of Participants	Yes (N)	Yes (%)	No (N)	No (%)
First-Generation	11	57.9	8	42.1
Migration of Parent/Grandparent	12	63.2	7	36.8
Philanthropy*	12	66.7	6	33.3

\*Please note: One participant elected not to answer or mistakenly skipped the philanthropic question. The data for this characteristic represents 18 participants.

**Findings: Primary Research Question**

To obtain information regarding the discretionary behavior of advisors, the participants were asked questions about their profession, the advising process, their advisees (generally speaking), institution, and personal perspectives and behaviors regarding undocumented students. Because more than half (57.8%,  $n = 11$ ) of the participants have 6 or more years in the advising profession and roughly a third (31.5%,  $n = 6$ ) have at least 2 to 5 years on the job, the sample can be described as composed of experienced advisors, which increases the reliability of the reported data.

The findings of this study revealed seven main themes which have been coded into Table 6<sup>26</sup>. The primary themes are as follows: (a) advisor introspection, (b) advocacy, (c) divergence, (d) institutional influences, (e) personal values of advisor, (f) position of university leadership, and (g) the identified purpose in role. Despite main themes emerging naturally from the data, the findings of this chapter are organized to properly align with and address the research questions, which are tied to the literature and theoretical framework guiding this study.

As a reminder, the primary research question guiding this study is:

<sup>26</sup> Table 6 provides a visual representation of the themes identified in this study with corresponding codes. The codebook may be found in Appendix H, which provides definitions for review.



RQ1. What type of discretionary behavior (if any) do academic advisors exercise when advising undocumented students?

Table 6

*Identified Themes with Corresponding Codes*

<b>Advisor Introspection</b>	<b>Advocacy</b>	<b>Divergence</b>	<b>Institutional Influences</b>	<b>Personal Values of Advisor</b>	<b>University Leadership</b>	<b>Purpose in Role</b>
Empathy/Ability to Relate	Professional Advising Model	Policy Rejection	Autonomy in Advising	Accountability to Students	President Messaging	Beyond Position Duties/Responsibilities
Desire to do More	Advocate for Students	Support of Community College	Culture	Fairness and Justice		Care and Concern
Disposition of Advisor and Student						Beyond Academic
Flexible/Adaptable	NACADA guided work/membership	Time-to-Completion Discrepancy	Policy Professional Development Inequity	Diversity Appreciation		Empower Students Help or Assist Students
Shared Experiences			Value of Advising	Volunteer/ Opt-in Training		Proactive/Anticipate Student Needs

The supporting research questions have been chosen to elicit the insight necessary to adequately address the overarching main research question. In addition, these questions create the framework for organizing the findings. As previously noted, the supporting research questions are as follows:

RQ1a. How are the fundamental factors (autonomy, policy content, contradictory nature of work, and unpredictability of citizens) that shape street-level bureaucracy, as described by Lipsky (1980), influencing discretionary behavior among academic advisors, if at all?

RQ1b. How are the historical determinants (background, organizational culture, personal characteristics, and personal disposition) of bureaucratic street-level discretion influencing the behaviors and perspectives of academic advisors, if at all?

RQ1c. In what ways is street-level divergence influencing the discretionary behavior of academic advisors, if at all?

RQ1d. In what ways are leadership acts influencing discretionary behavior among academic advisors, if at all?

RQ1e. How does institutional logic guide or influence the behavior and perspectives of academic advisors, if at all?

Thus, the findings are compared to the theory reviewed in Chapter 2, and additionally to the applicable studies to determine if the findings verify or contradict previous literature. The identified patterns and relationships have been used to answer the primary research question. In addition, results have been split into sub-categories, answering the supporting research questions according to their dominant thematic codes. Tables 7 through 11 outline these findings.

## Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior Shaped by Fundamental Factors

Participants reported four primary factors reflecting the inherent fundamental dynamics that shape street-level discretionary behavior. As indicated in Table 7, these factors include (a) autonomy in advising, (b) a discrepancy in the 4-year completion goal, (c) support of community college attendance instead of sole promotion of institutional courses, and (d) outright policy rejection to meet individual needs of students.

Table 7

### *Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Fundamental Factors*

Fundamental factors	Dominant codes	%	Example quote
Free from interference by supervisors operating in unobservable setting	Autonomy in advising	68	“Yes. I feel like in my position as an advisor in this area, I have a lot of autonomy. I can’t think of a scenario with those students where my boss would say don’t do that.”
Contradictory aspects	Time-to-completion discrepancy	53	“In some cases, students cannot always, especially undocumented students, cannot always do it [graduate in 4 years] in the time frame that we ask them to because in the cases I have worked with, and I’m thinking three or four students, they have such a huge responsibility to their families that the time frame that we set up for them is just not viable. And so I guess when I’m not encouraging them to take 15 semester hours and still work the hours that they work and still be involved in the things that they are involved in. It’s sort of counter to what the university is saying so in that respect, that’s when I differ from the university.”
	Support of Community College	32	“Let’s face it. This is not a cheap school. Students are not cookie-cutter. It’s not feasible for everyone to make it here. Depending on the circumstances, I share details with students about the community college and the whole transfer thing works - the process.”
Response to individual student need	Policy Rejection	63	“I will fight policy and procedures at times if I feel like it is something that I’m strong for so a student, in order to do certain things, whether it be like a nonacademic, they need documentation. Well, the student cannot get documentation, and I completely believed him and the policy says they have to have documentation and I fought it and said, no, he doesn’t, this is a professional judgement call.”

## Importance of Advisor Autonomy

The majority (68.4%,  $n = 13$ ) of participants believe they have autonomy in their role to do what is in the best interest for the undocumented students they advised. However, five participants (31.6%) felt they do not have autonomy in their position. The autonomy discussed in this study does not relate to having influence over immigration status, as noted by some advisors. Here, the autonomy was in reference to having the ability to make the best decisions to support the overall student success for undocumented students. The participants all viewed this as positive and necessary to perform their duties well. Autonomy did not exist in all areas of their work, as was noted by a few, but each described having autonomy when working with students, *generally* speaking. All participants verbalized the crucial role of autonomy in the function of advising as it relates to acting in a way that is best for students.

A reasonable level of autonomy is often required for discretionary behavior to take place. Some advisors described autonomy as an expectation or established norm in their role. As discussed in the literature (Lipsky, 1980; Osinsky, 2000) autonomy is often found in the work of street-level workers. By definition, front-line workers must be able to respond in different ways, depending on the particular issues presented for their attention. Advisors face complex situations, which cannot always be reduced to prescribed responses. In this context, they operate as individuals, with individuals, in unobserved and unobservable settings which require them to work autonomously (Lipsky, 1980).

Autonomy enhances beneficial outcomes for students, as demonstrated by studies on employee performance and/organizational commitment (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007). As one advisor explained, autonomy is a critical aspect of the job:

Oh sure, I think that's been a huge plus for us that in our programs we do have a lot of autonomy to do what is best for the students and again, from an academic, career, even

personal point of view so I think we've done a great job of addressing that as I said before, just kind of making sure that every service that is offered to every student is exactly that, offered to every student. And so we do have that autonomy and that makes me better, better able to support students. Again, I think the difficulties really are when you separate out their college life from their personal life, I think that's kind of where the difficulties kind of stand. But we've had that autonomy and we've used it to include undocumented students in every single thing that we do, like I said we've had opportunities to present to the chancellor and they're right there, front and center, so from that to professional development, mentoring programs, I mean, everything that we ever do to develop as a student support program will be accessible by them as well. So we have that freedom. (078C3)

This is because street-level bureaucrats frequently find themselves in circumstances in which they must make sense of rules and procedures, interpret, and implement them, which often results in policy making. Advisors discussed the policies pertaining to undocumented students at their universities in regards to autonomy, but mentioned the ambiguity in terms of academic advising. As is the nature of workforce operation in bureaucracies, there are situations for which policy has not yet been developed. Therefore, as a result street-level bureaucrats have to decide policy for themselves. As is explained by an advisor:

Do I have the autonomy? I think we make our own autonomy sometimes. There are no specific guidelines that I have been told we have to follow if a student discloses that they are undocumented. I don't think I have ever been told that I have to report something, so in that respect, I say, yes, I do. (069C2)

As noted previously, managers are rarely, if ever, present during advising sessions, which take place in private. Therefore, there is great autonomy within academic advising, which was described as having the potential to create tensions between managers and advisors. Lipsky (1980) indicated there are tensions between managers and street-level bureaucrats due to their potentially conflicting concerns. He continued to discuss that the sanctions available to managers to control street-level bureaucrats are limited and he regarded managerial control as “inherently problematic because of the significant levels of autonomy that street-level

bureaucrats have in carrying out their work” (Lipsky, 1980, pp. 161-162). However, in this study the participants who mentioned their managers in terms of their autonomy spoke of them in high regard, contrary to Lipsky’s indication. Here, managers were integral to the autonomy that advisors exhibited as they encouraged and expected it among advisors. There was no discussion of tension or negativity among advisors and managers as a result of their autonomy. One of the participants, who openly supports undocumented students, had a conversation during the interview process about autonomy with the manager.

Oh yeah, absolutely. And it’s really refreshing, in my interview they made it clear that I have a choice and autonomy to do whatever I think personally is best for students. Of course we also have a team and they’re open to new ideas, so that’s welcoming as well. They’re good to you know, not criticize but give feedback if the idea was good or not. In the same way they would balance back ideas with me and it’s not just [*name of supervisor removed*] it’s people who are higher ups and they really trust my opinion and so forth, and would tell people to come see me if they have any questions about working with undocumented students. So I feel very valued here. (072C2)

Another participant provided information that directly conflicts with this notion of tension between managers and autonomous street-level workers.

This office is very supportive of all students and especially my direct supervisor and her direct supervisor are all very supportive of all students, like I said this office is very student centered where we try to do the best for each individual student and they also respect professional judgement a lot here. So I feel like I do have the ability to make decisions as long as there is significant reason for it and I can make a good argument for it. (068C2)

Discretion on the job may enable individuals to integrate preferred job aspects into the job role, if desired. Discretion and autonomy in the workplace refer to the extent to which a position allows for freedom, independence, and discretion to schedule work, make decisions, and select the methods used to perform tasks (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Increased autonomy allows individuals greater flexibility in how advisors define their role because they will have

greater discretion in deciding how to perform the work (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Lipsky, 1980, 2010; Osinsky, 2000).

Among its many benefits, autonomy motivates employees to accept more responsibility and take initiative. Parker (1998) and Parker, Wall, and Jackson (1997) provided insight into why autonomy is associated with increased role breadth. Parker surmised that enhanced autonomy did not only increase ownership of problems but it also encouraged employees to recognize a wider range of skills and knowledge as important for their roles. Increased control over the work environment motivates employees to push their limits and master new tasks, which is consistent with work design research that has demonstrated the motivational benefits of work autonomy (Morgeson & Campion, 2003). This suggests that when given autonomy, individuals are likely to integrate more responsibilities into their role as advisors. Consistent with the literature (Morgeson & Campion; Parker, 1998), a participant described an experience when professional academic advising was in its infancy and she accepted more responsibility to influence the advising culture. Her manager noticed how involved she was with NACADA and referenced the advising books she often read. The manager asked this advisor to make the necessary changes and recommendations that would align their unit with best practices in advising. The participant's account of what followed explains further:

And we also wanted to be respected as academic advisors so we changed the title of all of our folks. But I had only been working here a couple of years and I was asked, hey, do you want to take charge and create this program in this department, and that gave me a lot of freedom and a lot of autonomy. I mean, I'm still mindful and respectful, I share everything that I do and I make sure hey, am I where I need to be but especially in service to our undocumented population but again, I believe the institution gives us that freedom and flexibility also. (077C3)



Consistent with the literature (Morgeson & Campion, 2003; Parker 1998), as a result of this manager-provided opportunity, the advisor was able to integrate more responsibilities into his/her work duties and now runs the program.

### **Policy Context: Discrepancy with 4-Year Graduation Policy**

The work of advisors provides the opportunity for divergence. When conflict arises due to the nature of advisor work, some have the ability to utilize their discretion regarding institutional practice, such as in the case of graduation within 4 years. Academic advisors reported resistance to organizational pressures to encourage 4-year graduation, as many felt the 4-year graduation plan was not applicable to all students at times. More than half of the participants (52.6%,  $n = 10$ ) discussed their direct divergence or conflict regarding the 4-year completion agenda. As is clearly articulated by this participant here:

I think that's a big one and sometimes I struggle with that versus really allowing students to create a full experience here on their own and sometimes that is not a 4-year plan.  
(067C2)

Divergence in this area also included any reference to occasions when participants spoke with students about interrupting school for some time period. The 4-year completion agenda is in reference to a university goal to ensure that students complete all degree requirements and graduate within 4 years of start date. The degree of freedom that street-level bureaucrats need in their job, in responding to individual need, and the space for discretion,

created by confusion, conflict, omission or obfuscation in the articulation of policy, give them the leeway not only to work in accordance with their interpretation of organizational goals, but also to operate in ways which contravene or subvert those goals (Lipsky, 1980). (p. 163)

One advisor explains the conflict and obfuscation:

I am interested in 4-year graduation in so far as I'm interested in graduation. I don't want students to come here and take on debt and then leave without having any credential, that's very stressful for me to think about after working in financial aid. But I just don't

care if it takes people a little bit longer, I don't think that people should be here for like ten years, but that's the kind of thing that people imagine is happening. I mean, most students want to get their degree and get out. They're not interested in being here longer than they need to but I think that the university just doesn't know, if they [the university] understand, or if they do and they don't care the ways in which 4-year graduation is difficult. The things that they've done to make that difficult. I think, that's the main way that my desires and goals for students differ from the universities. If I have a student who comes in and says, I absolutely want to graduate in 4 years, like that's incredibly important to me, I want to graduate early, that's important to me, then I'm doing everything that I can to make sure that that happens, but I only care if the student cares. I have definitely said to students like I'm not concerned with 4-year graduation rates. If that's important to you then it's important to me but that's not something I'm trying to push on you. I don't know if this is contradictory but I am honest with students, and I think that, not like people are lying to them, but maybe there's like, obfuscation, you know, like sort of like this is me waving my hand around trying to indicate things are veiled, things are, it's not a lie, it's just like not all of the information. (071C2)

The advisors describing their disagreement with the 4-year graduation directive all agreed that they were supportive of the “rule”, but it was not applicable to all students. Rather than the one-size-fits-all approach, advisors pointed out the need to review students’ situations individually. In their opinion, students should be encouraged to take time off for a period or even asked to re-examine their choice to attend the university altogether. Below one advisor explains the rationale for divergence regarding the need for a student to take some time off:

Many times, they [students] cannot go to school in the summer time if they don't have full time status, or if they only have 12 semester hours rather than 15 semester hours to make that 4-year plan. They're working 20-40 hours a week, and they need to help support their family. I ask them, do you have outside commitments, things like that and many times they must work, that's a big deal, but I also expect them, or try to encourage them to become involved in the university so they actually find a niche here. And so I guess when I'm not encouraging them to take 15 semester hours so they can still work the hours that they need to work and still be involved in the things here [at the university] it's sort of counter to what the university is saying so in that respect, that's when I differ from the university. (069C2)

The discussion regarding 4-year graduation with students was regularly reviewed with students’ ability to balance work, campus activities, family responsibilities, program requirements, extenuating circumstances, and the like. Below is another excerpt:

If, you know, it's what's in the best interests of the students. If you need to stop out and you're in the 4-year pledge program, but you just went through something traumatic, what's more important? You're always more important so stop out and what will happen if you're not in 4-year pledge, are they going to kick you out, like what does that mean, like what's more important? To me the student is always more important. They're always more important than anything else that goes on, when it's something that's critical, now if it's like I just want to party and play video games, no. If it's something that's really serious that's impacting their well-being, I don't think the university would be thrilled that I encourage a student to go somewhere else. Or telling students to stop out, or just telling students to make decisions that are in their best interests. (079C3)

Sometimes the 4-year graduation goal is discussed within the context of a student's need to stop continuous enrollment, such as in the case below:

Not often, but occasional conversations with incoming new students about are you really ready to be here. And maybe it's not the right time for you to be here. So I mean, of course there's recruitment goals to maintain. But part of me also knows that if a student gets here, and they're not happy, they're not going to try very hard, and if they don't try very hard, they're going to fail, then they're going to have a real hard time later on if they are at a point in their life in the future where they're ready but they're walking into a hole [very low GPA] that they dug when they were 18 because they felt like they were supposed to go to college. So just that occasional moment where I'm almost encouraging a student to rethink coming to college at least right now. (057C1)

Advisors find themselves participating in divergence concerning the 4-year graduation goal, which could be particularly challenging for undocumented students, many of whom have difficulties paying for their education due to their ineligibility for many sources of funding, significant family obligations, and psychological challenges resulting from their precarious immigration status (discussed later in this chapter).

It is important to note that colleges and universities do annually report four-year and six-year graduation rates. This information is detailed in the Integrated Postsecondary Education System (IPEDS) and easily accessible public information utilizing the World Wide Web.

### **Encouraging Community College Attendance**

Another important topic for advisors is encouraging community college attendance. More than a third of participants (31.5%,  $n = 6$ ) discussed their encouragement of taking courses at

community colleges with students instead of solely promoting their own institutions. This behavior has been categorized as divergent<sup>27</sup> because each of the three universities participating in the study receive the highest percentage of revenue from student tuition, according to IPEDS. Thus, each institution is tuition-driven regarding the financial operations of the university. When students take community college courses instead of enrolling in courses at their admitted institution, these universities suffer a loss of revenue, albeit perhaps minimal.

Given this reality, the advice that some advisors give to students is particularly noteworthy. Sometimes, the actions at the frontlines of policy do differ from the intentions of higher ups (May & Winter, 2009). As reported by the advisors in this study, the topic of community college was discussed with all students, generally speaking. This finding revealed that advisors who promoted community college options provided this information to both undocumented and traditional students. Participants discussed this information with students because they believed disclosing community college options to be useful information for students to have in their decision making process. As one advisor describes below, there are benefits for students when they take a few courses at the community college.

Sometimes I want to help students understand that they can make a lot of progress in the summers. I just think giving the student the most flexibility as they get towards the end of their degrees is most important. So I always try to make them aware of community college classes over the summer and try to show, I'll take the time and say, this is how you look it up, this is how you do it, and some are more interested than others, but I think letting them know that, because summer school here is super expensive, but doing a community college class is a great way to just knock out one or two classes and it's somewhat affordable. So I try to push that more than other people sometimes. (057C1)

In general, the findings reveal three main reasons for a conversation with students about community college as reported by participants in the study and they are as follows: (a) the cost of

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<sup>27</sup> Please note: Divergent behavior is not necessarily a negative occurrence. It can be positive, especially when the divergence takes place because the individual needs of students were priority.

courses at community colleges versus the cost at the university; (b) flexibility provided by community college, both academically and personally; and/or (c) student disclosed uncertainty about future goals. For these reasons advisors promoted or made students aware of an option of community college enrollment.

Advisors are uniquely positioned to address the three items listed above. When students disclose their concerns and circumstances to advisors, the latter use their professional knowledge, judgement, and discretion to make recommendations. The advice provided to students by participants in the study did not place the financial interest of the university at the forefront of recommendations. Below is an excerpt of the description made by a participant regarding a conversation with a student who was uncertain regarding future goals and whether she desired continuing the current learning path. The advisor recapped the conversation as follows:

Figure your life out, you don't want to come here and spend thousands of dollars to explore and figure out what you want to do with yourself in the future. That's a very expensive way. You could do that at community college and pay less than half the cost. (056C1)

Advisor disclosure of information concerning community college reflects previous findings from the scholarly literature regarding the opportunities for divergent behavior among street-level bureaucrats in that these advisors seek to balance the priorities of the communities they serve (students) with the interest and policies of the organizations (public universities) of their employment (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Mood & Musheno, 2000, 2003). Divergent behavior occurs when the population served is prioritized above the organization. The six participants who provided information about community college prioritized the interest of their students over what is in the best interest, financially speaking, of their university.

## **Policy Rejection to Meet Individual Student Needs**

Divergent behavior of university advisors can also be identified by the tendency to reject standing policies if such policies created situations that might have been detrimental to the students. More than half (63.1%,  $n = 12$ ) of participants discussed policy rejection. There were two examples that specifically mentioned consequences or concerns for the undocumented population. The remaining 10 participants mentioned policy rejection in general terms without disclosing any details, such as “I mean, I go behind university policy for students if it’s warranted” (075C2). All 12 participants described their policy divergence was situational or circumstantial. They described their behavior in terms of using good judgment and/or doing what was morally right because of the inaccuracies, disagreement, or failure of policy to consider various types of students as reasons for their rejections.

Policy divergence is a complex and challenging issue, as it relates to “what it means to act responsibly, ethically, and with integrity as a public servant” (O’Leary, 2010, p. 8). In two cases, divergence occurred when policy failed to recognize the challenges faced by undocumented students. One advisor described a resident housing (dorm room) policy that prevented a student’s mother from visiting him while at the university:

For example, I had a student whose mother was undocumented when I worked in housing. There was a policy that you had to present a state based ID to have a guest come in and so I didn't even realize and one day one of students comes up to me and tells me my mom has never visited me in the dorms, she’s not allowed and it’s been 7 months, is there any way that she can visit me. And I was like, oh my God, we need to change this policy ASAP. (059C1)

In addition, another participant described her actions to prevent participation of undocumented students, most likely DACA recipients, in a study-abroad trip after the election of President Donald J. Trump as follows:

We had accepted four students and they were so excited, we were so excited, we were going to be, that was the most we've ever had on campus from the program to go in one go. Then the election happened, and I was like, no, and the university's policy is it's up to the student so technically I was not supposed to tell the students no, even though they had already been accepted, but I sat them down all of us in this room, and I was just like, you all know I cannot let you go. It's really their choice, we're not supposed to tell them no. What if something happened and DACA gets removed, these people [general reference to university personnel] cannot and we [program staff] cannot do anything, their [university] lawyers here cannot do anything, they're going to be stuck in China for who knows how long, how are you going to tell me not to tell them no? I'm like screw your policy because these kids could maybe not come back and then it would be on us. I don't know, I don't know if I did the right thing. But this center supported me in that. (071C2)

In the examples above, this advisor created travel policy for the four undocumented students referenced above. This is characteristic of front-line work.

Street-level bureaucrats often respond to guidelines by stated policy and/organizational directives sometimes from a moral and ethical perspective (Carey and Foster, 2011), which may result in policy rejection or divergence. One participant, with the help of colleagues, discussed how advisors highlighted perceived policy problems that, at present, has the attention of the university president. This participant explained the financial hardship of some of students, which is being compounded by a housing policy. The policy requires students within relative proximity to live on campus. The advisor speaks to the principles (or ethics) in which the policy applies, such as the case below:

I think that's one of the biggest hindrances are finances. This policy says they have to live on campus. I don't agree with it. It's a policy that's been in place for a while and it's coming to light. Now, the president is onboard saying, wow, we need to change this. How can we change this? Why do we have this mandate? And it originated when we weren't getting enough [students] to justify housing. Now there's a high demand for the space and we would love to see that be taken into consideration. So that's one of the hindrances that we see quite a bit for our students is that they can be living you know, 15 miles away but because it's not a local area high school, they're falling under that mandate and the housing services are required. So that's something that our president is exploring. (082C3)

Street-level divergence may follow a professional decision, because occupational and professional identity are central to understanding street-level practices (Lipsky, 1980). One advisor explains how her education experience and professional background enable the questioning of a unit specific policy to take two congruent math classes: “to me, it just doesn’t seem right” (054C2), referencing moral judgement. In more detail, she stated:

Am I crazy, am I like totally misreading something? For example, students who are chemistry majors have to take some sort of math concurrently and it either has to be calculus or it can be statistics. And so this is a really stupid example, but I'll give it, and so calculus is part of the requirement for almost all of our majors in the college but statistics is often not. So they [students] take statistics to achieve this goal of having a concurrent math class with chemistry. Okay, so meta thinking, what is the point of this? Do they need something in the math class that would help them with the chemistry, in theory, yes, and if so that is fulfilled. I was a science major so I feel like trying to use my background as well, okay, some things that you're learning in calculus could help you in chemistry, that makes sense, but nothing that you're learning in statistics in my opinion is a requirement for chemistry. And so why are we having these students take this class that isn't going to count for their major and doesn't really help them for this other class? Well, it's because at some point, I asked my supervisor, someone was teaching chemistry and their wife was teaching statistics and statistics had a low enrollment and so they ended up opening that up as an option for something that could be concurrently enrolled and so when students don't pass the calculus pre-requirements then they're told to take statistics. And I'm like, this is really stupid. And so I tell students so technically you're supposed to take math concurrently with chemistry, but you don't need statistics for your major so don't take it if you don't want to. (054C2)

If street-level workers perceive that policy and rules prevent them from acting according to their professional knowledge, they are likely to act divergently and reject policy as expressed above. Furthermore, street-level bureaucrats (advisors) do not define their work in terms of policy and rules but rather in terms of relationships to their citizen-clients (students) and; thus, their personal commitments to citizen-clients may lead to the decision to act divergently (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003).



## Historical Determinants of Bureaucratic Street-Level Discretion

Divergent behavior is strongly influenced by factors pertaining to the advisor's background, personal characteristics, and momentary disposition. Participants identified nine factors reflective of the historical determinants shaping discretionary behavior, shown in Table 8. These identified factors along with culture and the value of advisory practice have been grouped under organizational characteristics. Among these, the second category, namely the attributes of the street-level worker, contains several themes such as: flexibility or adaptability, empathy or ability to relate, a desire to do more, proactivity or anticipation of student needs, performing beyond position duties and responsibilities, and disposition of advisor. The final factor, disposition of the student, is listed under attributes of the advisor or client-citizen.

The factors in Table 8 are reflective of the literature (Cole & Pilisuk, 1981; Danet, 1973; Goodsell, 1980; Stone, 1981; Tripi, 1984; Vail, 1970) presented in Chapter 2 on the historical factors of street-level bureaucracy, thus confirming previous findings and theory. The historical determinants of street-level bureaucracy paving the way for opportunities of discretion primarily include institutional culture, norms, and practices. In addition, discretion is affected by personal attributes of employees and the public. Moreover, there is the advisor's interpretation of the described factors which influence their discretion. Each of the identified factors as discussed by the participants in the study is detailed below.

Table 8

### *Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Historical Determinants*

Historical determinants	Dominant codes	%	Example quote
Organizational characteristics	Organizational culture	89	"I think being that we're a campus in a western state that has a large population of different cultures, groups of people from around the world, obviously including undocumented students, sort of unspoken to know that you're going to come across students that aren't

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			documented and you're going to provide them the best service possible or give them the best advising service possible, and just in general across campus.”
	Value of advising	74	“I can say that at [ <i>name of university removed</i> ] academic advising is very highly valued. We have a professional organization within the university for academic advisors to become a part of which is supported by university funding and different colleges also kick in extra money to help with this organization, which then provides a number of professional development opportunity for academic advisors, including going to conferences that will help them. We actively have NACADA sessions telecast to our university and so all the advisors who are part of this professional organization are notified when those telecasts are going to be.”
	Help or assist students	84	“We are here to help students first and foremost. That’s our job.”
Attributes of street-level worker	Flexible or adaptable	63	“You know, I can relate to various kinds of students and so I think most advisors are chameleon like in that respect in that we are adaptable to personalities that come in.”
	Empathy or ability to relate	89	“I think empathy is one of the most important things you can be guided by. And just having understanding that, or taking the time to understand, not everyone is going to come from the same background and have the preparation.”
	Desire to do more	79	“It’s tough and I wish that I was able to create more access for students. I wish I was able to find a way for students who have that.”
	Beyond duties and responsibilities	68	“I think it’s really important to understand sometimes a meeting won’t discuss academics, because there’s other areas, sometimes really serious things, to address with students which may take you outside of the academic role.”
	Proactive or anticipate student needs	47	“I try to be proactive, you know, try to anticipate students’ needs and questions before they come in because I think that’s a big thing. A lot of students don’t really know the questions to ask or they come in to look for classes but they haven’t really thought about so many other things that advising can do and should do for them.”
Attributes	Disposition of advisor and/or student	32	“I think your disposition affects, yeah it can definitely have an effect. Just like any human involved job, or a transaction. In our unit, I feel

like we're pretty well supported. If I were having a really terrible day and, I think that's encouraged, if you feel like your mood is going to affect your advising sessions, to tell someone and we will get coverage or if we have to reschedule we will."

"I think I still try to convey similar information even if someone [the student] is cranky and they're not saying why. I'm not going to be cranky back to them. But I think based on what they're verbally or not verbally telling me, I would try to adapt to what I think they need or what they're telling me they need."

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## Organizational Culture

The first factor, culture, is also the most prominent. All (89.4%,  $n = 17$ ) participants who disclosed their thoughts on culture and/or campus climate also referenced their thoughts on the environment for undocumented students on their campus. Most conversations primarily focused on the supportive environment offered on their campuses despite outside influences and/or varied cultures within their institutions. Culture did not influence divergent behavior concerning undocumented students as reported by study participants, although the literature notes the influence of culture on acts of divergence (Cohen, 2016; Kelly, 1994). However, culture did provide opportunities for divergent behavior. Of note, one participant alluded to the connection between culture and opportunities for divergence, as explained here:

You know, my office, is very, I think by virtue of the majors that we advise for and the individuals that are here, my office is very laid back, we're very collegial and friendly and it's kind of a family environment. And I think there's others that are not, and because of that I think I have more latitude to really work with my students and spend time with them, you know, maybe go off book a little bit more than somebody in other departments where you know, it's a much more formal environment by virtue of the students they have or the people that work in that office, the culture overall. (068C2)

The great majority of discussions were reflective of the insular positive environment created on campus or the overall positive culture for undocumented students within the university as seen in these two as seen here:

The university environment, it's a bubble and you feel safe here. It's one of those things where everyone is pulling for you to succeed in every office and in every department who can help you will and so it's a very nice bubble to be in, I'm referring to the university as a whole. (078C3)

The common verbiage on culture is represented in this advisor's explanation below:

I feel like our institution is strongly supportive of undocumented students in that even though in our particular state and region of the country, there's a lot of negative conversations around illegal immigrants and undocumented individuals. (056C1)

A third of the conversations on the topic of culture and undocumented students spoke of change and practice. Informal practices and culture emerge as significant explanatory variables in both organizational behavior and public administration theories (Bozeman & Kingsley, 1998). Behaviors stemming from informal, culturally-based practices are a major factor that influences public policy process. One advisor speaks of the culture created in her unit and how that culture is spreading throughout the campus to specific needs of undocumented students. The advisor explained:

In our department in particular because the needs and student success of undocumented students is discussed quite a bit and in my capacity because our department also awards a grant, I know who they [undocumented students] are and if they filed. It's not broadcast, but when our students come to us, I'm amazed at how much they disclose. I think it's because from the very beginning we do a big New Student Welcome, we bring in all of our incoming freshmen together, we talk about us being a family, we do a Proud to be [acronym of university removed] Chant at the end, we have them meeting with those that participate in the summer bridge program and we encourage them to serve as mentors to the ones [undocumented students] that didn't have that chance to participate over the summer, so I think our students see this as a second home. The colleges [within the university] not as much, but I think they're trying to work in that capacity recognizing our students have to feel safe when they come to this institution. And I really believe just because I work so closely with so many of our college advisors, they believe that too and so I think that they are trying to create that kind of an environment within their colleges. And then that filters out to the faculty. The faculty I think really embrace it, they're like I'm here to teach and if someone is interested in learning, I want to work with that student but I don't know that they necessarily know how to address the issues that may impact an undocumented. They're not quite there yet. I think that it's a specialized issue that unless you've had training or unless you have some greater knowledge about the things that

could impact an undocumented student, you wouldn't know how to even address it when it to you, instead you would say do we have a resource on campus, let me make the referral to that facility on campus or that person or persons. (077C3)

### **Value of Advising**

Another important factor leading to discretionary behavior is related to the value of advisory practice. The majority (73.6%,  $n=14$ ) of participants commented on the value of advising by acknowledging its personal value to them, its value to students, and/or acknowledged its value to the university. The considerations surrounding the value of academic advising were quite similar among all participants. The universities' acknowledgement of the value of academic advising was often reflected in the discussion of designated space for professional advisors, the creation of an advising specific mission within units, and/or the hiring of additional academic advisors.

In addition, thematic analysis suggests a relationship between autonomy and the value of expertise. Advisors that personally recognized the value of advising in terms of their expertise and knowledge also reported having autonomy in their roles as well. Recognizing the importance of professional knowledge and by extension the value offered from academic advising aids in understanding opportunities for discretion. There is value in professional status among front-line workers. Professional status is accompanied by presumed knowledge and educational attainment, which aid in the performance of position duties and responsibilities. Additionally, professional status aids in the use of discretion and the extent of freedom that any occupational group exercises their discretion (Evetts, 2002; Friedson, 1994; Noon and Blyton, 2002).

## Help and Assist Students

Respondents have noted the value of helping students as a motivation of their work. There was consistent conversation among several (84.2%,  $n = 16$ ) participants referring to helping students as an expectation or key part of the role of advisors. Participants discussed how they remove barriers, interpret complex or unfamiliar policies for students, and/or how they do not want to be part of the negative experiences students may encounter during their academic experience. It was common to hear the phrase “*here to help, not hinder*” on all campuses when speaking with advisors. There was a conscious effort to do what was necessary to help students. This advisor captures the previously detailed sentiment here:

Our mission in general is to help students, help them navigate, as I said, their way to their business degree. We help them with the policy side of things whether they're disputing their grade, how to go about that, transferring courses from an outside institution, or a student who plans to take courses over the summer at a community college or another institution and what the protocol for that is. Also when it comes to students asking about financial aid we are able to answer general questions and anything further we point them in the right direction so that they can get an accurate answer. As I mentioned we help all students across the university. (076C3)

Applying the perspective of Hjörne, Juhila, and Van Nijnatten (2010) to the study at hand creates the expectation that the majority of advisors recognize their roles as a primary source of help and assistance to students. Hjörne and colleagues (2010) asserted that the critical role of street-level bureaucracies (arguably by extension, street-level workers) is to channel services to those that need help and assistance ensuring people maintain a “reasonable standard of perceived care” (p. 306). A critical role of academic advisors is to interpret and fulfill the ambitions of the university mission and to channel needed assistance to the students, such as intervening when students are at-risk, providing services, and proactively helping students to obtain the goal of degree-completion. As one advisor describes:

You know, I am here to support students to their success and whether that is success in completing degrees in business or in realizing that they need to go on and find some other major to do, but yes, I am here to help students succeed. (075C3)

There is a clear position from participants in the study, which is that they strongly identify with helping students and have an expectation to do so. This is supported by the research on public service motivation, which suggest that individuals who seek to help others are often found in public sector work (Crewson, 1997).

When the demands of client-citizens (students) are not compatible with predetermined roles of front-line bureaucrats, the situation provides opportunities for divergence. This implies that schools have to develop certain institutional practices in response to such problems to prevent institutional failures and handle concrete dilemmas. In support of this finding, one of the universities in the study responded to the needs of their undocumented students by hiring designated personnel. They also identified physical space on campus to support and meet the needs of this population. Similarly, another research participant from a different university held an undocumented student workshop. In his own words:

When [name of residency House bill for undocumented student tuition] passed we started to hear more about it. I remember having a student who gave me details and let me know what was what. There was just so much I didn't know and [name of university removed] was a little behind the curve. I mean this was a while ago and we're much better now, but still. I thought this would be good information for everyone here [referencing department]. It wasn't anything major, but I did set up a workshop to educate my colleagues about undocumented students. I also enlisted my undocumented advisee to talk to us. (081C3)

### **Empathy or Ability to Relate**

The ability to relate to students in an empathetic manner is a central theme for advisors. The majority (89.4%,  $n = 17$ ) of participants reported being able to relate and/or expressed empathy for undocumented students. All 12 advisors who discussed policy rejection or policy

disagreement also reported being able to relate and/or have empathy. About a third (31.2%,  $n = 5$ ) of respondents also disclosed having autonomy in their role.

In the analysis of interviews, it was evident that participants who mentioned being able to relate to undocumented students made it very clear they can never truly know what it must be like to be an undocumented student. This point is captured here and reflective of most of the interviews regarding this finding.

I think being scared and feeling anxious about the cost of college is similar, that was always just such a big scary thing to me. I can relate in a tiny way, but I'll never know what it feels like to not have access to some of the resources that I had. I was born about 200 miles from a border and things could have been very different, you know, just understanding all of the privileges and benefits that I take for granted every day and understanding what those give to me versus someone who doesn't have those, and so I think again, I'll never be able know but, I try to keep that in mind when I'm working with undocumented students. (057C1)

Another advisor shared:

I think we relate especially if they're one of the students within our programs, I can relate to them coming as a first-generation college student. I can relate if they're coming from a lower socioeconomic background, I can relate to that. I cannot relate to what it must feel like to be called illegal, or even, not everyone is comfortable with the phrase undocumented, so I cannot, I can empathize, and that's what I do my best to offer, just from my own various kinds of experiences of feeling marginalized or feeling less than. So I think that it's through that empathy that I can relate to them. But I will never pretend that I know what they're experiencing. I pray that it's positive when they're here [referencing specific advising unit]. And I think our objective here, my objective when working with a student, advising a student, is just to let them know we believe in them and we support them, and that we're going to do everything in our power to continue to support them. (077C3)

This finding is aligned with existing research (Franklin, 1985; Paviour, 1988; Stone, 1981; Tripi, 1984; Vail, 1970; Weimann, 1982). Empathy among advisors is also underlined by emotional labor theory. According to emotional labor theory, sensitivity to the emotions of others is a significant component of jobs requiring face-to-face client interaction (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Guy et al., 2008; Morris and Feldman 1996).



## Desire to Do More

Intention is the precursor of action in most cases, which is why this study created a line of separation between the desire to do more, treated here, and going beyond simple duty. A total of 15 (78.9%) participants discussed wanting to do more to support and/or assist the students they advise, which included undocumented students. Thirty-three percent ( $n = 5$ ) of participants who expressed wanting to do more for students were also the same advisors who reported a lack of autonomy or having no autonomy in their role. These five advisors had similar responses in that they abided by policy and process, but they often felt they were not provided enough information or fell short in providing quality advising to undocumented students. One advisor discussed thoughts on inability to adequately address the realities of undocumented students especially during the period of transition in U.S. Presidential Administration from Obama to Trump as follows:

I noticed a lot of anxiety and fear after the election. I try not to cross the line or anything like that as far as what advice I'm giving them, but I don't know. I feel like people also say, oh have them go seek counseling, have them go to the counseling office, refer them, it's like, I want to do more for the student and I want to say more to help them if I feel it's necessary. I don't know. I just wish I could like follow up more, I guess with that student instead of just saying oh, did you go to counseling? How was it, did it help you? I want to continue the conversation and the counselors could understand why they don't [go to counseling]. But just more information on how they [university counselors] addressed the issue with the student and what I can do to help because I feel like that's very limited. And especially with undocumented students, like those fears that they're talking about, the student can be telling me, oh I'm fearful of getting deported or fear of having their family deported. (061C1)

While the desire to accomplish more was primarily reflective of personal feelings of limited information and/or resources, one advisor referred to the external role of the institution and its ability to address feelings of wanting to do more. The participant stated, "We need to do

more research as a university or as a community [regarding undocumented students], like let's talk to students now. There's definitely an opportunity there (O59C1)". Another participant said:

I have thought to myself, why don't I do more, what can I do that's more, how can I make a difference. These things that I do, they might make a small difference that isn't noticeable necessarily to a lot of people, but I'm beginning to wonder, am I needed in a different way in the world. There's so much going on that they shouldn't be dealing with and how can I be a part of the movement that stops it from happening. So I question that, but then, I get caught up on time. There's only so much that any one person can do so I do my job and I make the difference that I can for the students that I interact with. (055C1)

### **Beyond Duties and Responsibilities**

Going above and beyond the call of duty is a strong motivation for divergent behavior. Several (68.4%,  $n = 13$ ) participants discussed going beyond their position duties and responsibilities when advising students, which included undocumented students. All 13 advisors detailed how they provide information and resources beyond the initial student inquiry or question. Many advisors even provided some explanation as to why they were able to do more or felt the need to go beyond standard advising. As this participant explained:

We do more than our official advising centers here on campus, we want to make sure the other things in their lives are ok. Again we have smaller caseloads, so I recognize that. We have privilege to some degree to be able to do that. (079C3)

The participants who reported going beyond duties and responsibilities primarily discussed having conversations with students regarding post-graduation goals or career paths, as the systems and/or offices in place provided generalized services. Many discussed the need to go further concerning future goals such as career and/or graduate schools because oftentimes the student major would be the starting point for this conversation. One advisor captured this reported experience when reflecting on a response provided to a student seeking information about an internship. The advisor explained why directing the student to the Career Services Office is not enough or at the very least should not be the only response:

If you really want an internship, you should also [in addition to visit to Career Services] be networking with your professors. Have you talked to any of your professors yet? Especially in this college working with a lot of art design majors, a lot of them have portfolios. Our University Career Services office is not going to be well equipped to evaluate a visual arts or design portfolio whereas the faculty are, so reminding that student, you need to include your faculty in looking at your portfolio. That's an important part of getting ready for an interview for an internship, [because] where else would they find that resource or that service. (056C1)

A few advisors discussed the need to relate to their students when they were able to assess that their students were having struggles and challenges outside the scope of academics and college life. They often used the phrase "*I step outside or out of my role*" and phrases similar to "*I just have a real conversation*". One participant provided details of a conversation with a student regarding his disclosure about his past negative behaviors and trying to reconcile that with his religion:

He looked at me and he said, are you Catholic? And I said yes I am. I was wearing a crucifix. He said, well, I used to be too. I said, well, you know, what they say, once a Catholic, you're always a Catholic. You can go and come but you're always going to be a Catholic. And then I said, fine, now I'm going to step out of this academic advising role, I'm going to talk to you a little bit differently. I'm going to talk to you the way I would talk to my kid. I have a son who is about your age, I said, and if he came to me and told me that he was involved in things that he shouldn't have been, and I guess you're telling me because maybe you're wanting to get something off your chest, I said, as a former Catholic, maybe you need to go to confession, maybe you need reconciliation on a spiritual level before you can actually move beyond that. (069C2)

Human service workers who go beyond the scope of their role (and/or even outside the purview of academics) are most likely to provide the greatest benefits to clients (Cole & Pilisuk, 1981; Danet, 1973; Stone, 1981; Vail, 1970).

### **Being Proactive or Anticipating Student Needs**

Albeit not all, many academic advisors think it is important to anticipate what students may need in the future as part of their advisory practice. A little less than half (47.3%,  $n = 9$ ) of participants discussed displaying proactive behavior or specifically mentioned being proactive

and/or being able to anticipate student needs. It was common to hear about the importance of helping students to see the big picture or end goal. One advisor spoke about this practice, “I think [our department] does a good job or trying to be proactive and progressive and do things that other schools aren’t doing and especially in terms of thinking beyond freshman year, I think we’re really good at that. And that’s something that’s important to me (057C1).” Another described this proactive approach to being “like preventative medicine” (079C3). Participants all discussed the need for students to visit with them outside of course registration and when problem arose.

There was also a degree of discussion about their ability to recognize that students sometimes have difficulty successfully maneuvering their way through college. Sometimes students just do not know what they do not know. This participant captures the general voice among advisors who expressed their reasoning for going beyond the immediacy of a student concern or inquiry here:

So I think students don’t feel like they know what’s coming, I guess. For example, student comes in and they want to transfer to a specific major but I know what all the processes are and that I have the information. I can help anticipate what’s going to happen. And then also I’m able to make appropriate referrals, anticipate this might be a bit of an issue, I can’t personally help you with that but here’s the exact place that you need to go that will be able to help you. I don’t enable them in any way, but just so that they have all of the information. It just sort of seems like the university is a place that is set up in a way that they can be stressful. I think a lot of times students feel like its set up in a way that deliberately doesn’t want them to be successful and that [name of university removed] just tells them no a lot. [Name of university] does tell them no a lot, so I think removing some of those feeling in my work helps. I like to ease that stress for them. (071C2)

There was no literature identified on the relationship between employee’s proactive behaviors and discretionary or divergent behavior. Yet, the literature did reveal a relationship between employee proactivity and job autonomy (Giebels, De Reuver, Rispens, & Ufkes, 2016), which increases the opportunities for divergence. In this context, job autonomy refers to the

degree to which the task provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). A high level of job autonomy allows employees to decide how to perform their work (Troyer, Mueller, & Osinsky, 2000) and has been found to be an important predictor of proactive outcomes. In this study, the majority (88.8%,  $n = 8$ ) of participants who expressed being proactive and/or addressing student concerns beyond the initial inquiry also reported having autonomy in their role, supporting the existing literature (Giebels, De Reuver, Rispens, & Ufkes, 2016; Troyer, Mueller, & Osinsky, 2000).

### **Disposition of Advisor and Student**

In addition to factors related to the background, moral convictions, and professional ethics of the advisors, the study considered the dispositions of the advisors and students as a factor influencing discretionary behavior. Slightly less than a third (31.5%,  $n = 6$ ) of participants explained that the disposition or perceived mood/attitude of their students or their own disposition affected the academic advising sessions in some way, even if minimally. As one advisor explained, “I mean, I feel like their [the student’s] attitude definitely does impact [the advising session], but to what level I’m not sure” (073C2). As noted, research points to the importance of client (i.e., student) attributes in influencing decision outcomes in human service organizations (Franklin, 1985; Paviour, 1988; Stone, 1981; Tripi, 1984; Vail, 1970; Weimann, 1982). Goodsell (1980) found that clients who exhibited greater levels of need tended to receive proportionally greater benefits. This study supports earlier research (Franklin, 1985; Goodsell, 1980; Paviour, 1988; Stone, 1981; Tripi, 1984; Vail, 1970; Weimann, 1982) in this area. All six participants, who thought that students’ disposition impacts the advising, reported spending more time with students, and/or immediately scheduling a follow-up visit, based on their assessment of

student need or a student's self-reported concerns/questions. One advisor detailed their general conversation with students when she observed behavior that is abnormal compared to past meetings:

I will point out to them what I see, by saying, what I see right now is you doing this or looking like this and to me that's telling me there's something going on, and that tells me that you're concerned about something. That tells me that you're worried, that tells me that your anxiety levels are high. What's going on and how can I help? I'm here to help you, let's see what we can do. And almost always when they're able to tell me what's going on, I'm able to tell them, you're normal. Then they lean back and their shoulders kind of come down and go, ohhhh, I'm normal, okay. Then we're able to get into what they need and many times I need to schedule a follow-up because I didn't get a chance to go over the academic stuff. (055C1)

The decisions that workers make regarding their clients and the relationships between workers and clients are the concrete manifestation of the policy process. Frontline workers are able to assist, subvert, or sabotage the policy implementation process by shaping the actual experience of clients and, therefore, by determining policy outcomes (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2000; Meyers, Glaser, & MacDonald, 1998). In one reported experience, an advisor's negative disposition left an undocumented student feeling as though his undocumented status was cause for receiving undesirable treatment. The advisor did not realize how her disposition, which resulted from her temporary office displacement and trouble with technology, impacted the advising appointment until her colleague informed her of how the student felt. This advisor quickly scheduled a follow-up appointment with the student. The following details are an account of what happened next. The advisor described the conversation here:

He [the student] was really glad that he was able to meet with me because some people he interacts with just don't want to work with him because he's undocumented. He had thought that was me and that was the impression that I gave him. I was crushed. I was totally crushed by that. I was like that's not it at all. He was like, I know that now, but I didn't before. I was totally crushed and that was his first impression. That was our first meeting ever, and now I have to work with this student for two more years and he thinks that I just don't support him or like him as a person. I don't even know him. So I was completely crushed and kind of felt like, well, how is this going to ever become a positive

relationship. So I've always been sensitive to that since I've worked with him in the past. I think we now have a really good relationship, he says thank you and thanks me for giving him advice and guidance. But I was, I was completely crushed in that scenario, I have found to all students your disposition really does matter. We all have our bad days, but that was a bad one for me and then it got worse. (071C2)

The experience of this undocumented student, who was meeting with his advisor as a requirement of a university program for high academic performers, was shaped by the bad mood of the advisor at the time.

This finding and similar reported accounts regarding disposition support existing research (Franklin, 1985; Paviour, 1988; Stone, 1981; Tripi, 1984; Vail, 1970; Weimann, 1982). Advisor disposition or perceived mood/attitude of their student's impact academic advising sessions and in some cases the intended advising process. Therefore, this finding opens the door to potentially altering the intended student experiences/outcomes of this program, which proves an opportunity for changes in policy. For example, one participant shared with me that advisors are encouraged to cancel appointments or seek coverage from other advisors if they thought they were unable to perform duties as they should as the result of any number of circumstances. These circumstances may include, but not limited to, receiving particularly upsetting news prior to an appointment.

### **Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior Regarding Street-Level Divergence**

Recall that RQ1c is "In what ways is street-level divergence influencing the discretionary behavior of academic advisors, if at all?" Participants identified four factors known to shape street-level divergence. As indicated in Table 9, these factors include policy, professional development inequity, volunteer training, and the promotion of diversity and inclusion.

It is important to recall that street-level divergence occurs when the behavior of front-line workers is inconsistent with established organizational policy and policy principles (Gofen,

2013). O’Leary (2010) noted that policy divergence is complex and challenging, as it relates to “what it means to act responsibly, ethically, and with integrity as a public servant” (p. 8). Public servants, such as academic advisors working for public institutions of higher learning, are compelled to reconcile at times contradictory ethical obligations in general (Waldo, 1988). Street-level bureaucrats are consistently involved in ethical decision making and respond to guidelines as reflected in stated policy, organizational directives, and legislative requirements (at state and federal levels) from a position of moral autonomy (Carey & Foster, 2011; Hutchinson, 1990). In fact, they are often required to weigh and decide between competing moral principles within the context of mutually exclusive courses of action (Kaptein & van Reenen, 2001). Hence street-level divergence which follows an ethical decision refers to rights, responsibilities, and obligations which have a moral and value-based foundation (Banks, 2001).

Table 9

*Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Factors Known to Shape Street-Level Divergence*

Street-level divergence	Dominant codes	%	Example quote
Bounded rationality	Policy	84	“I love policy. I love being able to help a student out through policy, and knowing what the exceptions to those policies may or may not be as well, and helping students work with that. That’s the puzzle piece of advising. It’s putting all of that all together.”
Perception/knowledge of others	Professional development inequity	47	“I would say that we have resources available but there’s not as an entire huge university effort where say once a month every new staff member is going to come for this training. You know, it’s not mandated across the board, it’s definitely an opt-in ad hoc thing.”
Personal experiences and attributes of provider	Voluntary or optional training	95	“Recently I went through volunteer training, it’s called [removed name of program], which provides training opportunities and how to identify, work with, how to encourage and support undocumented students and they give you a little placard that you can put in your office.”
	Diversity appreciation	53	“I was invited to the faculty council sub-committee that deals with student retention and persistence, and just because of the climate of this campus, there were



concerns, actually a lot of concerns about undocumented students and a lot of the faculty didn't understand the concerns or what to do. But they were very supportive and they wanted to learn more. And they basically changed their statement on what the committee does to be more inclusive of undocumented students here on campus.”

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## **Policy**

This study identified several factors that create or act as opportunities for discretionary behavior of public servants. Among these, the great majority (84.2%,  $n = 16$ ) of participants mentioned or discussed policy. The findings showed that most of the work of respondents involved general policy education and interpretation for students. A number of advisors spoke about the gray areas of policy:

Things don't always fit into the policy that's written. Sometimes there's gray or needs to be a gray area. Everybody has their own background and their own story and sometimes that just doesn't fit into the rules and regulations that we've laid out. (068C2)

At the same time, others described having to interpret policy:

I'm doing the best job I can do when there's a process or policy that can be confusing and cumbersome to navigate, especially for students who are first-generation, who are not native English speakers, who you know, have basically no familiarity with dealing with a bureaucracy like this and no one in their family really has any experience doing that. I'm the person that makes sense of all of it for all students. It's rewarding. (071C2)

As expected, much of the policy discussion concerned policies specific to undocumented students. Interviews detailed how participants interpreted and implemented policies in their roles, or even created practice and procedure when there was none. One participant explained his experience trying to find resources and education regarding undocumented students at his university. He found none, so with the help of another colleague they educated themselves and developed an undocumented student program for faculty and staff, which is still active today.

An excerpt from his interview is below:

I received nothing from the institution and that's why I created something. So in [year removed] I cofounded a training on undocumented students called [name of program and university removed]. Basically this training, focused on how we develop conscious awareness training, anxiety reduction among practitioners, education around policy, and best practices, to address academic, financial and emotional needs of students, all this stuff. For undocumented students there was no education around policy best practices, to address academic, financial and emotional needs of students, all this stuff. Like me and a peer and then also a larger kind of group, we all created this program. (059C1)

To continue, much of the undocumented discussions focused primarily on participation in programs dedicated to studying abroad, which utilized state or federal funding for specific populations such as first-generation, and discussing the Family Education Rights Privacy Act<sup>28</sup> (FERPA) as it relates to reporting student's undocumented status. Recently, there has been a great degree of concern across all three campuses regarding the travel of students, even if they had DACA status. To provide some background for this situation, some programs required study abroad and other units highly encouraged global education experiences, which often includes study abroad. The comments consisted of changing communication plans to informing students of risk, while others spoke about requesting exemptions to program requirement. There were shared concerns about student's ability to re-enter the U.S. once they leave for a study abroad.

Program funding and appropriate allocation were commonly mentioned among participants who advised programs to support subpopulations of students. All the programs discussed by participants had partial or full external funding sources ranging from private donations, state funding, and/or government funds. Sometimes advisors were unsure about how to respond to undocumented students who either applied or inquired about program participation. There was no existing policy that declared their exclusion according to any of the programs discussed. However, there was angst and uncertainty about participation of undocumented

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<sup>28</sup> The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

students in programs using federal or state funding. A number of participants shared their conversations with undocumented students, in which they encouraged program participation when an alternative source of funding was available.

A common area of uncertainty was about reporting the status of undocumented students to government entities or non-university persons. One institution described an incident where several flyers were posted throughout campus which read, “It’s your civic duty to report undocumented students.” The undocumented status of any student is part of their student record and thus protected under FERPA, but there was campus uncertainty and a lack of knowledge in this area. Participants were well aware of the guidelines of FERPA, as it is part of their general knowledge as advisors, but many were uncertain if other faculty and staff understood or were aware of FERPA requirements regarding undocumented students.

The findings described above support those reported in the existing literature (Brodkin, 2003; Lipsky, 1980, 2010; Majone & Wildavsky, 1978). Street-level divergence is often considered inevitable in the implementation of policy (Majone & Wildavsky, 1978) because of its ambiguity and vagueness (Brodkin, 2003; Lipsky, 1980, 2010). More generally, street-level divergence is considered inevitable following bounded rationality (Simon, 1947), which suggests that there exists a bounded ability to make rational decisions related to the inevitable incompleteness of relevant knowledge (Jones, 2003), as was noted by the participants in this study. As noted by this participant, “the policy isn’t just the policy, we can make adjustments in good faith” (060C1).

### **Professional Development Inequity**

Professional development affects discretionary behavior. Professional development ensures employees are competent and current with best-practices, policies, and procedures. It is

intended to increase knowledge, skill set, an understanding and scope of position. Arguably, employees who are competent with a thorough understanding of their role are more likely to participate in divergence when deemed necessary. As such, discretionary behavior might be affected by inequities in chances for professional development. Slightly less than half (47.3%,  $n = 9$ ) of all participants discussed the differences they personally experienced or observed regarding professional development opportunities and participation within their respective universities. This finding is reflective of the literature (Keiser, 2010) on factors known to shape street-level divergence, as this describes participant perceptions and knowledge of other front-line workers. Keiser (2010), explains how the perceptions and knowledge of others within the network of front-line employees provides opportunities for divergence.

Participants believed there was inequity in professional development among advisors and other comparable employee positions on their campuses. This occurrence was found to be true in each of the three research sites. The study revealed the same reported reasons for inequity in professional development: communication, manager support or encouragement in terms of utilizing personal time versus work approved time, or differences in advising priorities. Participants reported inconsistent communication regarding opportunities for training, webinars, workshops and so on within their unit/department and within the university. The analysis of the data revealed that some participants seemed to be more knowledgeable about professional development opportunities compared to others, even on the same campus. This discrepancy is explained by a participant as follows:

I just recently learned that there's an Academic Advising Group called [name removed]. I just learned about them and I had my two year anniversary in December, so nobody tells you, well, at least for me, nobody tells me these are all the groups you can find on campus that will help you. (061C2)

As mentioned, some managers require advisors to use their lunch or their “own” time to participate in professional development activities, as described by the following account:

In other offices it would be, well, if you want to do that, that’s during your lunch time. Other offices are different. Nobody is against it but they might say to you, well, that’s your own professional growth, so on your own time. Whereas my office says well, your professional growth is going to benefit your work time so that’s a work time event. (055C1)

The final reason discussed for the imbalance in professional development was due to the differences in advising priorities and/or advising focus areas within departments/units on their respective campuses, as one participant explained:

I would say that as an institution as a whole, we do not have a singular advising training plan, we don’t have a singular advising philosophy for every unit, because it’s open to each unit or college to formulate how they’re going to decide how they want to advise their students. So I can say based on our college, some of our advisors focus on the prescriptive advising. Some people are more interested in professional development and so they engage with our university’s professional organization as well. Like I mentioned, go to some of the NACADA telecasts and things. So in some ways, some of us individually are very engaged. Other people are less exposed. (056C1).

### **Voluntary or Optional Training**

All (100.00%,  $n = 19$ ) of the study participants took part in voluntary training and/or professional development opportunities to better support a range of varied populations such as LGBTQ students, veterans, students with disabilities and so on. All but one advisor in the study participated in campus training to specifically increase knowledge about the undocumented student population.

Lipsky (1980) allows one to draw a comparison on this finding as it relates to efficiency and specialization of street-level bureaucrats. Based on his work, it is plausible to draw a connection between an increased efficiency in advising special populations with students as advisors become more specialized to adequately advise special populations of students. Whereas

advisors once lacked information and knowledge they now are able to adequately perform their duties with new knowledge (i.e., specialization) of student subpopulations.

Specialization solves problems for workers as well as for their organizations. In particular, specialization permits street-level bureaucrats to reduce the strain that would otherwise complicate their work situation (Lipsky, 2010, p. 146).

The literature on street-level bureaucracy (Evans, 2011) also supports the possibility that advisors may decrease workload tensions stemming from ambiguity and uncertainty regarding the advising of undocumented students and other underrepresented/unique populations of students. As advisors increase their knowledge and specialization they become increasingly able to meet the needs of students and decrease workload tensions that typically exist in front-line work. The following quote illustrates the use of discretion in seeking out training opportunities:

I think being educated on things is important. We work in education so I think that [education] should be important for all of us. I'm a huge advocate of doing trainings on campus, they're free, and they're easy. I mean it just helps. You just walk over to another building. When I first started here, I would just e-mail my supervisor and be like, hey, can I go to this, hey, can I go to that? One of the things was the undocumented class so I always try and send it out to my staff and to other people that I know to be like, hey, I don't know if you saw this e-mail. I'm going to this, wish you'd come, we can meet up and walk together. (070C2)

## **Diversity Appreciation**

The appreciation of diversity was a motive for favorable discretionary behavior of advisors toward students. Slightly more than half (52.6%,  $n = 10$ ) of all participants spoke about their appreciation for diversity and/or expressed the importance of having a diverse campus, particularly with respect to having undocumented students at their university. Diversity was discussed in relation to undocumented students but the conversations also included many diverse populations such as veterans, students with disabilities, and the LGBTQ populations, for example. This participant captures the voice of several interviews on diversity here:

I have a responsibility to understand religious diversity, to understand the impacts of laws and legislation, to understand health, students with disabilities, to understand students of color, to understand first generation and low income and how low income impacts. I have a sense of responsibility not just because it's the right thing to do. I mean it is the right thing to do, but I think, morally too. I think it is number one. (059C1)

In addition, much of the discussion concerned the importance of being in an environment that also shared their perspectives on diversity. As described below:

I think culture is a major part of life and experiencing different cultures. I grew up in New Mexico so I was exposed to a few different things, I guess, as a child so I think that kind of gave me an opportunity to see different things, and be around different things, and so I think that's always been really important to me to be in environments that supports that. Not sure I'd be here [working at this university] if things were different. (057C1)

As a finding, the appreciation for diversity as a factor of discretionary behavior is not supported in the literature, per se. Nonetheless, an appreciation for diversity is arguably a personal value. Personal values do indeed play a role in divergence (Sabatier, Loomis, & McCarthy, 1995; Whitford, 2002). Kaufman (1960) also highlighted the importance of employee values and preferences as being an indicator of how administrators interact with their client-citizens.

Workplace diversity has continued to be a central issue within public policy because of its association with issues of communication, group cohesion, turnover, job satisfaction, conflict, segregation, cooperation, and creativity (Rhys, Boyne, & Walker, 2006). Each of these noted factors are important factors affecting organizational performance and known to influence street-level discretionary behavior. Additionally, diversity is believed to positively influence organizational outcomes, such as innovation and effectiveness, by enhancing an organization's capacity for creative problem-solving and decision-making (Mannix & Neale, 2005; Thomas & Ely, 1996; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998).

## Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior Regarding Acts of Leadership

Participants identified four factors that influence discretionary behavior identified in the leadership model applicable to street-level workers. As indicated in Table 10, these factors include student advocacy, a belief in fairness, the empowerment of students, and providing care to students beyond the scope of academics.

Vinzant and Crothers (1996) argued that leadership provides a workable theoretical basis for integrating the notions of discretion, legitimacy, and accountability into a model of street-level public service within the context of situational leadership and value-based models, which are “particularly powerful to analyzing and evaluating bureaucratic discretion” (p. 473). They provide several reasons regarding why leadership theories, which are typically associated with individuals who occupy top positions in organizations, could in fact be the basis for an appropriate and useful theoretical framework to analyze the work of street-level bureaucrats. Utilizing a leadership framework makes the argument that advisors displaying discretionary behavior may act to inspire and empower fellow advisors and/or seek to accomplish their own goals for the greater good of the public.

Table 10

### *Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Acts of Leadership*

Acts of leadership	Dominant codes	%	Example quote
Value based model	Advocate for students	58	“I think I sort of said this, but I want students to feel like I am an advocate for them.”
	Fairness and Justice	37	“I want to make sure that I'm treating people equally and fairly.”
Situational	Empower students	32	“Sometimes it just seems like they [the students] don't get they have the power to really impact change, especially on this campus. If they just come together around issues that impact them. I do what I can to point that out to let them you know, they really can change things sometimes.”



Greater good	Care and concern beyond academics	84 “We're here because of them, so let's support them, but also on a personal note, like I said my family has been impacted by immigration laws, my students are being impacted, and I care about my students, I really do.”
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## Advocate for Students

Student advocacy has been isolated as one of the leadership traits that are part of favorable discretionary behavior. The majority (57.8%,  $n = 11$ ) of participants spoke about their advocacy for students or their ability to advocate on behalf of students. The participants that advocated for students were also more likely to have divergent perspectives, which may or may not result in divergent action. Their leadership action included manager notification of issues, the notification of issues to other university employees, and/or consultation with colleagues to advocate on behalf of students. As one participant said, “I will advocate for my students until the very end, even if I don't like the answer, I'll still go and advocate, maybe go to the next level” (058C1). Advocacy conversations encompassed a general student advocacy perspective for students enrolled at their respective campuses. Each of the interviews regarding advocacy were very similar. The overall sentiment is captured here:

I think my whole philosophy is I want students to leave my office feeling better than when they came in. And so whether that means, you know, just listening to them if they're have a crisis or being able to work with them to solve a problem that they have or making a phone call to another department to help them get the answers that they need. They want to know you have their back, to know that you're willing to push if it will help. It's not easy work but I love it and will continue to do what I can to advocate and help students. (059C1)

Advocacy is the "pursuit of influencing outcomes including public policy...that directly affect people's lives" (Cohen, Vega, & Watson, 2001, p. 8). In support of the study, advocacy efforts might include challenging the status quo, raising critical issues, asking others to act and do something that can help create positive change, and actively engaging other stakeholders in advocacy projects (Cohen, et al., 2001).

The advising literature (Campbell, 2002; Nguyen, 2015) provides support and insight into the advocacy of participants in the study. As Frank (2000) explained, institutions hire advisors with the expectation that they will be consistent, fair, and equitable in their dealings with students. Academic advisors may be called on to play the role of student advocate. There has been a call to advisors to be change agents on their campuses (Campbell, 2002; Nguyen, 2015) and advocate on behalf of students. When advisors advocate for students, it is important to look for opportunities to propose solutions. In short, advisors need to step up, inform leaders, and build lasting partnerships that will benefit all students (Nguyen, 2015).

### **Fairness and Justice**

Fairness is another important moral concept showing up in the leadership inclinations of advisors. More than a third (36.8%,  $n = 7$ ) of all participants discussed their personal perspectives on fairness and justice as it pertained to how they think, operate, and/or act in their role with students, to include undocumented students. Collectively, participants stressed the importance of their viewpoint within the context of their profession and its extension to life outside of the university. This participant's statement describes this occurrence here:

You know, I've been on the other side of things where I've gone into a store and I've been followed around and I've been spoken to harshly when the customer in front of me was spoken to with a smile and I think all those experiences and how they make me feel, and I tell myself, you know, it's the same goal to treat others the way you want to be treated. And that's a big part of me, treating everybody fairly because it was instilled to me at home, and I come from a very Mexican, Roman Catholic family and my father always said, treat others with respect, and be friendly, act amicably and sincerely. (076C3)

It was common among participants to speak about their evolved perspectives on fairness and justice. They each spoke about their current perspectives within a timeline of sorts, which directly related to their personal experiences regarding fairness and justice as essential, or at the very least, worth mentioning during their interview as described here:

I used to have a certain model in my head of what is fairness and I wanted to be fair to every single student. I think of that now as a little immature. It's the same idea as when you're a kid and your sister gets three red candies and now you want three red candies. And one of them better not be blue because she got red and I want red. And that used to be kind of my mentality, you know? Everyone gets the same three red candies when they come in for advising. And over time, I've really kind of gone away from that because working with different students, this student doesn't need any candy, this student needs asparagus. (068C2)

Participants who acknowledged the importance of fairness and/or doing what was right were also more likely to discuss policy rejection and/or divergent behavior. As noted by the participant below:

I mean, again, I think I'm a person where I hate seeing injustice and so I would say my natural inclination is to want to fight for what is right, even if it means I might have to get in trouble, or if I contacted someone I shouldn't have contacted. For me, I was always taught that you stand up for the underdog, you know, and I've always been told to stand up for what is right. I believe that something is right and a student is not being serviced correctly, I want to do everything in my power that I can to correct it. (058C1)

Street-level bureaucrats define their work not in terms of policy and rules but rather in terms of relationships with their clients, and thus their personal commitments to clients (or, as is the case here, the advisors' commitment to student fairness and justice) may lead to a decision to act divergently (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003).

Additionally, the theory of organizational justice offers support in understanding this finding as well. Organizational justice (Greenberg, 1987), provides a theory explaining variance in employee behaviors and attitudes (Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2005; Greenberg, 1990). Organizational justice provides a viable theoretical approach to an understanding of how perceptions of fairness within an organization are formed and how these perceptions affect employee behaviors and attitudes. Although the research on organizational justice does not primarily focus on the fairness and justice of front-line workers' perceptions of client-citizens fairness, there is applicability for the findings. Organizational justice is most often expressed as

consisting of three separate but interactive and interrelated concepts: distributive, procedural, and interactional justice, which is sometimes broken into distinct components of interpersonal and informational justice (Cohen-Charach & Spector, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001, 2005; Cropanzano, Bowen, & Gilliland, 2007).

The findings regarding fairness and justice are also supported by previous research (Frederickson; 2010; Gooden, 2010; Johnson & Svara, 2011) on social equity within public administration. Research in the area of social equity discussed the need for individuals to “attack disparity and advance equity for people in groups that have been, or in the future might be, subject to treatment that is inferior, prejudicial, or hostile” (Johnson & Svara, 2011, p. 281). Gooden (2010) expressed the need to stop the cycle of *ready, aim, study more* and suggested *ready, aim, fire* emphasizing the lack of action to impart change. Frederickson (2010) recommended individuals “walk the social equity talk” (p. 80) and suggested less reliance on social equity occurring as a result of government’s role.

### **Empowerment of Students**

A natural topic in leadership, empowerment has been discussed here as a component of advisor behavior toward students. Slightly less than a third (31.5%,  $n = 6$ ) of study participants discussed or mentioned providing information, support, and encouragement to students with the intention or desire to positively impact how students feel about themselves, their circumstances, and/or their ability to make appropriate choices. In this framework, advisors provide students with the tools necessary to accomplish their short and long term goals, overcome challenges, as well as maneuver the bureaucracy of higher education. Participants primarily detailed how they educate students to enable them to make autonomous decisions, meet goals, and aid students in understanding their choices. In the Hersey and Blanchard (1988) leadership model, leaders

provide a level of guidance, direction, and support necessary to empower the individual or group to achieve a goal. In support of Hersey and Blanchard (1988), one advisor described how her leadership philosophy aided in the empowerment of students.

I have a leadership philosophy that I like to implement working with students. That's really building up the people that you work with or supervise but in terms of advising, I don't like to tell students what to do or what to believe in or what to choose. I like to give them like the personal autonomy, the right to choose, and really empower them to really make decisions on the curved paths, but then again, I like to give them information that they need so when they do choose, they can make the right decision, the right decision that's best for them, and not what I think is the right decision. (072C3)

Additional literature (Zimmerman, 1995) on empowerment theory also lends some perspective on this finding. Zimmerman (1995) proposed the conceptualization of empowerment at the individual level as psychological empowerment, comprised of intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral components. Within this framework, the first construct, intrapersonal component, includes perceived control, self-efficacy, competence, and mastery. The second construct, interactional component, includes critical awareness, skill development, and resource mobilization. The third construct is the behavioral component: community involvement, organizational participation, and coping behaviors (Zimmerman, 1995). The reports of participants in the study align with intrapersonal and interactional components of Zimmerman's theory on empowerment. One advisor explained an approach applicable to interactional empowerment theory here:

I guess the best way that I see myself doing that is by letting students know they can make choices that they might feel like they don't have a choice about. So in the sense of "I have to do XYZ." I'm like, well, you don't have to do that. You could stay in bed all day. That example might sound silly, but that's literally one that I use a lot to remind them like, you chose to get out of bed, you chose to show up to this class, you chose to, you know, blah, blah, blah, and I get that sometimes you might not feel like it was a choice, I say there are days I wake up, I would love to choose to stay at home, but I also like to choose to pay my mortgage. So we all have to make choices. So yes, I come in every day, and actually I love my job so, I sometimes make it out like it's a chore to emphasize the point but I actually love coming in every day. But to them I try to use it as

the illustration or as the parallel to their life. Yeah, classes suck. Yeah, they sure do, but you're choosing to do it because your other choices you prefer less. So I guess that's the best way I can empower them to really understand, you are making this choice, you might feel like it's forced, you might feel like you have to, but that's not true because when you feel like you have to do something, then you're powerless. (057C1)

Of note, participants who mentioned empowering students were more likely to report lack of autonomy in their role. However, none of the reviewed research and scholarly literature was able to explain this occurrence.

### **Care and Concern Beyond Academics**

This study has considered care toward students as part of the leadership of advisors. The vast majority (84.2%,  $n = 16$ ) of participants openly discussed their affection, concern, and/or care of students beyond their academic performance. Advisors, like other identified public front-line workers, have administrative concerns working within the context of public administration governed by hierarchy and rules (Katz & Danet, 1973; Wilson, 1970). Advisors handle student concerns by embodying the values of caring, commitment to human needs, and trust (Evans 2014; Hasenfeld 1992; Lipsky, 1980). This discussion reflected upon the greater good this level of care provided. Arguably, there is a benefit to the university as the affection and care spent with students helps to increase student connectedness and engagement, which in turn promotes persistence and timely graduation. It was noted often that the care and concern provided beyond academics contributes to the greater society as well, as engaged students will presumably assume many roles within their communities and the society at large. As noted in this excerpt:

I take time to talk about other things. I always strive to help students connect to public good, so helping them, I guess develop critical consciousness. How do they view themselves, and how the world impacts them, and then how they impact the world with the decisions they make? I get at the thoughts that they have and the feelings that they carry, if that makes sense. (059C1)

The research of Barnes and Austin (2008) on perspectives advisors hold in their roles found that they take on a supportive and caring role. Lynch and Baker (2005) highlighted the importance of promoting love, care, and solidarity when working with students. One participant explained how she conveys her concern and care through questions about personal aspects of her students' lives below:

I'm a very relational person so I like to ask, hey, how was your spring break, or last time we talked your mom was in the hospital, like how is she doing now? I always like to have that personal touch with students and still again professionally and you don't pry any further than a student is willing to give, but me personally, because I'm a relational person, I can't just say like here's your classes, bye, see you later. (058C1)

Furthermore, Noddings (2005) suggested that ethic of care is "future-oriented. Its work begins where an ethic of justice often ends" (p. 147). Student affairs professionals who work to meet students' individual needs are conscious of teaching and helping students to grow emotionally. According to Noddings (2005), satisfying individual needs and interests is critical because "our interests instigate and help us form purposes" (p. 157). Lynch and Baker (2005) also urged institutions to create space or policies that allow the expression of emotions and feelings from students and staff. The great majority of participants identify with the literature (Barnes & Austin, 2008; Lynch & Baker, 2005; Noddings, 2005) on care and concern, supporting the previously noted literature.

### **Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Institutional Logic**

By way of a reminder: RQ1e is "How does institutional logic guide or influence the behavior and perspectives of academic advisors, if at all?" Participants identified five factors within institutional logic known to influence opportunities for discretionary behavior among street-level workers. These factors include: president messaging, support for a professional advising model, participation in NACADA membership or abiding by NACADA guidelines,

being accountable to students, and recognized shared experiences among advisors (see Table 11). Street-level bureaucrats are exposed to professional-level institutional logic through their participation in and knowledge of the organizational field and most directly through their membership in organizations in which known logic is embedded. Hence decisions, courses of action, and frontline outcomes of practice result from embedded agency, otherwise known as embedded action, which is constrained and enabled by the institutional logic structuring the organizational field and the organizations that constitute it (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

Table 11

*Opportunities for Discretionary Behavior: Institutional Logic*

<b>Institutional logic</b>	<b>Dominant codes</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Example quote</b>
Institutional position	President messaging	95	“Our university president is very committed to student success and student access. And so I know that he would do whatever he could in his power to help undocumented students but I would say it would probably be other factors outside of that that would be out of his control that could affect that.”
	Support Professional Advising Model	48	“I remember when having professional advisors was an issue with the faculty. Now they see the need. Well, most do at least. We [faculty and advisors] focus on different things and it helps students all around.”
Broader belief system	NACADA guided work and/or membership	74	“We make sure to reference NACADA when we’re looking to start a new initiative or just need some information. I know my boss likes to make sure we stay up to date with trends and stuff.”
Understanding of role	Accountability to students	100	“So I would say I definitely have a personal accountability to students.”
	Shared experiences as advisors	42	“I’m here to help people, not make negative impacts to their life.”



## **President Messaging**

The first topic under discussion was that of messages from the university president and their impact on the student community and advisors. The overwhelming majority (94.7%,  $n = 18$ ) of participants re-counted e-mails sent to the campus community from their president regarding positive support for all students and, in most cases, for undocumented students as well. Some advisors felt as though the message from their university president regarding undocumented student support should have been sent without delay after the November 2016 presidential election. Nevertheless, the overall reported university president messages described in this study was surrounding undocumented students. According to the participants, presidents wanted to ensure undocumented students felt welcomed, important, and/or recognized as part of the campus community. The general voice from all three campuses is reflected in the excerpts below:

I feel like our institution is strongly supportive of undocumented students even though in our particular state and region of the country, there's a lot of negative conversations around illegal immigrants and undocumented individuals. That said, our university's president has made it very clear in his public statements and addresses that despite whatever the political climate may be like, that is not the type of culture that we're interested in fostering. (056C1)

Institutional messages convey institutional logic, meaning they carry patterns of beliefs and rules (Lammers, 2011). Institutional messages such as those discussed in the study are: collations of thoughts that are intentional, enduring, have a wide reach, and encumber organizational participants to engage in certain behaviors or to take performative responses. It is argued that individuals and/or organizations develop institutional logic as they make sense of institutional messages. Messaging from the president sets the premise regarding what the institution will value and how members of the community should act, based on the messaging. One participant explains here:

When things happen, for instance, like the executive travel ban order and so on, we almost instantly see our university president sending out a mass e-mail in regards to our support for all students giving us guidance and inspiration. (062C2)

According to the institutional logic perspective, organizations are embedded in institutional fields from which they derive their legitimacy by adopting schemas and material practices that are dominant in the field. Participants were clear regarding their purpose and function with continued messaging from the president. The messages provided an institutional viewpoint on the topic of student success and the support of undocumented students. Moreover, the institutional message communicates the core meaning of an organization to internal and external audiences. In addition, the institutional message is understood as aligning an organization's activities and image with rules established in its environment, building upon the work in institutional theory (Lammers, 2014 & Scott, 1991).

A few conversations detailed undocumented student apprehensions concerning impediments and issues outside the university purview, such as the status of DACA, travel, and recent detainments of undocumented youth. These concerns remained despite the positive messaging from the president, such as is evidenced in the discourse of the following advisor:

Our president has done a very good job of stating that they support students of all backgrounds and life experiences but we're not able to openly say we support an undocumented student and if ICE [U.S. Immigration Customs Enforcement] approaches you, this is what you should do because we're [the university] afraid it's going to take us into a legal situation which I totally get. I totally understand. But that means that we have students who are sitting in class who do not know if they are safe if an ICE person comes into their classroom and asks. I feel like we're not taking away concerns. It can be about student success, helping student success and persistence. So if we're not even providing the acknowledgement of support and safety. How can they [undocumented students] be successful if they're just trying to make sure that they're safe and their families are safe? (068C2)

Another participant's perspective adds to this point:

Within the past 6 months and knowing what's coming with DACA or any of that, no one has really given us guidance. The e-mails that come out from the president are very

supportive of students and students having access to higher education and especially here, and providing the resources that they need to succeed. But I don't know what's going to happen with students being here legally versus illegally. (058C1)

The framework of institutional logic provides insight to address the gaps and ambiguity identified in the above excerpts from the study. Garrow and Grusky (2012) indicated that institutional logic may influence policy implementation by providing cultural and material inventories that shape workers understandings of the means and ends of their interest. Perhaps participants may find ways to support undocumented students because they take into account variables outside the scope of the university purview and participate in acts of divergence based on their understanding of undocumented student's daily challenges. The opportunities for divergence within the context of institutional logic rest on the ways messages are "interpreted and acted on" (Lammers, 2014, p. 175).

### **Professional Advising Model**

One of the opportunities for discretionary behavior offered by institutional logic is that of the professional advising model used in universities. Slightly less than half (47.3%,  $n = 9$ ) of participants discussed their past or present promotion and support for the use of an advising model that utilized professional advisors, employed 12 months of the year on campus 5 days a week, with primary responsibility for advising, instead of or in conjunction with faculty advisors to support student success. Many advisors spoke about their roles individually and collectively in the support of professional advisor positions, the creation of Advising Centers, Student Success Offices, and the like, a finding which is supported by research in the field of institutional logic (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Friedland and Alford (1991) observed that institutions have a logic that is a "set of material practices and symbolic constructions . . . which are available to organizations and individuals to elaborate" (p. 248).

The universities which participated in this study did identify the importance of the practice of academic advising and the need to hire full-time staff with relatively similar functions, structures, and materials. Each campus is reflective of unit and department professional advisors who were hired to function as full-time professional advisors in support of students. One participant shares this journey and her thoughts on the role of professional advisors in the following way:

For many years it was believed only faculty could do the advising and that's an expectation. I've been a proponent for a dual model [faculty and professional advisors] believing that our faculty are experts in the career field, they know their discipline and that's how they best can support our students, but they don't need to be tied down with trying to remember all university policies and procedures because they're here to teach and to research and to be able to share that knowledge with their students. So from my personal objective around advising is that we're here to partner with our students, to help them fulfill the goals that they've set out for themselves and if they have challenges, then our role is to assist them in that whole process. (049C3)

Thornton and Ocasio (2008) defined institutional logic as “the material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules by which individuals [and/organizations] produce and reproduce their material subsistence” (p. 101). The scope of academic advising changed to meet the needs of students and therefore the main function, the material substance, of the role evolved. Institutional logic “affect the allocation of attention to alternative schemas for perceiving, interpreting, evaluating, and responding to environmental situations . . . [by providing] a set of values that order the legitimacy, importance, and relevance of issues and solutions . . .” (Thornton & Ocasio 2008, p. 114). Academic advising was not seen as faculty work or a portion of faculty work, but rather a full-time position, which needs a particular set of skills and education. Another participant detailed the changes in academic advising, further adding to institutional logic, as a result of changing environmental situations:

I think when it comes to how folks might define basic advising and again, as a campus we're growing in that because advising on this campus for many years was very

prescriptive, it was very much, here's your curriculum, here are the courses that you need, when we communicate my goal is just to talk to you about how you stay on track. It didn't necessarily include, and it was probably only a five minute or ten minute or 15 minutes at the most, wraparound. It wasn't holistic advising unless you were in pockets of student support areas like our [name of program removed], but now in the last couple of years, every college has some. They call it their advising center, some refer to it as their student success center. (077C3)

The number of professional academic advisors on U.S. college campuses increased with the accountability era of higher education, which may likely be the result of institutional logic changes. The rise of professional academic advisors, as declared by Self (2008), is perhaps indicative to NACADA membership trends and position titles among the organization's members. Self (2008), reporting on NACADA raw data, found that members identifying as academic advisors or academic counselors (professional advisors) increased from 2,236 in 2001 to 5,207 in 2007. During the same years, members identified as faculty advisors went from 243 to 528 (117% increase). A total of 1,520 members identified as advising administrators in 2001, which increased to 2,312 in 2007 (52% increase).

### **NACADA Guided Work and/or Membership**

As a reminder, participants were asked about NACADA membership and NACADA guided work to determine if there was a sense of cohesion and a sense of common purpose and unity, which aids in guiding street-level worker's interactions as outlined in institutional logic (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). One of the main topics approached by advisors is that of NACADA, a useful tool when it comes to guiding students. Almost every person (with the exception of one participant) in the study had working knowledge of NACADA. The majority (73%,  $n = 14$ ) of participants mentioned having membership (past or present), participation in NACADA learning opportunities, utilizing the online resources, attending a conference, and

using the NACADA core values and/or NACADA principles in their work. One advisor shares her history with NACADA here:

I grew up in NACADA is what I always say. I came from an institution where I went to graduate school and had a grad assistantship in academic advising where every year they were putting forth the awards and winning most outstanding advisor and everybody read proposals and I was told NACADA is part of your job. So I grew up in NACADA. Then I came here and it was shocking to me that I was the only person and actually still am in my department that holds a NACADA membership. And that's not consistent through the whole university. There are other departments that are NACADA departments. I'm very involved and very active, I love research so I love reading publications, learning about best practices in research, and the values that NACADA is putting forward. (061C1)

Another participant provided her account and experience with NACADA, which closely resembles the overall discussion of this theme below:

Of the advising groups that I know of that have created an advising syllabus, created mission statements and things like that, I believe that one of their first resources they look at is the Guiding Principles of NACADA. The very first advising retreat that I was able to put together, there a few things that everybody had to read before we walked into it. Guess what they were, NACADA Core Values. (055C1)

Institutional logic lends support for this finding. This framework focuses on how broader belief systems, such as NACADA core values and principles, shape the cognition and behavior of advisors. Institutional theory recognizes that the organizational field, defined as those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area (NACADA training, webinars, conferences, core values, etc.) of institutional life (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), is structured by institutional logic. Institutional logic provide the symbolic constructions that guide organizational practices and desired outcomes.

### **Accountability to Students**

Accountability is one of the most important topics for institutional logic because a sense of accountability leads to increased responsibility and reliability. All (100%,  $n = 19$ ) of the participants in the study reported being accountable to students. Accountability affords advisors

the ability to consider the impact of their action or non-action pertaining to students.

Accountability is the obligation to respect the interest of those affected by decisions (Considine, 2002). All participants accepted and acknowledged the accountability as it relates to students:

Yes, I have accountability. I have to account for the student's persistence, for their grades, are they making progress towards their degree, and are they in good standing, all the different learning outcomes that we define that we have to evaluate for how we're practicing our services, how we're evaluating and so there are very specific accountabilities. Our accountabilities fortunately reflect the goals of the institution and our goal is to surpass what the institution is doing in terms of success for students, and so we want to go above that. (079C3)

Every conversation was quite similar. Participant 069C2 said, "Yes, I'm personally accountable. I feel strong personal accountability, I'm here to help people, not make negative impacts to their life". Subject 59C1 declared "I feel a sense of great accountability and responsibility for all students, particularly vulnerable or underserved students." There was an overwhelming consensus that all participants believed they were accountable to students, yet the degree and extent of accountability varied some. Some participants wanted to specify the accountability variance as illustrated in the following sentiment: "I'm picturing NACADA's wheel of the six areas. I mean, I do think I have a personal accountability to my students at some levels." (O60C2)

Field-level institutional logic lends its support and explains this theme. This concept defines the relationship between institutional actors, as well as an overarching model for governance (i.e., student accountability) practices in the field (Nigam & Ocasio, 2010). Street-level workers adopt a self-interested response to manage the mismatch between agency capacity and client need (Lipsky, 1980) and as an outcome form interpersonal relationships with clients (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). Consistent with previous research (Lipsky, 1980; Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003; Nigam & Ocasio, 2010), the findings suggested that the

formation of interpersonal relationships established with students aided in the understanding of participant's position duties and responsibilities, such as having student accountability.

### **Shared Experiences as Advisors**

Naturally, the direct experience of advisors is a crucial part of their daily activities and lives, and influence their behavior and decisions. More than a third (42.1%,  $n = 8$ ) of participants discussed personal perspectives, behaviors, and/or experiences that were similar or in some case identical to other advisors interviewed. In the analysis of interview data, it was evident that participants who had never met, worked within different universities, and advised different students were having parallel experiences as advisors. The responses shared common language regarding function and challenges to the advising role, as illustrated by a quote:

Most academic advisors -- we are in a helping profession. It's the idea that we are here to help not necessarily to serve, but to help people who need our assistance, especially college students who are struggling or those that are just trying to make their way.  
(069C2)

Participants mentioned their own education experiences and how that influenced/influences their role as advisors, for example:

Many of us [advisors] are first-generation college students ourselves, many of us have come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and I think we bring that sensitivity to our roles and I think that that has guided us quite well. I think we also believe that we always have room to grow ourselves, and that every moment is a learning moment and is an educational moment for both parties in the advising experience. We use proactive advising, we focus on the course of developmental advising, working with the student where they are and developing a plan in their own growth, in their journey to completing their degree.

The need for more advisors and the lack of campus wide understanding regarding the role of academic advisors was discussed as well.

I definitely think academic advisors are needed. My hope is that more universities will be more supportive of academic advisors in the work that we do because even though I know that our university supports it, sometimes I don't think they see everything that we do. And so I think it's going to be important for universities to really support their



advisors, provide resources for them, stand by them even when students escalate issues and things like that. And to know that advisors matter because if it wasn't for my advisor, like guiding me, I don't think I would be here. And so I think that advisor is important and necessary and I think it's vital to student retention, I really do. (059C1)

This is supported by the literature (Nigam & Ocasio, 2010). Nigam and Ocasio's (2010) application of field-level logic combined with environmental sense-making, defined as the way in which people make sense of their work in the field, found that people generate a set of cultural beliefs and values that articulate their understandings of prevailing practices. Arguably, the study finding regarding shared experiences and understanding among advisors mirrors Nigam and Ocasio's (2010) theoretical application of field-level logic and environmental sense-making.

Of note, participants that articulated a shared advisor experience were also more likely to advocate for students (undocumented and general population students) and report policy divergence, thus increasing their opportunities for discretionary behavior. Friedland and Alford (1991) proclaimed that the use of institutional logic accounts for logic of profession. Thus, advisors may be reconciling their actions in support of their shared understanding concerning the function and purpose of their positions.

### **Findings: Secondary Research Question**

The section reports on findings which address the secondary research question:

RQ2: Do the academic advising needs of undocumented students differ from those of other students? If so, how?

Although there are many advising similarities among undocumented and traditional students, the findings revealed that the academic advising needs of undocumented students do differ from other students.

1. The academic advising needs of undocumented students differ due to unique psychological challenges encountered by this population, despite the advising similarities to traditional students.
2. Advisors are typically unaware of an undocumented student's status.
3. Advisors need to educate themselves about undocumented students.
4. Advisors need to create an inclusive environment for undocumented students.

An overview of participant responses and synthesis of data provide information on each of the finding.

### **Psychological Factors**

The majority (78.9%,  $n = 15$ ) of participants shared that undocumented students experienced stress, anxiety, and fear. Students primarily reported having these feelings as a result of financial problems, family obligations, and the change in the U.S. Presidential Administration in 2017.

According to the second-hand account of participants, undocumented students faced family pressures. Many undocumented students advised by the participants are first-generation college students. They often felt pressure to be role models for their families and communities. They worry about money and wonder if their precarious right to pay in-state tuition will be overturned. Undocumented students are careful about disclosing their status, for fear that someone will report them. Travel became much riskier and DACA no longer seemed to provide the level of comfort it once did. Career opportunities after college often look bleak. There is immense uncertainty about what their opportunities will be when they graduate, because without legal immigration status, they would not be able to work in the formal economy.

Overall, study participants (89.4%,  $n = 17$ ) consistently agreed the academic advising needs of undocumented students were in many ways similar to other students. Participants disclosed that their conversations with undocumented students often reviewed common topics such as course requirements, career goals, policy interpretation, the sharing of co-curricular opportunities, discussions to aid in student decision making, graduate school, and the like. Although a discussion on similarities was brief, the position was clear. There was overwhelming consensus that the advising needs of undocumented students in many ways parallel other students.

### **Immigration Status Unknown to Advisors**

Participants (78.9%,  $n = 15$ ) disclosed the challenges to knowing a student's undocumented status. Conversations surrounding citizenship or residency status is not characteristic of an advising session. As explained by a participant here, "They do have to self-disclose in order for me to know who they are and it doesn't come up in a normal conversation" (055C1). Undocumented status does not come up in general conversation. Participants do not want to ask such a sensitive question, as they do not want to force anyone to lie or provide information about themselves that may not be ready to share. As one interviewee shared:

I may not know they're undocumented, I'm not going to know they're undocumented. So in many cases I may have been assisting students who are not documented but they may not have told me either. (075C1)

This finding was common on all three campuses, despite their location in regions with some of the highest accounts of undocumented students in the U.S.

Participants in the study detailed the importance of having conversations with students that seek to build relationships, practicing appreciation and development advising, as this may

aid in a student's likelihood of undocumented student disclosing their immigration status.

Another participant explained their thoughts:

I provide them the same advising that I provide any other student. As I mentioned, when it comes to our undocumented students, the very few that are willing to disclose that they are, it really doesn't change much to me, it's like, you're here, you're our student and we're going to help you (077C3)

### **Advisor Education**

The importance of education and training about undocumented students was emphasized by participants, (94.7%,  $n = 18$ ) found that their knowledge increased after attending formal programs/workshops. Many learned about the unique barriers faced by undocumented students, the use of preferred language (undocumented versus illegal), and tools to aid in the practice of advising undocumented students. Education provided participants with more insight and perspective into the world of some undocumented students. At the same time, trainers instructed those attending the training on undocumented students not to generalize: each undocumented persons experiences are different, although they share common threads. As one advisor explained below:

I think what I try to do and I also know that whenever someone says, "Oh, I'm undocumented" - that could mean the string of things. Like I've said, I've had the undocumented students where money wasn't an issue and I've have the undocumented students where money was the deciding factor. So I try to still, even when someone discloses that, keep the open mind of I don't know what this is necessarily going to mean for this person. (056C1)

One of the participants provided information on how his outlook on hard work and success changed. This perspective emerged after working with more undocumented students and becoming more educated about their status. He explained here:

I think when I first started working with undocumented students in general, I always grew up with and this comes from my parents, hard work pays off, if you just work hard, if you do the extra mile, you'll succeed no matter what. At the beginning that was my mindset working with undocumented students. Yeah, you can graduate college if you just

work hard, I know you have another thing that's another barrier that you have to face compared to other students, but if you just work hard, everything is going to be okay. And then I think those values have changed over time because I didn't understand/or I didn't have that lens of an undocumented student, I was seeing it through my own lens and not theirs and it goes back to all the barriers that we talked about that I had the privilege of not going through. I didn't have a big medical condition that my parents had to pay for or help support me with. And even though I was a first-generation student, I came from middle class. I didn't have to think about my family being deported or anything like that. I started to understand, you could work hard but there are barriers that are out of your realm. (072C2)

Conversations about a change in perspective after education or more interaction with undocumented students were common. All acknowledged the need for mandatory or incentivized training/education to increase attendance and to better support undocumented students.

### **Safe Space**

Participants (94.7%,  $n = 18$ ) discussed the importance of creating a welcoming environment for undocumented students, primarily by making changes to their offices. The use of symbols was very important here. Every university had developed an item for undocumented allies to put in their workspace. The use of this item was very important in the creation of a safe space, according to participants.

Several participants declared that having an undocumented student-friendly office helps to send an unspoken message of support. As explained by one participant here, "If I were talking to an advisor I would tell them like the best thing you could do is create a safe space, welcoming space for undocumented students to be willing to come and see you" (072C2). Safe spaces are designed to help students feel less isolated through connection with other people who may have knowledge of their circumstances. It is important for undocumented students to feel that their status is accepted by their advisors and other university personnel. One advisor describes

disclosure of an undocumented status by a student, which she linked to the creation of a safe space below:

I did have one student come and disclose that he was undocumented from seeing my little placard. I would definitely say the placard has helped from what I've seen so far, I mean, I've only talked to one student since then but that shows that once they know that they're in a safe environment they're willing to open up (058C1).

### **Conclusion**

This chapter presented findings by tying them to the literature and theoretical framework to address the primary and secondary research questions of this study. Detailed information on the 19 study participants, their background and demographic data were provided. The self-reported actions and perspectives of academic advisors regarding individual advising sessions and the advising process of undocumented students in public institutions of higher learning was examined. The findings of this study offer insight into the discretionary behavior of advisors, the identified street-level bureaucrats in this study, and how they operate within the institutional policies and procedures present at their institutions when advising undocumented students.

The next chapter offers a review of the research study purpose. Chapter 5 also provides information on the research findings as outlined within the theoretical framework of street-level bureaucrats. Public policy implications and recommendations are discussed. The chapter will conclude with details on future research.

## **Chapter V. Discussion**

### **Review of Dissertation Purpose**

Immigration is arguably among the most divisive global and national issues at present. In the U.S., undocumented persons (the DREAMers) who arrived to the U.S. as children have been the central focus of legislation and debate. As of 2013, the undocumented population has increased from less than a million in 1980, then reaching 12.2 million in 2006, to an estimated population of 11.3 million (Passel, Cohn, Krogstand, & Gonzalez-Barerra, 2014) just a few short years ago. To no surprise, due to the citizenship barriers, financial challenges, and college access issues (as detailed in Chapter 1), a relatively small numbers of undocumented students are able to enroll and subsequently graduate with a post-secondary degree. Only 25% of undocumented immigrants ages 25 to 64 have attended college compared to 61% of U.S. born adults and 54% of legal immigrants (Passel & Cohn, 2009).

For those who beat the odds and actually make it to college, post-secondary institutions need to create policies, procedures, and structures targeted at the retention and academic success of undocumented students once admitted. Academic advisors are often the assigned persons on college campuses with the primary role of providing academic support to students to ensure their retention, persistence, and timely graduation. As this study has found, undocumented students face unique challenges and experiences in the pursuit of their college degree. Yet, there is no known research which examines the role of advisors and undocumented students within the scope and theoretical framework of public policy. Moreover, there are minimal or nonexistent guidelines/best practices regarding the advising of undocumented students within the academic advising process. To address that gap, this study examined the perspectives and actions of academic advisors regarding the advising of undocumented students utilizing the theoretical lens

of Michael Lipsky's (1980, 2010) framework on discretionary behavior among street-level bureaucrats. The research goals for this study were met. I was able to capture the discretionary perspectives, methods, and behaviors of professional academic advisors regarding the advising of undocumented students. This study also identified the perspectives, methods, and behaviors of academic advisors, who promote academic success among undocumented students. This research was able to determine that the factors identified in the literature, known to influence discretionary perspectives, methods, and behaviors among street-level bureaucrats do exist among the advisors. Recommendations in higher education policy regarding how colleges may aid in promoting the academic success of undocumented students were developed. Further, identified areas of future research are presented.

### **Application of Findings to Theoretical Framework**

This study sought to answer the main research question formulated as follows:

RQ1. What type of discretionary behavior (if any) do academic advisors exercise when advising undocumented students?

The findings of this study demonstrate that academic advisors are exercising discretionary behavior when advising undocumented and general population students. This question has been answered on several levels with the help of five secondary research questions intended to narrow down and clarify the following aspects of the relationship between discretionary behavior and academic advisors: (a) fundamental factors influencing discretionary behavior among academic advisors; (b) historical determinants of bureaucratic street-level discretion influencing the behaviors and perspectives of academic advisors; (c) the ways in which street-level divergence influences the discretionary behavior of academic advisors; (d) the ways in which acts of leadership influence discretionary behavior among academic advisors; and (e) the ways in which



institutional logic guides or influences the behavior and perspectives of academic advisors.

Table 12 provides a visual representation of the application of findings applied to the theoretical framework.

Table 12

*Theoretical Framework Applied to Findings*

<b>Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>Overview of Findings</b>
Fundamental Factors	Moderately Supported
Historical Determinants	Supported
Street-Level Divergence	Supported
Acts of Leadership	Moderately Supported
Institutional Logic	Supported

*Fundamental factors.* Discretion among street-level workers is fundamental (Lipsky, 1980; Marvel & Resh, 2015). The fundamental factors known to shape street-level bureaucracy were moderately supported. Participants in the study function as street-level bureaucrats and reported discretionary behavior and in effect are creating policy. The following fundamental factors known to influence discretion were reported in this study: autonomy, freedom from manager interference, and operation in unobservable setting.

Among the factors that constitute the root cause of discretionary behavior of professional advisors were their autonomy, disagreement for 4-year graduation programs, policy rejection, culture, helpfulness, empathy, proactivity, and disposition. The findings revealed that two thirds of respondents feel that they have autonomy, while the rest do not share this view. In addition, researchers (Lipsky, 1980; Marvel & Resh, 2015) have argued that autonomy increases skills and willingness to take on extra responsibilities, which was also found in the present study. The promoted 4-year degree completion goal also created the potential for advisor divergence, given their belief that flexibility should be allowed when students need it. Despite the financial interests of their institutions, advisors would rather encourage students to attend community

colleges than provide detrimental advice. The tendency to support students above anything else is emphasized by the willingness to reject policy to meet student needs. All these findings are supported by previous research and literature (Humphrey, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Lipsky, 1980, 2010; Osinsky, 2000).

*Historical determinants.* Historical determinants known to shape street-level bureaucracy were supported in this study. The literature revealed that several historical factors may shape discretionary behavior among academic advisors to primarily include an institutional culture, norms, practices, personal beliefs, and policies/procedures. In addition, discretion is impacted by personal values and attributes of the public (i.e., advisees). For example, advisees who are more forthcoming with advisors about needing help are likely to receive that help in the form of longer and additional advising meetings and/or referrals to campus resources. Subsequently, there is the advisor's interpretation of the described factors which influence their discretion. Finally, organizational pressures and available resources also influence discretionary behavior among street-level workers.

Historical determinants of discretionary behavior, such as personal features, culture, and history, have also been examined in the study. Albeit not a direct factor of discretionary practice, the culture/personal beliefs of advisors provides them with opportunities to follow their internal moral compass. In addition, the value that advisors place on the act of encouraging students to follow their best interest, and their helpfulness and empathy frequently make advisors, as public workers, go beyond their standard duties and responsibilities outlined in their job description. All these findings echo previous research findings (Franklin, 1985; Paviour, 1988; Stone, 1981; Tripi, 1984; Vail, 1970; Weimann, 1982).

*Street-level divergence.* Street-level divergence was a common theme found in this research. The theoretical framework for this study asserted that street-level divergence will likely occur if advisors perceive the current policy, structure, rules, and so on as preventing them from acting according to their professional knowledge. Street-level bureaucrats (advisors) tend to define their work in terms of the relationship building (relationship between advisor and advisee) which takes place in their occupation rather than in terms of existing policy and procedures, which may lead to divergent actions and decisions.

Street-level work (i.e., academic advising) consistently invokes ethical decision making within the scope of autonomy. Divergence typically occurs when employees bend or even break the rules for students often because advisors are acting in a manner that they believe to be just or right. In many respects divergence transpires as a result of how street-level bureaucrats process and interpret the environment in which they work as it relates to their own decision making process.

In this study, discretionary behavior of advisors as public servants occurred in the context of street-level divergence, which is an adaption to the interests of the citizens. Thus, policies considered morally questionable or incompatible with the interests of students by university advisors are among the factors triggering discretionary behavior, along with inequity in professional development, optional training, and appreciation of diversity. Although the appreciation of diversity is not supported in the general literature, it is still a personal value known to play a role in divergent behavior.

*Acts of Leadership.* The occurrence of divergence as a result of acts of leadership was a moderately supported finding in this research. The leadership perspective/model provides a foundation and theoretical basis for discretionary behavior among street-level bureaucrats, and

allows researchers to analyze the work of academic advisors and similar front-line occupations. This framework makes the argument that advisors displaying discretionary behavior may act to inspire and empower fellow advisors and/or seek to accomplish their own goals for the greater good of the public.

Moreover, while acting as leaders, advisors recognize their discretion comes with difficult decision making processes, which may have drastic consequences for not just their institutions, but also for themselves and even perhaps for the community. There is an accountability factor which comes with the leadership model, which invokes a deeper understanding of administrative discretion that accounts for personal and professional values, institutional rules, and the demands of the situation at hand. The leadership model accepts that street-level bureaucrats are acting as leaders as they create policy through their discretionary behavior. Perhaps the most insightful component of this model identifies the two types of discretion among academic advisors and other street-level workers: discretion over process and discretion over outcomes.

The willingness to perform leadership acts is a motivation for divergent behavior in the ranks of university advisors. Thus, for the sake of student advocacy, empowerment, and in the name of fairness and justice, advisors go the extra mile to serve client-citizens. In addition, the caring of advisors for students often goes beyond academic prescription. In most cases, advisors have the willingness to form a connection with students on a purely human level.

*Institutional Logic.* Institutional logic is used to explain another layer of discretion among academic advisors and was supported in this research study. Respondents have identified five factors within the field of institutional logic that shape the way advisors think about undocumented students. Thus, the messages of university leaders form a culture of support for

undocumented students. Additionally, advisors have a strong sense of accountability to students and believe that professional advising models should not be reserved to just faculty. These findings are supported in peer-reviewed academic advising literature (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Garrow & Grusky, 2012; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

This framework focuses on how broader belief systems shape the cognition and behavior of street-level workers. It calls attention to how and why discretionary behavior differs systematically in a broader context. The discretion expected among academic advisors is not objective and based on personal preferences, but rather subjective and determined (at least in part) by institutional logics which structure the college or university. Within the context of this perspective, academic advisors rely on any number of factors which influence their discretion, but those factors are institutionally conditioned in systematic ways. Therefore, the individual interest of discretionary actions of street-level bureaucrats is called into question. There is a greater focus on the institutional environment when examining discretionary behavior and policy making within this framework.

### **Public Policy Implications**

This study confirmed that academic advisors (identified as street-level bureaucrats) are practicing discretionary behavior pertaining to the advising needs of undocumented students and general population students, consistent with the literature (Evans & Harris, 2004; Hawley & Lipsky, 1976; Lipsky, 1980; Vinzant & Crothers, 1996). Additionally, this research provided insight concerning the advising needs of undocumented students and the shortcomings of universities to support the student success of this unique population. Public policy implications are discussed.

This study determined that the 4-year graduation policy was rejected by advisors because they prioritized the needs of students over university policy. Institutions of higher learning may consider alternative graduation policies for students who determine that graduation in 4 years is not a feasible option. Some universities already report the 6-year graduation rate as well. Alternate graduation goals with benchmarks throughout their academic career have the potential to keep students successfully moving toward a graduation goal that meets their best interest. While 4-year graduation is important, some students need more time to complete their degree. Academic advisors have insight and their voices are needed in the creation of graduation policies, which focus and lend support for the 6-year graduation goal.

Professional development inequities exist among advisors and policy has the ability to address this. Many professions required continued learning and education, as the industry changes. Advisor's work involves the ever changing needs of students. Continued training and development to support populations such as undocumented students and other subpopulations must be a requirement. Institutions of higher learning are able to decrease the inequities in academic advising and lack of management support through well-defined policy.

Attendance of university-sponsored training, workshops, and similar events is not required nor supported by all managers in some instances. Without existing policy on appropriate use of work time for professional development, managers have the ability to require employees to use personal time for such educational activities. The only personal time advisors have is their lunch period. University policy supporting the continued professional development of advisors is essential to ensure advisors stay abreast of best practices and increase their competency to support students. University policy can address professional development inequities and the role of managers pertaining to professional development participation with

clear guidelines and expectations, which encourage participation in learning opportunities to support students.

Post-secondary institutions that accept undocumented students and permit their payment of in-state tuition have institutional campus policies specific to this population, as they cannot be processed like documented U.S. residents or international students. It is especially important for colleges and universities who accept undocumented students to extend their institutional policies beyond tuition payment and college admission. Post-secondary institutions have a responsibility to create policies to support students more holistically, as their academic performance is affected by what happens outside of the classroom. Policies that ensure undocumented students get the resources they need to meet their unique circumstances are key.

### **Discretion and Policy: Positive Versus Negative**

The implementation/creation of on the ground policy as a result of street-level discretion may be positive or negative. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2000) clearly noted that some street-level bureaucrats exhibit compassion and support to client-citizens, even when it is not fiscally responsible. Whereas, other front-line workers use high levels of force and aggression that leave people feeling fearful and scared. In both of the detailed examples above, front-line workers were exercising their policy discretion just like many of the participants in this study. Advisors in the study at hand noted their discretion, by my interpretation and theirs, as positive and/or in the best interest of their students. University administration, on the other hand, might interpret some of this discretion (such as encouraging community college attendance) as negative. Discretionary behavior is inherently present in street-level work, (Lipsky, 1980). Therefore, the reported discretionary behavior by advisors in this study is not uncommon, but the interpretation of their behavior in terms of whether it is positive or negative is subjective.

As Maynard-Moody, Musheno, and Palumbo (1990) explained, “street-level adaptations of policy are not always positive” (p. 833). In a study of ward managers (also considered front-line workers) by Hutchinson and Purcell (2010), negative discretionary behavior was a result of poor job clarification, little training/development, a lack of administrative support, ambiguous human resource policies, and promotions based predominantly on technical skills rather than effective management skills. Hutchinson and Purcell’s (2010) research highlights the negative aspects of discretion. I recognize that there are likely undocumented students receiving poor information and negatively experiencing the advising process in colleges/universities in the U.S. as a result of some or all of the identified variables noted, which lead to negative discretionary behavior by front-line employees. The respondents were not likely to report negative use of discretion during interviews. I acknowledge the possibility that the discretionary perspectives and behaviors of advisors may have negative impacts on their institutions, and/or their respective units. Yet, advisors should still continue to use their discretion to support student success, specifically undocumented students, because street-level workers have the ability to improve policy implementation when institutions of higher learning structure themselves to engage those on the front-line rather than curb their independence (Maynard-Moody et al., 1990).

Research also suggest there may be more positive outcomes in the policy implementation phase when street-level influence and discretion occurs (Handler, 1990; May & Winter, 2009; and Maynard-Moody et al., 1990). In addition, Tummers and Bekkers (2014), noted two positive effects of front-line discretion:

Discretion influences client meaningfulness because street-level bureaucrats are more able to tailor their decisions and the procedures they have to follow...the specific situations and deed of their clients...the positive effect that discretion has on the bureaucrat’s perception of client meaningfulness can be seen as a condition for the second effect: more willingness to implement the policy (p. 540-541).



Street-level bureaucrats want to make a difference in the lives of those who seek their services (Maynard-Moody & Musheno, 2003). It was evident that many participants in this study also wanted to make a difference in the lives of their students, specifically for undocumented students, through their discretionary behavior and divergence. Although, the voice of positivity is evident in this study, it is important to highlight the literature on positive and negative outcomes in the examination of street-level bureaucracy for context and clarity of this research.

### **Recommendations**

Higher education is at a crossroads regarding immigration and undocumented students. Many college and university presidents sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security expressing their concerns regarding President Trump's travel ban executive order. More than 600 college and university presidents signed a statement calling for the continuation of the DACA program (Pamona College News & Events, 2016). Higher education is part of the national immigration discussion. Campus leaders have the ability to influence public policy for undocumented students in the national discussion, but they also have great authority to effect change within their own institutions.

Undocumented students face unique barriers and circumstances. It is recommended that academic advisors educate themselves to increase general knowledge, insight, and perspective to better understand their undocumented students. For example, advisors have the ability to make undocumented students feel more connected and welcome through the creation of safe spaces. Advisor's offices can serve as safe spaces. Creating inclusive personal office and undocumented friendly environments, which students would presumably frequent, may aid in the disclosure of

status and in better equipping academic advisors to conduct directed conversations, and provide resources which address the unique circumstances.

Post-secondary institutions that permit the admission of undocumented students must provide them with support and commit to their student success. It is important for colleges and universities to provide an inclusive, welcoming environment, with safe spaces for this populations. They need to recognize this population by using the identifier *undocumented* students or *DREAMers* instead of hiding behind a generic statement to support all students and embrace diversity. It is important to keep open lines of communication and provide a forum for stakeholders and students to discuss their challenges and proposed solutions. The efforts have to be elevated to scale versus support and communication existing in silos. Administrators have to ensure offices such as admissions, financial aid, and student support services are involved to assist students with post-graduation preparation and success.

The rules and regulations for DACA are not set in stone. Colleges and universities must consistently assess their processes, procedures, programs, and structures to determine if they are up-to-date and working as intended. For example, areas such as study abroad and employment eligibility may change. The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals was an executive order by President Obama, who is no longer in office. The campus community needs to stay abreast of changes and proactively design programs and policies to support students in the event of major DACA changes.

Faculty may not be aware of the percentage of undocumented students on campus. Enrollment information and institutional demographics of each new cohort of students is generally unknown to faculty, but they interact with students regularly. Therefore, faculty members need information about this population of students as they will likely have

undocumented students in their classrooms. They need to be aware of the resources for undocumented students, as well as have general knowledge about some of the unique barriers and challenges of undocumented students. Faculty need to be knowledgeable about established resources on campus and perhaps even off-campus resources, so that they are able to properly respond to the needs of such students.

Universities and colleges should seek to engage and collaborate with the communities in which they exist to support undocumented students. Public research universities, in particular, could establish community-university partnership with various university departments. Disciplines such as psychology, law, public administration, economics, and so on have the ability to assist this population of students and other undocumented persons in their communities. This provides research and learning opportunities for students and faculty alike. In addition, universities are afforded the opportunity to work with their communities through service learning and build life-long partnerships to address shared problems and concerns.

Post-secondary institutions need to create Undocumented Student Centers, as many schools have done, to meet the atypical needs of this population. Undocumented Centers help support students. A few characteristics of such centers are as follows: they often provide the campus community with education opportunities, a safe space for students, and they aid in undocumented student's sense of connectedness and inclusion. The campus community should also provide counseling support and overall well-being services to address the experiences and circumstances of undocumented students. They need culturally responsive and appropriate services. It would be important to hire counselors that have familiarity and expertise with some of the reported psychological concerns faced by undocumented students, which differ from the concerns of documented/resident students.

There is a possibility DACA may be repealed since the Obama Administration is no longer in office. Colleges and universities need to consider the consequences of this possibility, especially those with significant populations of undocumented students. Of course, the consequences are unknown, but it is fair to speculate that the circumstances and experiences for students brought to America as children, without documentation, will likely become increasingly challenging with the repeal of DACA. As detailed, financial barriers are an issue for undocumented students. They are unable to take part in the Federal Student Aid Program (FASFA) or access typical financial channels available to citizens/documentated U.S. residents. Post-secondary institutions that admit this population need to find ways to increase funding in the form of scholarships/grants utilizing funding sources, which are accessible to undocumented students. When students do not graduate, it impacts institutional reporting such as graduation and retention rates.

I also recommend the creation and use of a *Rule of Thumb Guide* when advising undocumented students, which should be the result of collaboration with undocumented students, advisors, and key campus leaders/constituents. The bullet items below provide a starting point for such a document.

- Seek information about undocumented students and the DREAMer perspective, such as your institutions existing policy/procedures on undocumented students, DACA, existing financial opportunities to assist with tuition, etc.
- Ensure that campus counseling services is aware of the unique psychological circumstances of undocumented students which may lead to increased fear, stress, and anxiety. Determine the best way to refer students for such services when you are made aware of such occurrences.

- Participate in professional development that will increase knowledge about and available resources to undocumented students at your institution or in the community.
- Create an inclusive environment for undocumented students in your office or shared spaces where students frequently convene. Post the DREAMers butterfly placard or any inclusive material that conveys a welcoming environment for undocumented students.
- Add information that is specific to undocumented students to general student resources, handouts and electronic materials. This way there is no need to disclose their undocumented status to utilize resources and find support.
- Speak with your career services offices to determine what employment and internship options are available for undocumented students. Their post-graduation success is also important.

The use of such a guide will aid in providing the resources and support many undocumented students need to ensure their persistence, timely graduation, and post-graduation success.

My final recommendation concerns outreach and education to undocumented high school students, their parents, guidance counselors, teachers, and principals about the policies, procedures, challenges, and opportunities for degree attainment. Higher education administrators need to begin undocumented student recruitment in high school so families and students understand the challenges that lay ahead, but more importantly provide them information early on so they may adequately prepare for future challenges.

### **Future Research**

This study revealed findings that warrant future research. This research study reported that the needs of undocumented students differed from those of other students. Additional research on this findings should be conducted to include more colleges and universities and

expand beyond the western and middle southern regions of the U.S. to include additional regions, such as the east coast, which also has high rates of undocumented students. Further, this study was designed to capture the perspectives of advisors. Future studies should also include the voices of managers and undocumented students to determine if the reported perspectives and observations of academic advisors match that of their managers and their undocumented students. Future studies should also include direct observation over a designated time period to triangulate information/data from students, advisors, and managers. After some time, individuals may no longer take notice of researcher presence and operate as they would without any direct observation. This research methodology should yield valuable information which is likely to determine if the reported actions align with observed behaviors.

As with all populations, there are subpopulations. The study of undocumented subpopulations are recommended for future study. Research that examines their experiences and perspectives pre and post undocumented status may yield insights into policy implications. The study of gender dimension of this population may be insightful. This study noted that some undocumented students speak with advisors about family obligations. Are there differences as it relates to gender? Do women feel more responsibilities and stress balancing school and family obligations than men? It is important to research this area to determine if there is appropriate support systems and policy for students as they pursue their post-secondary degrees.

As was detailed in this research study, some states openly accept undocumented students and some even allow them to pay in-state tuition. Research that examines the differences and experiences of undocumented students in an environment where they are “welcomed” versus an environment where they are not publicly acknowledged or eligible to pay in-state tuition may yield insightful information. Research could provide information on persistence and graduation

rates, but also on life outcomes, opportunities, and perhaps even the overall well-being of undocumented students who live and function in a welcoming environment.

Additional research on the autonomy of advisors is warranted as well. Two-thirds of advisors reporting having autonomy, but one-third disclosed they did not. In my analysis there was not any clearly identifiable personal characteristics or combination of variables that seemed to significantly influence autonomy among the participants. However, the study results did show that among those who reported autonomy they seemed to simply assume autonomy as a function of their role rather than request it. The exploration of autonomy in academic advising and the relationship between autonomy and discretionary behavior should be explored further.

The study was unable to draw clear connections utilizing the street-level leadership model (Figure 1). Therefore, the application of the model warrants future study. In the discussions with participants, I discovered that outcomes and discretion were not easily defined within the clearly defined boundaries of the street-level leadership model. The one area of promise within the framework of the street-level model was the use of prescriptive advising as reported by four (21.0%) participants. The use of prescriptive advising means they have very clearly defined outcomes/processes, and exercise little to no discretion when working with students, including undocumented students. In accepting the application of this model, these four advisors are reflected in Quadrant 1 (limited discretion over process and outcome). Additional research should target the applicability of the street-level leadership model, and all of its four quadrants, in the research design to determine if this framework provides insight into the discretionary behavior of academic advisors, specifically those who advise undocumented students.

Future research should also examine the ways in which existing post-secondary policies and practices impact undocumented students. For example, this study revealed that undocumented parents may be prevented from visiting their children due to university requirements to show a state-issued identification to enter dormitories. Few undocumented individuals are able to obtain state-issued identification. Institutions need to examine their policies to determine if they are creating barriers, which disproportionately impact the experiences of undocumented students.

This study reported that the majority (63.2%,  $n = 12$ ) participants had a parent or grandparent that migrated to the U.S. This study did not establish a relationship between discretionary behaviors as it relates to advising undocumented students among advisors who did not have a parent/grandparent migrate to the U.S. compared to those that did, but this area warrants further study to determine if there is an existing relationship or noted differences. The use of representative bureaucracy lens may be useful here. Findings may yield significant outcomes to support the success of undocumented students pursuing their college degree.

The creation of Undocumented Student Service Centers is relatively new. Research needs to determine if such centers are aiding in the overall support of and contributing to the positive experiences of undocumented students. Research with a proposed focus on Undocumented Student Service centers may begin the first steps necessary in the establishment of best practices.

This research has the potential for replication among academic advisors with or without a specific focus on undocumented students. This study can be executed pertaining to the general student population and/or include additional subgroups of students such as students with disabilities, military students, etc. The replication of this work could provide further insight into



the discretion of advisors, while providing additional knowledge on how best to meet the needs of students through the academic advising process.

### **Conclusion**

This research contributed to the body of public administration knowledge through the application of street-level bureaucracy as it related to the actions and perspectives of academic advisors. The reported actions and behaviors of street-level bureaucrats pertaining to the advising of undocumented student's offered insight in terms of both public administration and public policy, and also within the field of public higher education. Academic advisors have the ability to significantly affect the experiences of undocumented students through the use of their discretion.

Many colleges and universities are working to improve student success. Given that, why focus on undocumented students when there is still much to be done among general population students? There are approximately 1.1 million undocumented children living in the United States (Passel & Cohn, 2011). The majority of undocumented students arrived at a very young age and were brought to America by parents who were often in search of better lives for their families (Gonzales, 2009). Discussion surrounding undocumented youth often focuses on the myth of their illegal actions, which led to their current status. Undocumented students and youth by and large had no decision in their migration to the U.S. In fact, the majority of them were legally educated in our public K-12 education system. America is their homeland, as this is where they have spent the majority of their lives. This is the only home most of them know. They are arguably just as *American* as native born youth.

The U.S. is a nation built by immigrants. Throughout American history, millions of people around the world have migrated to this country in hopes of starting a new life, a better

life, not only for themselves, but for future generations. Today is no different. Our education systems (K-12 and higher education) have historically had significant influence on the integration of immigrants into the larger society through the English as Second Language Program and other programs which help immigrants earn a General Education Development diploma. Education, public policy, as well as the public sector have contributed to the integration of immigrants for generations.

This research helps to remind us of the integral role street-level bureaucrats have, as representatives of the front-line of government, to potentially influence the outcomes of undocumented student's educational pursuits. Academic advisors are on the front-lines working with students in colleges and universities through the nation. Discretion that they exercise in their daily work may affect the lives of undocumented students and perhaps society. Research that focuses on the work of street-level bureaucrats helps aid in the creation of policy to best support the success of undocumented students. After all, if we as a society can help the undocumented students reach their highest potential, it ultimately benefits not only them and their families, but their communities, and the only country they know – the United States of America.

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## APPENDIX A

### Recruitment E-Mail Letter

I am a doctoral student at Virginia Commonwealth University working on my dissertation study. I am conducting research on the perspectives and behaviors of academic advisors regarding the advising of undocumented students in higher education. To facilitate this study, I am seeking interviews with advisors who have previous experience advising undocumented students.

The purpose of this e-mail is to request your participation in this study if you meet the criteria stated above. Many advisors are unaware of a student's undocumented status. Therefore, the number of advisors who meet this criteria is very limited. If you are an advisor who has advised undocumented students I would like to speak with you. All interviews will be confidential and your college/university will not be identified.

May I please coordinate a time to meet with you for about an hour when I visit your campus **March 16<sup>h</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>**? If this timeframe is inconvenient I will make every feasible effort to work with your schedule to determine another date and time.

Please feel free to call or e-mail if you have any questions or concerns. You can reach me at my office telephone number at 814-732-1401 or my cell number at 908-406-1221. My e-mail address is [howardfr@vcu.edu](mailto:howardfr@vcu.edu).

I look forward to hearing your response.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fai R. Howard". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Fai R. Howard

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Consent Form**

#### **Title**

Undocumented Students in Higher Education: A Case Study Exploring Street-Level Bureaucracy in Academic Advising

**VCU IRB No: HM20001356**

You are being asked to take part in a study that examines the perspectives and behaviors of academic advisors regarding the advising of undocumented students in higher education. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to explore how academic advisors impact retention and timely graduation (if at all) of undocumented students through the academic advising process.

#### **Your Participation**

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you questions about your job, questions regarding undocumented students, any discretion you believe you may or may not have, the advising process at your school, resources, and your overall perspective of the advising process as it specifically applies to undocumented students.

The interview will take about 30 to 60 minutes to complete. Interviews will be audio recorded and identified by your participant ID number only.

#### **Risk**

This study has minimal risk. I do not anticipate any risks participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life. However, there is minimal risk that you may find some of the questions about your position and perspective to be sensitive. Some participants may have some general discomfort being observed and recorded. In addition, some participants may be hesitant to disclose their true thoughts about the advising process and their role at their respective institutions.

The position of academic advisor is an essential role that impacts all students within institutions of higher learning. I hope to learn more about academic advisors regarding the advising of undocumented students.

#### **Compensation**

There is no compensation for participation in this study.

## **Confidentiality**

The research records will remain confidential. The statements will always remain confidential and the coding process is the safeguard in place to minimize the risk for breach in confidentiality.

Potentially identifiable information about you will consist of audiotapes of interviews. The interviews will be audio recorded, but no names will be captured. At the beginning of the session, all participants will be asked to use their identification number so that no names are recorded. The audio recording will be locked and password protected after being transcribed. After the information from the audio recording is transcribed all recordings will be destroyed.

Data is being collected only for research purposes. All research records will be kept locked and password protected; only the researchers will have access to the records. Audio recordings will be transcribed then destroyed to prevent audio identification.

I will not tell anyone you provided the answers in my study; however, information from the study may be looked at or copied for research or legal purposes by Virginia Commonwealth University.

## **Voluntary**

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, there is no penalty. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

## **Questions**

I am the researcher conducting this study under the direction of Dr. Saltanat Liebert, Associate Professor in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs at Virginia Commonwealth University. Please ask any questions you have now.

If you have any questions, complaints, or concerns about your participation in this research, contact:

Dr. Saltanat Liebert  
804-828-1874  
[sliebert@vcu.edu](mailto:sliebert@vcu.edu)

or

Fai R. Howard  
908-406-1221

[howardfr@vcu.edu](mailto:howardfr@vcu.edu)

Researcher/study staff named above is the best person(s) to call for questions about your participation in this study.

If you have any general questions about your rights as a participant in this or any other research, you may contact:

Office of Research  
Virginia Commonwealth University  
800 East Leigh Street, Suite 3000  
P.O. Box 980568  
Richmond, VA 23298  
Telephone: (804) 827-2157

Contact this number for general questions, concerns or complaints about research. You may also call this number if you cannot reach the research team or if you wish to talk with someone else. General information about participation in research studies can also be found at <http://www.research.vcu.edu/irb/volunteers.htm>. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **Interview Questions**

1. In your opinion how does the university/college mission concerning student success (student engagement, persistence, and timely graduation) support undocumented students, if at all?
  - a. Can you tell me about the established academic advising mission and/or goals that guide your work as advisor?
  - b. What's your personal advising philosophy?
2. Can you describe the differences or similarities of undocumented students compared to the general student population?

Prompt: Your observations in advising sessions, their experiences in college, self-discloser, etc.
3. Do you think the experiences of undocumented students in college differ from the general student population? If so, in what ways?
4. Do the advising needs of undocumented students differ from other students? If so, in what ways?
  - a. How do you address these differences in the advising process?
5. In what ways (if any) do the established mission/goals differ from your personal goals regarding your role at this institution? Explain how this may support or hinder the academic success of undocumented students.
6. Do you believe you have the freedom and autonomy to make decisions and choices that best support the success of your undocumented students? Please explain.

7. Describe how you feel about the resources and the guidance provided to perform your duties regarding the advising of undocumented students.
8. In what ways are you able to relate to undocumented students?
  - a. How do you think this impacts your advising practices or perspectives regarding undocumented students?
9. In what ways do you believe you are held to prescribed or routine methods/practices to address student needs?
  - a. How does this impact your advising with undocumented students, if at all?
10. In what ways do you think your disposition or the disposition of your undocumented student's impacts the academic advising you provide?

Prompts: Consider your advising philosophy or type. Student is knowledgeable about applicable resources/programs for undocumented students. Perhaps student is rude.

11. In what ways have your personal values/morals ever impacted the advising you provide to undocumented students?
12. In what ways have you found your actions to be contradictory or acting outside of the "normal" process/procedure, if at all?
13. Please rank what is the most important to you in your profession:
  - adhering to the overall mission/goal of your university/college;
  - building relationships with your advisee's; or
  - your personal commitment to doing what you believe is right (as you define it).

Please explain your answer.



14. In what ways have you ever acted in a way to inspire/empower others, particularly regarding the advising of undocumented students?
15. Please explain whether or not you have a sense of personal accountability to your students, your college, and your community, if at all.
16. In what ways do you believe your actions are aligned (or not aligned) with how an academic advisor is supposed to act within colleges and universities?
17. In what ways are you required and/or permitted to decide how best to achieve specific goals, specifically regarding the advising of undocumented students.
18. In what ways is your college/university policies and procedures reflective of the guiding principles and research put forth by the National Academic Advising Association?

## APPENDIX D

### Alignment of Research Questions with Interview Questions

Research Questions	Corresponding Interview Questions
RQ1: What type of discretionary behavior (if any) do academic advisors exercise when advising undocumented students?	Please see specific RQ1 sub-questions below that will attempt to elicit answers to this broad research question.
<p>RQ1a: How are the identified fundamental factors that shape street-level bureaucracy, as described by Lipsky (1980), influencing discretionary behavior among academic advisors, if at all?</p> <p>Complex situations; belief in their specialized work; conflicting/contradictory aspects of the work; unclear/fuzzy agency goals; degree of freedom</p>	<p>5. In what ways (if any) do the established mission/goals differ from your personal goals regarding your role at this institution? Explain how this may support or hinder the academic success of undocumented students.</p> <p>6. Do you believe you have the freedom and autonomy to make decisions and choices that best support the success of your undocumented students? Please explain.</p> <p>7. Describe how you feel about the resources and the guidance provided to perform your duties regarding the advising of undocumented students.</p> <p>a. 12. In what ways have you found your actions to be contradictory or acting outside of the “normal” process/procedure, if at all?</p>
<p>RQ1b: How are the established historical determinants of bureaucratic street-level discretion influencing the behaviors and perspectives of academic advisors, if at all?</p> <p>Sympathetic case workers, attributes of advisors, limit workers flexibility; characteristics of clients; organizational characteristics; attributes of provider</p>	<p>8. In what ways are you able to relate to undocumented students?</p> <p>a. How do you think this impacts your advising practices or perspectives regarding undocumented students?</p> <p>1. In your opinion how does the university/college mission concerning student success (student engagement, persistence, and timely graduation) support undocumented students, if at all?</p>

	<p>a. Can you tell me about the established academic advising mission and/or goals that guide your work as advisor?</p> <p>b. What's your personal advising philosophy?</p> <p>10. In what ways do you think your disposition or the disposition of your undocumented student's impacts the academic advising you provide?</p> <p>Prompts: Consider your advising philosophy or type. Student is knowledgeable about applicable resources/programs for undocumented students. Perhaps student is rude.</p>
<p>RQ1c: In what ways is street-level divergence influencing the discretionary behavior of academic advisors, if at all?</p> <p>Advisors perceive the current policy, structure, rules, etc. as preventing them acting according to their professional knowledge. Relationships built with advisee's are most important; moral/value decision making; act in manner to be just or right</p>	<p>2. Can you describe the differences or similarities of undocumented students compared to the general student population?</p> <p>Prompt: Your observations in advising sessions, their experiences in college, self-discloser, etc.</p> <p>9. In what ways do you believe you are held to prescribed or routine methods/practices to address student needs?</p> <p>a. How does this impact your advising with undocumented students, if at all?</p> <p>13. In what ways have your personal values/morals ever impacted the advising you provide to undocumented students?</p> <p>Please rank what is the most important to you in your profession:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adhering to the overall mission/goal of your university/college;</li> <li>• building relationships with your advisee's; or your personal commitment to doing what you believe is right (as you define it). Please explain your answer.</li> </ul>
<p>RQ1d: In what ways are acts of leadership influencing discretionary behavior among academic advisors, if at all?</p> <p>Act to inspire and empower fellow advisors; accomplish things for the greater good; consequences of not acting discretionary</p>	<p>14. In what ways have you ever acted in a way to inspire/empower others, particularly regarding the advising of undocumented students?</p>

<p>has drastic consequences not just for institution but the community; feelings of accountability; deeper understanding of their actions</p>	<p>15. Please explain whether or not you have a sense of personal accountability to your students, your college, and your community, if at all.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16. In what ways do you believe your actions are aligned (or not aligned) with how an academic advisor is supposed to act within colleges and universities?</li> </ul>
<p>RQ1e: How does institutional logic guide or influence the behavior and perspectives of academic advisors, if at all? Considers the broader belief systems that shape cognition and behavior of street-level workers; discretionary acts are considered very subjective and determined based on institution logic; reliance on a number of factors but their influenced by the structure/system of their college/university; more focus on examining the environment here</p>	<p>17. In what ways are you required and/or permitted to decide how best to achieve specific goals, specifically regarding the advising of undocumented students.</p> <p>18. In what ways is your college/university policies and procedures reflective of the guiding principles and research put forth by the National Academic Advising Association?</p>
<p>RQ2: Do the academic advising needs of undocumented students differ from those of other students? If so, how?</p>	<p>3. Do you think the experiences of undocumented students in college differ from the general student population? If so, in what ways?</p> <p>4. Do the advising needs of undocumented students differ from other students? If so, in what ways? How do you address these differences in the advising process?</p>

## APPENDIX E

### Alignment of Interview Questions with Literature

Identified factors in the literature that influence discretionary behavior.	Questions/Statements to address this identified factor.
1. Acknowledgement/acceptance that people are unpredictable, diverse, and have different needs	Can you describe the ways in which you observe differences or similarities in the students you advise, generally speaking? What do you know regarding the experiences of undocumented students in college?
2. Street-level bureaucrats operate in organizations that collapse complex goals, which have many, often conflicting or outright contradictory aspects.	Can you explain the university/college mission and/or goals concerning student success (student engagement, persistence, and timely graduation)? Can you tell me about the established academic advising mission and/ or goals that guide your work as advisor? What's your personal advising philosophy? In what ways are the university/college mission, advising mission/goals, and personal goals similar or different from each other? Explain how this may support or hinder the academic success of undocumented students.
3. The degree of freedom required for street-level bureaucrats to do their job creates an environment of discretion.	Do you believe you have freedom and autonomy to make decisions/choices that best support the success of your undocumented students? Please explain.
4. Limited resources in the workplace results in modifying policy through practice	Describe how you feel about the resources and guidance provided to perform your duties and responsibilities regarding the advising of undocumented students.
5. Street-level bureaucrats that are sympathetic tend to provide more benefits than rule orientated workers	Do you consider yourself a minority or being part of an underrepresented group? If so, please explain. How do you think this impacts advising undocumented students?
6. Organizations that promote circumscribed routines and high levels of formalized service. Street-level bureaucrats display less discretion.	In what ways do you believe you are held to prescribed or routine methods/practices to address student needs? How does this impact your advising with undocumented students?
7. Client attributes: Present greater needs or knowledgeable/articulate tend to receive greater benefits. Clients viewed as difficult or troublesome receive fewer benefits b/c providers withheld info., evaded questions, made process difficult, etc.	In what ways do you think your disposition or the disposition of your undocumented student's impacts the academic advising you provide? For example: If you're in a great mood how does that impact advising? If the student is knowledgeable and articulate how does that impact advising? If the student is troublesome and difficult how does that impact advising?

8. Street level divergence as a choice – based on street-level workers ethics, responsibilities, and obligations that have a moral/value based foundation to act divergently.	Have your personal values/morals ever impacted the advising you provide to undocumented students? In what ways have you found your actions to be contradictory or acting outside of the “normal” process/procedure, if at all?
9. Street-level worker perceives policy and rules prevent him or her from acting according to their professional knowledge (and education) so they act divergently.	Addressed in number 2.
10. They define their work not in terms of policy and rules but in terms of the relationships they have with their advisee’s/personal commitments to students may lead to act divergently.	Please rank what is the most important to you in your profession: adhering to the overall mission/goal of your university/college; building relationships with your advisee’s; your personal commitment to doing what you believe is right (as you define it). Please explain your answer.
11. Street level divergence as inevitable in policy implementation – Divergence as a result of information processing of existing policy. The written policy doesn’t detail what they need to know or how to do policy.	This will come from collection of documents.
12. Acts of leadership within discretion – Exercising unilateral authority/power and acting to inspire/empower others to articulate goals and/or achieve goals	In what ways have you ever acted in a way to inspire/empower others, particularly regarding the advising of undocumented students?
13. Acts of leadership within discretion – Resulting from feeling of accountability to their students, colleges, and communities	Please explain how you feel accountable to your students (particularly your undocumented students), your college, and your community if at all. How does this impact your role as an academic advisor?
14. Acts of leadership within discretion – Acting in ways that their students, organizations, and communities expect them to act	How do you feel your actions as an advisor are aligned, or not, with how you’re expected to act? How do you believe this impacted the advising of undocumented students, if at all?
15. Acts of leadership within discretion - Belief that their actions are influenced by many conflictual and completing circumstances and varied factors.	Addressed in number 2.
16. Acts of leadership – Process discretion exist whenever a worker is required to decide how best to achieve a specified goal.	In what ways are you required and/or permitted to decide how best to achieve specific goals, specifically regarding the advising of undocumented students.
17. When policies are consistent with core field-level institutional logics, it is more likely that implementation will be consistent with policy intent, even when accounting for all variations of individual and/organization. Field-level institutional logics are important empirical and theoretical constructs because they provide members of the organizational field with cohesion and a sense of common purpose and unity, which aids in	In what ways is your college/university policies, processes, and procedures reflective of the guiding principles and research put forth by the National Academic Advising Association?

explaining their connections and guides street-level workers interactions.	
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**Appendix F**  
**Demographic Questions**

Participant ID No. \_\_\_\_\_

1. How many years have you been an academic advisors?
  - ☐ Less than 2 year
  - ☐ 2 to 5 years
  - ☐ 6 to 9 years
  - ☐ 10 or more years
2. Do you hold a particular advising title or rank you wish to share, such a particular level or category of advisor for example?
  - ☐ Yes. Please list your advising status. \_\_\_\_\_
  - ☐ No
3. Please select the advising practices you use most often.
  - ☐ Prescriptive advising
  - ☐ Developmental advising
  - ☐ Intrusive/proactive advising
  - ☐ Appreciative advising
  - ☐ I am not familiar with the listed advising practices
  - ☐ Not applicable
4. Are you able to identify the advising model used at your institution?
  - ☐ Yes – Please proceed to number 5.
  - ☐ No – Please proceed to number 6.
5. What advising model is used at your institution?
  - ☐ Faculty-only model - Faculty are the only persons to advice students
  - ☐ Split model - Generally includes an advising center for a designated group of students (e.g. freshman, undeclared, etc.) and all other students assigned to their academic departments or programs
  - ☐ Supplementary model - All students have a designated faculty member but the institution provides a general advising office to provide assistance to students as well
  - ☐ Total intake model - Utilizes professional advisors for all students during a designated time period and then students are transferred to their department or program
  - ☐ Satellite model - Each academic unit is responsible for its own advising it is called the satellite model
  - ☐ Other – please describe



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6. Are you a first-generation college graduate?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

7. Did you, your parent(s), or grandparent(s), migrate to the U.S.?

- ☐ Yes  
☐ No

8. In the last year have you volunteered or participated in any philanthropic activities or organizations?

- ☐ Yes. Please describe here.

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- ☐ No

9. Do you know what is expected of you at work?

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

10. Do you have the materials and equipment that you need in order to do your work right?

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

11. At work, do you have the opportunity to do what you do best every day?

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

12. In the past seven days, have you received recognition or praise for doing good work?

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

13. Does your supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about you as a person?

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

14. Is there someone at work who encourages your development?

- ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

15. At work, do your opinions seem to count?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

16. Does the mission or purpose of your institution or unit make you feel that your job is important?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

17. Are your coworkers committed to doing quality work?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

18. Do you have a best friend at work?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

19. In the past 6 months, has someone at work talked to you about your progress?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

20. This past year, have you had opportunities at work to learn and grow?

☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Agree ☐ Neither Disagree or Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Strongly Disagree

21. What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Transgender
- ☐ Genderqueer
- ☐ Other
- ☐ I do not identify.

22. What is your age?

- ☐ 18-24 years old
- ☐ 25-34 years old
- ☐ 35-44 years old
- ☐ 45-54 years old
- ☐ 55-64 years old
- ☐ 65-74 years old
- ☐ 75 years or older

23. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED)

- ☐ Some college credit, no degree
- ☐ Trade/technical/vocational training
- ☐ Associate degree
- ☐ Bachelor's degree
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Professional degree
- ☐ Doctorate degree

24. What is your race/ethnicity?

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ Asian or Asian American
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Non-Hispanic White
- ☐ Bi-racial
- ☐ Multi-racial
- ☐ Other

## **APPENDIX G**

### **Undocumented Inclusive Office and/or Advising Center Checklist**

- ☐ Visible information about DACA or DREAMers
- ☐ Any reference to undocumented student support services on or off campus
- ☐ The DREAMers butterfly is on display
- ☐ Materials that reference undocumented students do not include illegal or unauthorized
- ☐ Financial information specific to undocumented students is visible

## **APPENDIX H**

### **Additional Data About Three Study Sites**

#### **Review of Institution A**

Institution A is a public flagship university located in the western region of the United States and grants degrees ranging from certificates to doctorates. The primary degree types are baccalaureate or above. This institution has a Carnegie classification<sup>29</sup> of doctoral university with the highest research activity. The campus is located in a midsized city. There are approximately 52,000 students enrolled with men comprising of about 57 percent of the total population and women are about 43 percent of population. This institution is predominantly white (50 percent) with the second highest reported race/ethnicity representing nonresident alien and Hispanic tied at 17 percent each. Eighty-eight percent of the undergraduate population are age 24 and under. Institution A participates in Title IV federal financial aid programs<sup>30</sup>. The first to second year retention rate of first-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduates is 86 percent. The 4-year graduation rate is approximately 40 percent and the 6-year graduation rate is 60 percent.

#### **Institutional Information Pertaining to Undocumented Students**

Institution A details their commitment to undocumented students and publicly addresses the population as DACA and DREAMer students within the last year at the highest levels of leadership. There is a website presence for undocumented students to locate information. I was

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<sup>29</sup> The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is a framework for classifying colleges and universities in the United States. The framework primarily serves educational and research purposes, where it is often important to identify groups of roughly comparable institutions.

<sup>30</sup> Title IV financial aid is federally funded aid such as Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct Loans.

able to find several uniform resource locator addresses with information for undocumented students utilizing the schools search engine with minimal effort. There is a page solely dedicated to questions and concerns for undocumented students, their families, allies, and educators. The dedicated webpage provides information available at the national, state, and local level.

Voluntary formal training and professional development is available for faculty and staff at Intuition interested in educating themselves on the undocumented student population and learning about how best to support this population. The program is also open to other education institutions and personnel. The program is specifically tailored to providing an overview while also detailing information and resources specific to the state to assist all participants. A decal for public display is provided to all attendees. Plus, there is a university recognized student group for undocumented students. The purpose of this organization is to openly address a wide range of concerns and education equity for undocumented students. In the details provided it is evident that advocacy is also foremost. The student ran organization is for undocumented students and allies who seek to impact harmony on campus and the community.

The University has publicly available information on the webpage clearly stating their support of this identified population of students. This University released a public statement reciting the mission and made it known the mission pertains to undocumented students. Institution A was one of many universities that publicly support the DREAM Act in 2010 and 2013, and their President was one of several campus president's to sign letter released November 21, 2016 to current President, Donald J. Trump, in support of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program and our Undocumented Immigrant Students (Redden, 2016). Further, the public letter identifies that the acceptance and support of these students is a matter of values. There are additional details of support for undocumented students that expand upon Institution

A's commitment, but it is necessary to refrain from providing further information to keep the identity of research participants confidential.

Undocumented students meeting the requirements of DACA attending Institution A are eligible for in-state tuition, but they still do not meet the requirements to apply for any institutional, state, federal aid, or subsidized loans. However, there are a limited number of private scholarships available to undocumented students. Campus leaders have been instrumental in raising millions of dollars to ensure DACA and DREAMer student have the opportunity to apply for the funding needed to complete their education. Undocumented students may apply for any private scholarships that do not specify U.S. citizenship or lawful presence in the scholarship eligibility criteria, or that do not require a social security number for the application. Additionally, there are private scholarships specifically available for students who have received DACA or who want to obtain a college education and give back to their communities.

### **Review of Institutional Advising Documents**

Institution A has a satellite model staffed with professional academic advisors in place for academic advising, meaning each academic unit is responsible for their own advising. Students without a declared major also have a specific campus department for advising needs. Research participants from Institution A represent five different academic department. Each unit is reviewed here to the extent possible without revealing information that may jeopardize the confidentiality of the participating university.

Two participants from Institution A worked with undeclared students. The information available online for undeclared students affirms academic advisors as advocates for student

success who seek to build purposeful relationships with students. The mission/vision statement also agrees to provide quality academic advising, which is key to the academic success of students. Retention is graduation is also highlighted as important in the mission statement. Undeclared students are also provided with an advising syllabus<sup>31</sup> which identifies student learning outcomes that specify what student will learn by a predetermined date through the advising process. Students are provided with information to easily identify their advisor.

One of the participants works in a department that houses physical sciences. This unit does not have an advising mission or advising syllabus. The information available is primarily curricular focused detailing policy/procedures, deadlines, placement testing, holds, and course selection. Students are able to clearly identify their assigned advisor. In reviewing all advising materials there one document highlights a non-curricular focused area. Within one document for students detailing the purpose of advising there is information that recommends speaking with an academic advisor to discuss personal struggles that may hinder their academic success.

Another research participant advises students in the Arts Department. Their materials outline a mission/vision dedicated to establishing meaningful relationships with students, an environment that is inclusive and kind, providing resources to support graduation, and a commitment to continuous assessment to foster improvement in the advising process. Student success is mentioned several times in relation to the academic curriculum and non-academic curriculum (student life focus).

One advisor from the Honors College also participated in my study. Students in the Honors College students have several assigned advisors with specific responsibilities. Students

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<sup>31</sup> An advising syllabus is a tool which allows individual advisors to outline the advising relationship and experience for their advisees (Trabant, 2006).



in the honors program are provided with faculty and staff advisors. There is not specific advising mission/vision available. Students are able to easily identify and schedule an appointment with their academic advisor. The available materials and information provided by professional academic advisors for students specifies the role of advisors are to help support the additional honors requirements, connecting students to resources, and exceptional experiences reserved for honors students. There materials have fairly equally split information regarding the academic and non-academic experiences available to support the student journey.

There was also participation from a participant who work in the Ethnic and Cultural Studies Department. There is no mission/vision regarding academic advising. The available resources focus primarily on academic, experiential learning opportunities, and scholarships. Students are encouraged to visit their academic advisor even if they are not students in the Ethnic and Cultural Studies Department. The materials available clearly articulate the importance of student connectedness, inclusion, and diversity. Students may contact their advisor by e-mail, but reviewing the information it strongly suggest that walk-in appointments are welcome.

The last unit to be discussed from Institution A, regarding institutional documents, is the Special Programs Office. This program has an advisor. It is open to students that meet a specified criteria based on their unique characteristics or student academic status. This program has enrolled undocumented students as members of the program. There is no specific academic advising mission/vision, but there is very detailed information pertaining to what students will experience in the program. The program is aimed at student success through personal development and awareness of social mindfulness. Materials available are student focused to foster sense of community among students.

## **On-site Observations**

I interviewed seven advisors at Institution A. Two were interviewed at an off-campus coffee shop while the other advisors were interviewed in their personal employee offices on campus. On-site observations are provided only for the five advisors interviewed in their offices, as I was not able to observe the office locations of the advisors who elected to meet at an off-site location. The office location of the undeclared advisor whom I met did have materials specifically referring to an inclusive environment for DACA/DREAMer students.

Undocumented students were not referred to as illegal or unauthorized, which is not an inclusive or acceptable term preferred by the population. I did not see any materials for undocumented students regarding the student organization, nor did I see any financial aid materials specifically for undocumented students. The office was private permitting student disclosure of confidential information. The advisors office had a desk and the student sit on the opposite side of the desk for typically advising sessions.

The observations for the Department of Physical Sciences did not have any visible information for undocumented students. The advisor's office was private with a desk for advisees to seat opposite of the advisor. The student waiting area had several materials for students with majors in the department, but nothing specifically referencing information for undocumented students. I also reviewed information in the hallway and on the door of the waiting area. All materials were academic in nature.

The receptionist area for the Art Department had a wide range of student life information an academic information available for students to take. The waiting area was inclusive and welcoming to undocumented students. Information posted by advisors was visible with minimal effort in the receptionist area. Some advisors posted the information by their doors and windows

which surrounded the receptionist area. The advisor I spoke with had office materials that referred to undocumented and DACA. I did not see any financial information specifically for undocumented students.

The Honors College did not have any information in the receptionist area pertaining to undocumented students, but the interviewee did have an inclusive environment with information that references DACA/DREAMers visible. There is also personal information visible that would arguably be categorized as aspirational quotes/pictures for students. Financial resources for undocumented students were not visible during my visit. The office structure had a desk with advisor and advisee sitting opposite of each other.

The Office of Ethnic Studies had visible information for DACA/DREAMer students. There was also information in the advisors office which supported inclusiveness for undocumented students. The receptionist/waiting area had several materials that promoting inclusiveness an appreciation of diversity. I did see some scholarship materials related to immigrant students as well. The office of the interviewee had a desk for advisees to sit opposite of the advisor.

## **Review of Institution B**

Institution B is located in the middle southern region of the United States. It is a public flagship university and grants degrees ranging from certificates to doctorates. The primary degree types are baccalaureate and above. This university has a Carnegie classification of highest research activity. The campus is located in a large city. There are approximately 51,000 students enrolled with men comprising of about 49 percent with women representing 51 percent of the population. Institution B is a predominantly white institution (PWI) with 45 percent of

population identifying as white. The Hispanic population is the second largest ethnicity at 20 percent and Asian students are the third largest population at 17 percent. Institution B participates in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The first to second year retention rate of first-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduates is 95 percent. The 4 year graduation rate is approximately 51 percent and the 6 year graduation rate is 79 percent.

### **Intuitional Information Pertaining to Undocumented Students**

Institution B publicly provides services and support for their DACA/DREAMer population of students. There is information easily accessible on their website. The University seeks to connect faculty/staff with resources and education pertaining to undocumented students on campus and within the community through student outreach and formal programming. The program which supports undocumented students provides pictures of students participating in this initiative. The information provided on the webpage outlines the added value of undocumented students to the university community while urging others to support all students regardless of immigration status. Details for students and staff are summarized for those interested in voluntary programs, events, and education.

Although, there is a disclaimer that notes possible changes due to President Trump's executive orders and changes to enforcement of immigration law currently very specific guidelines and particulars for undocumented students are available on the web ranging from the admission process, the overall college journey, experiential learning opportunities, and resources. The website also provides readily available and up to date facts on DACA with accompanied action items. Details on filing taxes and legal assistance is also available for undocumented students. A thorough review and educational information on undocumented students is easily accessible on their webpage. A definition of what classifies as undocumented persons and how

students find themselves with this status are discussed. National and state statistics for the DADA/DREAMer population are provided. Psychosocial experiences common among undocumented students are listed as well with resources for help and support.

According to the publically available information on Institution B's webpage, undocumented students are not prohibited from applying for admission. In-state tuition is available to undocumented students who meet specified requirements. Federal financial aid is not available to DACA/DREAMer students, but they do have the ability to apply for state financial aid and/or private scholarships.

### **Review of Institutional Advising Documents**

Institution B has a combination of split and total intake models with each academic unit primarily utilizing professional academic advisors in their respective departments. Undeclared students are also advised by professional academic advisors in a designated unit along with other special populations of students. There is a dedicated page in the university catalog which provides very concise information and student responsibilities concerning academic advising. The university encourages effective academic advising and outlines specific advising information. Institution B views academic advising as a significant part of educating students. Academic advisers have the responsibility to assist students in developing academic success and exploring life goals. The relationship established between advisor and student is identified as significant in the process of academic learning academically life goals. This relationship between advisor and advisee is identified as being professional and kind to support students. Details are also provided regarding the responsibilities of students in the academic advising process.

Two of the participants worked for the Special Programs Office, which advises students with a declared major who also belong to one of the programs housed in this unit. Students may be in the Special Programs Office as a result of their unique characteristics or academic status. The guiding documents available affirm staff are to design programs and engage with students to support the production of global citizens through the promotion of diversity of people and perspectives. Available information acknowledges students are part of learning community that encourages growth personally, professionally, and academically. The advisor I spoke with works with a specific program for undocumented students. The mission promotes an environment where undocumented students can flourish academically, personally, professionally through program advising, mentoring, and workshops. The program partners with other departments at the university to promote a positive and welcoming environment for all students, specifically undocumented students. The mission openly pronounces the office acts in an advocacy capacity for undocumented students at the university.

The Special Programs Office has information available on resources and services for undocumented students including, but not limited to, student support, applicable university policy education, free course materials, and tutoring. Instructions on how to financially support this population is outlined for perspective donors. Undocumented students have open letters to incoming undocumented students to promote engagement and their participation in the program.

One of the interview participants worked for the Ethnic and Cultural Studies Department. This office has information specific to academic advising but there is no established mission/vision for advising. The information available related to advising provides information about time, place, and purpose. As described, the purpose of advising is on curricular

requirements, registration, and petitions. There is no documented advising materials or guidance provided specifically for undocumented students within this unit.

In the School of engineering, where I met one of the participants at Institution B, there is no available mission/vision. The purpose of advising is stipulated on their webpage. Advisors are professional full-time, faculty, and department heads. New students meet professional academic advisors and continuing/upper class students meet with faculty advisors. Advisors have the goal of building a strong foundation for academic success to professional success through a sustained relationship with students. The advisor advisee relationship is personalized responsive to student needs. Professional advisors seek to ensure students understand program requirements, policy/process, and address any personal concerns that will prevent student success. The faculty focus more on career/experiential learning opportunities, graduate school, and specific focus areas within a major.

I also visited the Language Arts Department, as one of the interviewers worked in this department. This unit does not have a specific mission/vision for academic advising, but states the process is a collaboration between student and advisor. The focus is to promote academic success, career aspirations, and social development. The relationship is designed to ensure students obtain their academic goals, but share their personal ambitions and goals with academic advisors. There is not specific language pertaining to undocumented students.

The First-Year Advising Office in the Department of Natural Sciences does not have an available mission/vision for academic advising. The webpage provides information about first-year advising which focuses on the academic progress, major exploration within the natural sciences, and programming to retention. There is no information on the how the relationship between advisor and advisee will be practiced in terms of relationship building or detailed

responsibilities of each party. The information on the online site provides information about policy, curses, and navigating the university system for registration. Undocumented student advising documents are not present.

The Undeclared Advising Office does not have a mission/vision. The available online materials do outline the purpose of academic advising for students, which is to exploration various majors/career paths, learn about university academic policy, and course registration. The webpage details the student responsibilities not the advisor responsibilities. Students are provided with what may be described as a checklist of items ranging from action items directly related to academic success to abiding by the honor code followed by the importance university policy. There is no specific information about undocumented students for advising this population.

### **On-site Observations**

The Special Programs Office has information visible pertaining to DACA/DREAMers as well as the butterfly symbol typically associated with the undocumented population. The butterfly symbol was very large and prominently displayed. Many of the offices have the inclusive verbiage for undocumented students displayed as well. The undocumented materials were displayed next to other information typical to student support such as general student resources and programs.

The hallway and open space directly before you enter the main area for the Ethnic and Cultural Studies Department does not have any information in the receptionist area pertaining to any items that would be considered an office that is inclusive to undocumented students. Once



inside materials are available for students with that are tailed to each major housed within the department with opportunities for study aboard or research.

School of Engineering receptionist did not have any visible supportive or inclusive undocumented student information available. There is an area for guest with furniture for sitting. In this area student materials are within the line of sight. The materials available are for student resources and support. The interview was conducted in the office of the advisor. A flyer advertising the program for undocumented students was visible when sitting in the chair directly across from the participant's desk.

The receptionist area in the Language Arts Department for this Department did not have any visible DACA/DREAMer information. There were no hardcopy materials available for students to review or read within my eyesight during the visit. The research participant's office did have a sign displayed which referenced support of undocumented students. The hardcopy materials available to visitors was major specific in the typical fashion providing information on student academic resources.

There were no office observations for the interviewee with the Natural Sciences Department. We met in the lobby and then relocated to public space outdoors to conduct the interview. The receptionist area had a wide range of hardcopy materials for students categorized by major, which included degree requirements, freshman checklist for the first year, and curricular and non-curricular resources.

There is no report for the participant advising in the Undeclared Advising Office. We met at a coffee shop, so I did not observe any information on-site.

## **Review of Institution C**

Institution C is located in the western region of the United States and part of a state system of universities. It is a public university and grants degrees ranging from bachelor's to doctorates. The primary degree types are baccalaureate and above. This university has a Carnegie classification Master's Colleges and Universities large programs<sup>32</sup>. The campus is located in a suburban large city. There are approximately 24,000 students enrolled with men comprising of about 55 percent with women representing 45 percent of the population.

Institution B is a predominantly Hispanic institution (PHI) with 40 percent of population identifying as Hispanic. The Asian population is the second largest race/ethnicity at 25 percent and white students are the third largest population at 20 percent. Institution C participates in Title IV federal financial aid programs. The first to second year retention rate of first-time bachelor's degree-seeking undergraduates is 90 percent. The 4 year graduation rate is approximately 10 percent and the 6 year graduation rate is 52 percent.

## **Intuitional Information Pertaining to Undocumented Students**

Institution C has personnel dedicated to undocumented student services. A physical office on campus is available to students, staff, and faculty. There is an established university program for students, faculty, and staff to educate the campus community about rights, laws, and advocacy. The mission/vision details the purpose of the program, which is to advocate for students, examine student specific issues, review services, discuss university policies, and generally support the overall student success of undocumented students. Addressing and/or improving campus climate and barriers regarding undocumented student success is also part of

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<sup>32</sup> The Carnegie classification of Master's Colleges and Universities ranking has three categories: large, medium, and small programs.

the mission. Undocumented students are to be supported in the attainment of their degree as declared within the mission/vision. Additionally, there is a student club and employee organization on campus; each provides information about location, contact information, and how to become involved with the organizations available online.

Undocumented students meeting specified criteria are eligible for in-state tuition at Institution C. There are scholarships available through private citizen funding and/or donations made by faculty/staff exclusively for undocumented students. Non-institutional financial aid is also available. The documents available detail the handful of scholarship funding directly on the university webpage for students to view and in some cases apply. There is also a document provided on how to fill out the college application as an undocumented student. An extensive document with facts and frequently asked questions is also provided.

### **Review of Institutional Documents**

Institution C had a public directive concerning academic advising. There is a dedicated webpage on academic advising and it is detailed in the university catalog. The mission/vision affirms the university is dedicated to supporting students and implementing best practices to promote the success of all students. The advising community seeks to guide and support the student decisions to ensure post-graduation goals as well. Academic advisors adopt a proactive model to advising. Advisors act as advocates for students and actively shapes the student experience for the better.

Student expectations in the academic advising process are provided, which include preparation for appointments and introspective self-evaluation, both academically and personally. Students also need to develop the skills and competence required to ask for help on

their own accord. Plus, work to complete their degree plan in a timely manner. Academic advisors are provided with several online documents specifically dedicated to the work of advising students. Information ranging from education on advising types, special populations of student (transfer, for generation, etc.) policies, to graduate school documentation is available online.

Although, a mission/vision is not utilized for advising undocumented students there is one primary document recommended for the advising of undocumented students. A resource guide is available. This guide provides documented students and advisors with direction and guidance. Some of the key areas reviewed in the resource guide are as follows: laws, policy (state, federal, and university specific), programs, services, community support, and legal services. The Resource Guide is designed to address the most common questions raised in the course of advising undocumented. The information contained may not always be conclusive thereby requiring additional consultation with other staff whose names are in this guide.

Two advisors were interviewed in the School of Business. This office does not have a specific advising mission/vision, but it had a statement on their webpage about advisors commitment to student success. Advisors are to assist students with their academic progress, campus resources, academic challenges, and university policy/procedure. The advisor role is academic based on the information provided.

The advising directive provided in the documents for the Office of Undeclared Students does not provide an advising mission, however the available materials discuss the advisor's role as assisting students through comprehensive academic advising and major/career exploration. The advisor advisee relationship according to the information provided on the web focuses on an

academic supportive relationship with students. There is no specific information for undocumented students.

My staff member in the Special Programs Office advises the student undocumented group. According to the documentation provided, the purpose is to organize and collectively meet the needs of undocumented community through support, advocacy, and awareness. There is information on personal stories, resources, meetings, and events.

The fifth advisor worked with a special program for students who meet specific criteria (first-generation, financial need, etc.) in the Physical and Life Sciences Department. This program has additional support, faculty advising, and support. No mission/vision is listed, although there are materials for students pertaining to academic advising. Advising documents for students include major specific course requirements, resources exclusively offered to students in the program, and research opportunities. No information exist on the advising relationship. The materials available focus on academic success and academic experiences for students guided by interactions with the program advisors.

### **On-site Observations**

The receptionist area in the School of Business visible DACA/DREAMer materials were visible. One advisor had hardcopy materials of undocumented support services and campus resources on their desk visible for students. There were several resources posted on a bulletin board for students regarding mentoring opportunities and academic student resources. The other advisor in the School of Business did not have any visual materials pertaining to undocumented students although other inclusive material for other populations of students was easily visible.

The advisor who works with the Office for Undeclared Students displayed inclusive and welcoming materials concerning undocumented students. Hardcopy materials (duplicates of what was in the School of Business) were visible on her desk. She also had a decal of sorts in her office window which signified her support of undocumented students. The waiting area for students did not have any supportive or informational materials available for undocumented students. In the seated area designated for students to wait there were no visible materials.

I did not visit the physical space for the advisor who works with the student organization for undocumented students. We met in her staff office. This advisor did have an inclusive environment for undocumented students with visible materials pertaining to and advocating for the DACA/DREAMer population.

In the receptionist area for the Physical and Life Sciences Department there was no visible information identifying resources or information for undocumented students. The waiting area did not have seating. There were no student materials available for students, undocumented or otherwise. I interviewed the advisor in their personal office in the Physical and Life Sciences Department. There was no visible DACA/DREAMer materials or information.

## APPENDIX I

### Codebook

Number	Code	Description
1	Accountability to Students	Any discussion regarding advisor's belief that they are responsible or accountable to students.
2	Advocate for Students	Any discussion or mention of the word advocate or advocacy regarding the general student body and sub-populations of the student body including but not limited to undocumented students.
3	Autonomy in Advising	Any discussion or mention of having the ability to exercise judgement, outcomes, advice without consultation or need to follow rigid guidelines.
4	Beyond Position Duties/Responsibilities	Taking action or participating in dialogue with students that not only address the question(s)/concern(s) at hand but having the ability to discuss and provide advice on what would be considered the next and/or parallel student step/action/thought within or outside the context of college question(s)/concern(s).
5	Care and Concern Beyond Academics	Any discussion or mention of concern, use of terms of affection, or warm feelings for students beyond the academic scope.
6	Culture	Any mention or discussion of a shared belief system and/or perspectives within the university broadly speaking, or individual department/unit of employment, and/or city/surrounding region.

7	Desire to Help/Do More	Any discussion or mention of longing or wanting to provide more help (guidance, services, reduced barriers, aid, support, etc.) to students than what is already done.
8	Disposition of Advisor	Any acknowledgement that advisor state of mind, mood, outlook, or attitude and the state of mind, mood, outlook, or attitude of their advisees has an impact on the advising session (ranging from minimal to grand).
9	Disposition of Student	Any acknowledgement that student state of mind, mood, outlook, or attitude and the state of mind, mood, outlook, or attitude of their advisees has an impact on the advising session (ranging from minimal to grand).
10	Diversity Appreciation	Any mention or discussion of an appreciation for or embracing diverse people (race/ethnicity, identifies as LGBTQ, veteran, undocumented, etc.). Any mention of the importance of ensuring diverse people feel welcomed and part of the university community.
11	Empathy/Ability to Relate	Any discussion or mention of the word empathy regarding undocumented students. Any discussion of personal experiences or personal characteristics that enable a connection (ranging from minimal or grand) to undocumented students.
12	Empowerment of Students	Any mention or discussion of inspiring and/or influencing students through individual action and/or supporting/encouraging the actions of others.
13	Fairness & Justice	Any discussion or the importance or equality, equity, justice or fairness as it relates to undocumented students.
14	Flexible/Adaptive	Any mention or discussion regarding the ability to modify/respond to circumstances or conditions with ease or minimum effort and doing so causes little to no distress. The use of the words flexible or adaptive as a personal descriptor.



15	Help or Assist Students	Any mention or discussion regarding the expectation that advisors have to aid, assist, help, support students.
16	NACADA guided work/membership	Any mention of abiding by or referring to NACADA in their role and/or membership to the organization.
17	Policy	Any reference to policy or discussion of policy regarding the academic advising process and/or undocumented students and how advisors interpret, implement, and act regarding policy.
18	Policy Rejection	Any mention or discussion of disagreement (verbalized or actions) regarding university policy.
19	President Messaging	Any mention or discussion of a positive position (written or verbal) on undocumented that was shared with the campus community in writing or in an open forum directly from the President.
20	Proactive/Anticipate	Any mention of the advisors taking initiative to assist students beyond their immediate circumstances, needs, or general inquiries. Any mention of the university and/or unit taking initiative to assist students beyond their immediate circumstances, needs, or general inquiries.
21	Professional Advising Model	Any discussion of promoting or supporting the use of full-time staff with advising experience/education hired to replace or work in conjunction with faculty advisors.
22	Professional Development Inequity	Any mention or discussion of advisors having different opportunities, support, or knowledge of education, training, workshops, conferences, seminars, skill enhancement which aided in the development or increased knowledge regarding undocumented students.

23	Shared Experiences	Any discussion or mention of perspectives, behaviors, processes, etc. that are common and generally understood among advisors and/or those that work closely with college students in advising capacity.
24	Support of Community College	Any discussion regarding support of students attending community college instead of their current institution.
25	Time-to-Completion Discrepancy	Any discussion regarding disagreement of 4-year degree completion.
26	Value of Advising	Any mention or discussion regarding the importance, significance, value, etc. of academic advising.
27	Voluntary or Optional Training	Any discussion or mention of partition in training.