

STATE-AGENTS VS. CITIZEN-AGENTS: HOW PARENTAL VALUES AND SOCIOECONOMIC
BACKGROUNDS IMPACT THE CONSTRUCTION OF WORK RELATED IDENTITIES IN
STREET-LEVEL BUREAUCRACY

by

JESSE R. BOOHER

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Any errors or shortcomings in this study (and they are there I promise) belong solely to me.

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ABSTRACT

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Jesse Booher, M.A.

The University of Texas at Arlington, 2011

Supervising Professor: Dana Dunn

Scholarship on street-level policy implementation identifies two dominant approaches street-level bureaucrats use to describe their work: the “state-agent” and “citizen-agent” narratives. The former focuses on how street-level bureaucrats implement law and the latter on how bureaucrats interact with clients. To this point, scholarship only recognizes the above narratives as descriptors. I hypothesize that street-level bureaucrats actively construct identities as state-agents or citizen-agents depending on their backgrounds. Using semi-structured interviews with street-level bureaucrats in North Texas, this exploratory study finds that relationships exist between participants’ socioeconomic background as children, the values stressed by their parents, and the narrative style they use to describe their work. Findings indicate that persons from lower and upper income backgrounds use the citizen-agent narrative.

Persons from middle and working class backgrounds use the state-agent narrative. Participants from authoritarian backgrounds were more likely to use the state-agent narrative, while participants from permissive backgrounds used the citizen-agent narrative. The results offer a more nuanced understanding of how street-level bureaucrats view their role as policy deliverers.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The majority of policy implementation literature seeks an understanding of the gap between legislative design and bureaucratic implementation. Implementation oftentimes develops much differently than legislators intend. This occurs for a plethora of reasons, including: unclear language in the legislation, political pressure, organizational culture, overworked case workers, and the identity of the policy's target population. Within the implementation literature a subset of scholars research the persons who actually deliver policy. In characterizing these persons, Lipsky (1980) coined the term "street-level bureaucrats." Lipsky defines street-level bureaucrats as "public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work" (p. 3). Classic examples include: police officers, counselors, teachers, social workers, welfare case managers, etc. To be a street-level bureaucrat one must essentially work in public service (though not exclusively the government) and be responsible for the direct delivery of policies to citizens.

Scholars who examine policy implementation at the street-level view the "substantial discretion" inherent to the work as the factor which explains the difference between legislative intent and implementation. Lipsky (1980) went so far as to claim that street-level workers effectively legislate through their behavior. His work demonstrates that while policies appear static, the street-level bureaucrat's approach to policy is fluid. Workers have the ability to strictly enforce policy, bend regulations, or even ignore rules. Therefore, to understand the efficacy of a particular policy, one must begin with an understanding of how street-level bureaucrats deliver the policy.

Within this subset of the street-level implementation literature, scholars recognize two overarching concepts to explain what guides discretion: work pressures and stressors, and the identity of the clients. One group believes that organizational pressure, policy constraints, and job stressors impact how and why street-level bureaucrats behave as they do. The other set believes that how the street-level bureaucrat constructs the identity of a client acts as the primary motivating factor for street-level action. Therefore, the relationship between the client and street-level bureaucrat is more important than the rules and regulations under which the worker operates. Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003) write that the first group of literature portrays street-level bureaucrats as “state-agents” while the latter group of writings (which Maynard-Moody and Musheno dominate) portrays street-level bureaucrats as “citizen-agents.” They define the state-agent narrative as “a viewpoint of street-level workers that focuses on how they apply the state’s laws, rules, and procedures to the cases they handle.” In contrast, the citizen-agent narrative is dominated by “the judgments that street-level workers make about the identities and moral character of the people encountered and the workers’ assessment of how these people react during encounters” (p. 9). The dichotomy between state-agent and citizen-agent forms the basis for my study.

What I believe Maynard-Moody and Musheno’s work lacks is recognition that the street-level bureaucrat’s use of the citizen-agent or state-agent narrative is not a chance occurrence. Instead, street-level bureaucrats actively cultivate job-related identities whereby they view their work through the lens of policy or through their identification with their clients. Examples of both types of street-level workers exist; those who fit the state-agent mold and those who fit the mold of the citizen-agent. Maynard-Moody and Musheno offer little explanation as to what can cause a worker to take on the persona of the state or citizen-agent. While the street-level literature offers a plethora of theories on why and how workers utilize their discretion, I found few studies that discuss how a worker’s unique background impacts their approach to street-level

bureaucracy. The goal of this work is to offer a different and more nuanced understanding of the possible causes for a street-level bureaucrat's use of a particular narrative style.

I chose this topic because street-level bureaucrats hold enormous power in the policy process. While elected officials pass policy for the people, it is the street-level bureaucrats who deliver policy to the people. It is at the street level where clients interact directly with workers. Street-level bureaucrats are the gatekeepers and facilitators. They ultimately decide who can access services, how quickly to deliver services, and how strictly to enforce policy. While rules and regulations compel all street-level bureaucrats to act within policy parameters, studies repeatedly show the permeability of those parameters. Policy boundaries are elastic and bend to fit the confines of individual discretion. It is critical for any study of policy implementation to understand how and why discretion occurs. This study adds another dimension to the body of work dedicated to understanding street-level bureaucrats.

I hypothesize that street-level bureaucrats from similar socioeconomic backgrounds, and from homes where parents stressed similar values, will use similar narrative approaches in discussing their jobs. For example, this study tests whether or not a relationship exists between use of a particular narrative style and whether or not a participant grew-up with more authoritarian or permissive parents. The study also seeks to determine what, if any, relationships exist between the narrative styles of participants who grew-up poor, working class, middle class, or upper middle class. To test the hypothesis I utilized semi-structured interviews with street-level bureaucrats in public and non-profit organizations. The independent variables are the workers' socioeconomic backgrounds as children and the values stressed by their parents or caregivers. The dependent variable is the whether or not a participant describes his/her work as a state-agent or citizen-agent. I detail the operationalization of these variables in the methods section.

The paper begins with a review of the literature relevant to my hypothesis. I provide the reader with the theoretical foundation for the work, continue with a review of recent scholarly

writings on street-level bureaucracy, and conclude with a discussion of previous work on the intergenerational transmission of values. The paper continues with a detailed look at the sample I chose for this study. I discuss the data codification and analysis techniques I employed during the study. I then provide the reader with participants' relevant demographic information. Next, I report the results of the study. In this section I examine the relationships between each subgroup and their responses to questions related to the construction of their work identities. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion of the findings, the study's shortcomings, and implications for future research.

In full disclosure, I believe that it is important for the reader to know that I work as a street-level bureaucrat. Only one of the participants was aware of my work during the interview process. I undertook a study on this topic, in part, to develop a better understanding of how and why I make the decisions that I make while at work.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Two competing paradigms dominate the subset of academic literature on micro-level policy implementation. The first is the state-agent paradigm, typified by the work of Lipsky, and the second is the citizen-agent paradigm typified by the work of Maynard-Moody and Musheno. Several studies within both camps prove that policy constraints, organizational pressures, and the relationship between clients and workers affect street-level bureaucratic discretion. However, I believe that a gap exists in the current literature. I have found no study that offers an explanation as to what causes different groups of street-level bureaucrats to describe their jobs using either the state-agent or citizen-agent narrative. What is missing from Maynard-Moody and Musheno's work is an examination of what could influence a street-level bureaucratic to adopt one narrative over the other. I hypothesize that some workers adopt the state-agent narrative while others utilize the citizen-agent narrative because of differences in the values stressed when they were children and differences in their socioeconomic backgrounds. To properly understand how and why street-level bureaucrats use their discretion, it is critical to determine if links exist between their backgrounds and the narrative style they adopt. This study attempts to link what the literature recognizes about value development with the complexities inherent in street-level bureaucracy.

2.1 Theoretical Orientation

One can trace the origins of sociological studies on the bureaucracy back to Max Weber. In his analysis of Weber's work, Giddens (1971) wrote that for Weber the "pure type of bureaucratic organization" possessed defined roles and duties, clearly demarcated hierarchy, appointments to positions based on merit, and the execution of tasks based on rules (p. 158). Weber focused on the rational nature of the bureaucracy and bureaucratic action. He was also

keenly aware of the necessary, but often contentious relationship between democratization and bureaucratization. He understood the inherent power of the bureaucracy (Weber, 1925/1946). Weber's writings form the basis for the dominant policy implementation paradigm.

The majority of modern scholarly work on policy implementation utilizes a positivist theoretical orientation (Frederickson & Smith, 2003). Within this tradition scholars view organizations, administrators, and workers as objective implementers of policy. Because positivist theorists describe implementers as objective, they believe that external factors like clearer legislation, political pressure, and proper levels of supervision will remove any space between legislative intent and street-level implementation. The positivist studies examining street-level policy implementation either imply, or outright state, that self-interest (making decisions to make one's job easier to manage) is the motivating factor in the decision making process for bureaucracies and bureaucrats. Because of the power inherent to implementing policy and the level of discretion that exists in interpreting policy, this tradition seeks to understand bureaucratic discretion for the purposes of controlling it. These scholars desire implementation to closely match legislative intent. Their suggestions for improvement in policy implementation usually call for more control over discretion (Golden 2000, Bunker 1972, Sussman and Rhodes 1982, Keiser 1998, etc.)

James Coleman's (1990) work on social theory represents the most useful depiction of the positivist policy implementation tradition. Coleman clearly states that self-interest leads to the formation of ideas, actions taken, and controls how the bureaucrat makes decisions. He recognizes the practical fallacy of this approach, but justifies its use in theory. Coleman writes that the "social environment" is comprised of the "natural" and the "built" (p. 43). He writes that bureaucracies are artificially built environments. Coleman goes on to describe simple versus complex relationships. The former can exist without maintenance of a third party. The latter requires a third party for continued existence. He argues that the bureaucratic structure exists to maintain the artificial relationships that develop between the worker and the client.

Coleman does not, however, recognize the complexities inherent in the relationship between bureaucrats and the clients they serve. Nor does Coleman recognize the nuances of why or how bureaucrats use discretion. He instead argues that bureaucrats will disregard the interests of the organization only in “disjoin authority relations” where the subordinate has no interest in the outcomes their actions produce (p. 79). He goes on to write that the “bureaucratic personality” encourages strict focus on rules as opposed to broad organizational goals (p. 79). Organizational rules and regulations protect the bureaucrat from adverse outcomes. Notice that Coleman’s descriptions and conclusions focus on organizational interests and view the street-level worker as an automaton who either follows policies and rules or disregards them due to environmentally created flaws. Recommendations stemming from this theoretical approach focus on policy design and management strategies as effective controls for worker discretion.

While it is important to understand the underlying theoretical premise that dominates the field, I reject this approach in favor of the post-positivist tradition. Frederickson & Smith (2003) write that one can trace the roots of this tradition as far back as 1948 at the original Minnowbrook Conference. Scholars at this conference argued that public organizations and administrators are neither neutral nor objective. The post-positivist tradition stemming from this conference steeply itself in both Thomas Kuhn (the idea that scholars can reach a new public administration theory via paradigm change) and Berger & Luckman (the idea that reality is socially constructed). This tradition argues for a dramatic overhaul in how the academic and political communities view policy implementation. Post-positivists contend that the basic focus of scholarly analysis should be the street-level bureaucrats who have face to face interactions with persons receiving services. They do not use organizations as their units of analysis. The post-positivist tradition also uses phenomenology, or the belief that only the actors’ interpretations, meanings, and views can help researchers understand actions. They also tend to use qualitative and naturalistic methods, allowing them to both reject objectivity while utilizing empiricism.

This exploratory study fits squarely within the post-positivist tradition. I do not go so far as to claim this work as post-modern, which tends to blur the boundaries between perception and reality further than I am comfortable with. However, it is clearly post-positivist. I utilize phenomenology, qualitative methodology, the same basic unit of analysis, and agree that scholars cannot study or measure the bureaucratic world objectively. I also recognize, as do Frederickson and Smith (2003), that the post-positivist approach is not without its problems. Two notable issues include a lack of generalizability due to purposive sampling and conclusions that yield indeterminate results due to “mutual causality” (p. 134). Despite these concerns, I ask participants questions about their perceptions, attitudes, and actions. I also do not seek to confirm a previously developed theory, but am instead hoping offer a different perspective on why street-level bureaucrats utilize a particular narrative style. Therefore, utilizing post-positivist theory fits both the questions I ask and the conclusions I am searching for.

2.2 Bureaucratic Discretion at the Street-Level

Scholars within the public policy field recognize that bureaucrats play a crucial role in determining how legislated policies translate to citizens. Interestingly, there is little agreement on what successful policy implementation looks like (O’Toole 1986, Sowa & Selden 2003, Brodtkin 1997, Lipsky 1980, Maynard & Musheon 1990, etc). However, there is a substantial body of literature devoted to bureaucratic motivations. In my reading I found two differing, though not competing, theories on how and why bureaucrats do what they do. In the first set of literature, scholars study the macro factors influencing discretion. These include political pressure, composition of the organization, supervisory tactics, etc. The second group of scholarly work focuses on the micro factors that influence street-level bureaucrats. This group looks at the decision making process through the social reality that the street-level bureaucrat constructs; i.e. what is important to them and how they report making decisions. Micro focused scholars often examine the professional characteristics of street-level workers and the pressures associated with street-level work. My work fits squarely within the second group of

literature. However, I believe it is important to understand the dominant paradigm within the field. This section of the literature review will include a discussion of macro-focused policy implementation scholarship. It continues with a look at the contrasting micro view of policy implementation. I conclude by situating this work within the micro-level policy implementation scholarship.

In one subset of the macro focused implementation literature, scholars write about how the structure of the organization influences bureaucratic decision making. As far back as 1946, Hunt argued that the informal structures within bureaucracies work in tandem with the overt hierarchies inherent in organizations to allow for efficient decision making. Golden (2000) argues that “research demonstrates that the norms, beliefs, practices, and values shared by members of an organization shape both their behavior and their decisions” (p. 25). She contends that agency history through a shared set of experiences unique to the culture of the organization impacts individual behavior. Golden’s work demonstrates that messages sent from the Presidential Administration regarding their level support for the agency directly influenced how members of the agency viewed their roles. If bureaucrats viewed their roles as positive they were more likely to act in line with the wishes of the Administration.

Other macro-focused scholars found that policy design and political pressure directly influence policy implementation. Bunker (1972) argues that successful implementation depends upon implementers possessing advanced policy knowledge and up-to-date training. However, Bunker defines implementers as high level bureaucrats in an organization. Sussman and Rhodes (1982) write that Congress usually offers little guidance on how bureaucrats should implement policy. They state that politicians pass policies based on their constituencies’ political whims. In their opinion this invites bureaucratic abuses of legislative intent. Calvert, McCubbins, and Weingast (1989) focus their work on the link between the bureaucracies, the legislative branch, and the executive branch. They argue that the power of appointments and the threat of sanctions limits bureaucratic decision making.

Several studies attempt to meld the macro and micro approaches. In a study of street-level bureaucrats in Denmark, May and Winter (2009) offer a blending between the two paradigms. They recognize the influence of street-level bureaucrats, but argue that the attitudes of the actors at the top of the organizations affect how workers at the street-level interpret policy. Maupin (1993) further tries to bridge the gap between the macro and micro literatures. He found that agency attempts to control street-level discretion will always prove difficult because of vaguely written social policies. He claims that street-level bureaucrats will always have their own version of rationality that may conflict with organizational goals.

What the macro level literature misses, with the noted exception of Maupin (1993), is recognition of the role for street-level workers in implementing policy. While some older examples recognize the role of street-level workers in shaping policy, it was Lipsky's (1980) seminal work that altered the landscape of the implementation field and offered the foundation for the micro-level paradigm. For Lipsky, street-level bureaucrats were just as important to the formation of policies as the legislators. Lipsky wrote that "the decisions of street level bureaucrats, the routines they establish, and the devices they invent to cope with uncertainties and work pressures, effectively become the public policies they carry out (p. xii)." Lipsky established two primary factors that comprise the street-level bureaucrat's role as an agent of policy. First, street-level bureaucrats exercise high levels of discretion in determining who receives which benefits. Secondly, the individual actions of street-level bureaucrats become "agency behavior" (p.13).

In the same work, Lipsky (1980) also contends that people who seek out social services do not do so voluntarily; agencies force themselves upon their clients, or social conditions are such that clients have no choice but to apply for services. Therefore, street-level bureaucrats control access to resources and must learn to effectively control client behavior. As Lipsky aptly notes, this creates tension between the reasons why many street-level bureaucrats enter into their fields, and the realities they experience once they began their work. To manage this

tension, workers develop coping mechanisms “thereby making their jobs psychologically easier to manage (p. 141).” These coping mechanisms can include both a physical and psychological withdrawal from work, an adjustment of personal responsibility and authority, and treating preferred clients by the ideals and goals with which the worker initially entered the field. This final point allows the street-level bureaucrat to limit the dissonance between their ideals and the individual and organizational pressures they feel on a day to day basis (Lipsky 1980). While Lipsky’s work added a micro focus to a macro dominated field, his theory is ultimately in line with the positivist implementation tradition. He sees self-interest as the underlying cause of bureaucratic decision making.

In Lipsky’s wake a multitude of scholarly work emerged on the factors affecting street-level bureaucratic discretion. Brodtkin (1997) found that the fiscal capacity and available resources of an organization impacted discretionary approaches at the street-level. He argued that street-level bureaucrats do neither what they want nor what their bosses tell them to, they do “what they can” with the resources available (p. 24). Similarly, Keiser (1998) found that both internal characteristics of the bureaucracy in question, like resources and values, as well as environmental characteristics, like support from the legislature, influence how street-level bureaucrats exercise the high levels of power they have over their clients. Keiser (1999) later found that variation in street-level implementation of welfare policy depended on the level of need in the area, the overall health of the economy, and state partisan politics. For Keiser, policy implementation at the street-level depends upon the organizational environment. He also found no difference between the implementation of regulatory policies and redistributive policies. Using experimental research, Scott (1997) found that levels of organizational control played the most significant role in the street-level decision making process, followed by the characteristics of the clients, and then the characteristics of the individual worker.

Recent academic work has challenged Lipsky’s theory that external pressures and self-interest are the deciding factors in understanding street-level discretion. Scholars have begun

devoting serious attention to how the identities of the clients and their subsequent relationships with street-level bureaucrats, impact discretion. In a more recent study Keiser et al (2004) found that sanctions of non-whites on Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) increased as the population of nonwhites increased until the point where the nonwhites had enough votes to gain political power. While Keiser's ultimate conclusion was that partisan ideology at the legislative level influences actions at the street-level, his work confirms that the identities of clients matter in how street-level workers make policy decisions. May and Wood (2003) found that building inspectors regulation styles were situationally dependent. Inspector's decided how strictly to enforce rules based in part on the backgrounds of those being regulated, including their income, education, and attitudes.

The most prominent challenge to Lipsky comes from Maynard-Moody and Musheno (2003). Maynard-Moody and Musheno interviewed three different groups of street-level bureaucrats: police officers, teachers, and counselors. They asked workers about their decision making processes, specifically about times when they followed policy to the letter and when they altered or disregarded a policy either to help or hurt a client. They found that the decisions of workers to go above and beyond policy depended directly on how workers constructed the identities of their clients. Many of the workers' stories focused first and foremost on the character of the client. Street-level bureaucrats used "mainstream beliefs about good and bad character, and acts to reinforce that judgment" (p. 7). They found that workers described policies as a means to act how they wanted to toward the client based on their previous construction of the client's identity. In Maynard-Moody and Musheno's study, policy and organizational pressure offered little help in understanding the decision making process. It was instead the street-level worker's relationship with his/her clients which acted as the critical influencer in how the worker made decisions to implement policy.

In the same study, Maynard-Moody and Musheno also found that when their participants answered questions on policy implementation they often told stories about their

clients. All other concerns, especially policy and organizational issues, were ancillary characters in the street-level bureaucratic narrative. They found that workers did not merely see themselves as agents of the state, but instead as “advocates on a mission” (p. 62). They also found that the street-level bureaucrats discussed their own social identities (with regard to race and gender) with their clients.

The authors ultimately concluded that Lipsky’s paradigm, or what they call the “state-agent narrative,” dominates the literature on street-level bureaucracy. Under this narrative, the street-level bureaucrat acts only based on rules, regulations, and organizational pressures and actions are motivated by self-interest. Maynard-Moody and Musheno recognize the importance of this paradigm and write that street-level bureaucrats are faced with policy and organizational pressures. However, they conclude that the street-level bureaucratic decision making process begins with the construction of a client’s identity. Street-level bureaucrats then adjust how they deliver services to that client based on that identity. They refer to this as the “citizen-agent narrative.” In this narrative, policy and self-interest do not drive bureaucratic action, but instead street-level bureaucrats interpret policy based on the relationships they form with the clients. The differing findings in the two studies form the basic question guiding this thesis. How is it that two studies examining street-level bureaucratic discretion uncovered such vastly different narrative styles?

It is my contention that the identities of the street-level bureaucrats, specifically their socioeconomic backgrounds as children and the values stressed by their parents, impact which narrative style they employ. While the street-level bureaucrat’s own beliefs are important, it is equally as important understand how the street-level worker was socialized into his/her beliefs, attitudes, and values. There are several notable studies that examine how the current identities of the street-level bureaucrats impact how they approach their clients. Booher (2009) found that the religious identities of Evangelical Christian street-level bureaucrats had a substantial impact in how they approached their clients and viewed discretion. Riccucci and Meyers (2004) found

that to determine the link between passive and active representation amongst street-level bureaucrats, one must begin with a person's "social origins" (for them race and gender), then examine the worker's "values," then look at the "actions" a worker takes, and finally look at the "policy outcomes" that result from these actions (p. 587). They found that the link between social origins and values was higher with workers who exercised more discretion. Watkins-Hayes (2009) examined how the identities of blacks and Latinos "inform their understanding of how they should do their jobs" (p. 286). She used participant observation, archival research, and in-depth interviews with over 70 workers and found that blacks and Latinos injected race into their discussions with their minority clients to get them to "invest in the process" (p. 299). Watkins-Hayes also wrote that her participants used social class to both link themselves to clients in terms of their backgrounds and separate themselves from clients in terms of their current status. Sowa and Selden (2003) noted that the level of perceived discretion is positively correlated with agency tenure, level of education, and the number of minorities and women in the organization. Worker's who had been at the agency longer and were more educated were more likely to use discretion over strict interpretation of policy. Langbein (2000) also found that education levels impacted discretion. She argued that the higher the education (i.e. the higher the degree held above the bachelor's degree), the more discretion the worker utilized. These findings were consistent regardless of sector. For purposes of this paper, it is important to note that academic research has demonstrated that a street-level bureaucrat's background influences discretion. However, no study I found examines how a worker's background or identity influences the narrative style they use to describe their work.

2.3 Value Differentiation

My hypothesis assumes the validity of two interrelated ideas. First, persons raised in similar socioeconomic backgrounds share similar values. Second, parents impart values to their children. Taking these assumptions one step further, I put forth the notion that an individual's background dramatically affects a street-level bureaucrat's approach to the narrative style they

use in describing their work. Separate works by Lareau and Kohn form the foundation of scholarly support for the above assumptions. In 1972 Kohn examined the shared work-related values in working and middle class families. He argued that middle class families encouraged self-direction and autonomy whereas working class families focused on following the rules. He traced the development of these value differences to employment conditions. Kohn wrote that working class men held occupations where success required strict adherence to rules and regulations. In contrast, men in the middle class worked in professions where autonomy, independence, and self-direction lead to success. Kohn found that men brought these values with them home from work and imparted them to their children in an attempt to facilitate their children's success in future careers.

Kohn went on to test and expand his original theory in several studies. In 1979 a group of scholars including Kohn moved outside of the limiting focus on men. Miller et al (1979) found that women who worked in jobs with more independence and autonomy had greater levels of "psychological functioning" and women in jobs with lower levels of independence and autonomy had lower levels of psychological functioning (p. 66). By 1986 Kohn et al wrote confidently in favor of the existence of a causal chain from a parent's occupational approach to a child's values. They wrote "social stratification affects parental occupational self-direction; occupational self-direction affects parental values; parental values affect children's values" (p. 99). Kohn's work influences this study in that I accept his causal chain to a point. Therefore, my study starts from the premise that socioeconomic background (as measured in part by parental employment) affects how one views what is required for success at work. I also accept as correct Kohn's assertion that parental values affect children's values. Where I depart from Kohn is the direct application of his entire causal chain. I contend that socioeconomic status and parental values can act separately in influencing a child's approach to work. I take this one step further in arguing that one brings the values learned from childhood into the workplace and this ultimately affects the worker's approach to street-level bureaucracy. For example, because the

working class ethos focuses more on following the rules, one would expect workers from this background to define their jobs using policy as the centerpiece of their narratives. In contrast, upper class persons place more emphasis on autonomy. Therefore, one would expect persons from higher socioeconomic backgrounds to define their jobs with policy being a supplementary character.

Annette Lareau (2003) details a somewhat contrasting, but theoretically important, take on Kohn's theory. Using naturalistic observation, ethnographic research, and interviews with twelve different families, Lareau found that middle class parents stress "concerted cultivation" with their children (p. 2). Middle class parents focused on the intellectual and social development of their children. These parents inserted themselves into their children's lives, encouraged discussion and dissent, created highly scheduled lives outside of the home, and tried to control childhood development. In contrast, working class and poor parents saw childhood development as a natural process outside of their control. Lareau refers to this parental approach as the "logic of child rearing as the accomplishment of natural growth" (p. 238). Working class and poor parents did not foster debates with their children. They focused on at-home activities with family members. These children were more likely to have free time to play at their leisure. Lareau also found a clear line of demarcation between adults and children in the poor and working class homes. Parents tended to blur that boundary in the middle class homes.

While Lareau recognizes Kohn's ultimate conclusion that working class families stress an ethos of respect to authority and following the rules, her work asserts that the independent free time inherent to the lives of poor and working class children could foster higher levels of autonomy than middle class children who live in a constantly scheduled world. I believe that the divergence in findings in Kohn and Lareau's writings occur because of methodological differences. Lareau's use of qualitative methods offers more depth, while Kohn's use of statistical analysis offers more breadth. Both theories show that socioeconomic backgrounds

coupled with parental values can have a profound effect on childhood development and the values children take into adulthood. Their findings on the importance of parental values and class backgrounds are critical to this study. However, I depart slightly from Kohn and Lareau. I believe that while socioeconomic class does affect parental values, each variable separately influences how a child approaches work as an adult.

The academic literature supports the idea that people from different socioeconomic circumstances emphasize different values. In an examination of political participation, Beeghley (1986) found a clear relationship between levels of political participation and socioeconomic class. He divided participation into six different categories and argued that within every category the poor participated less than their more wealthy counterparts. Beeghley argued that this lack of participation occurred because the social structure creates circumstances that discourage participation from the poor. He wrote “my theoretical orientation is that the organization of society affects the range of options people have and that such choices are external and coercive over individuals” (p. 497). This quote encapsulates my argument that one can utilize socioeconomic background and parental values as separate variables. The class under which one grew-up profoundly impacts exposure to ideas and the development of attitudes.

Other examples supporting the idea that social class affects value development include Grabb’s (1981) study which found that middle class respondents rank self-actualization as more important than working class respondents. Grabb’s survey included questions I asked participants for this study, including question on: the freedom to do one’s job, frequency of supervision, and if one could influence the decisions made by one’s supervisor. Ginwright (2002) also focused on how occupation impacts values. He found that in his sample of forty African Americans, working class participants tended to see work as merely a job instead of part of one’s identity. Working class participants viewed problems in terms of concrete issues while the middle class viewed problems as ideological. Scholarship has also found that working class persons are more likely to rank the need for belonging as more important than either the poor or

middle classes. Lower income persons also tend to discuss safety and physiological needs as more important than the other groups (Gratton, 1980). Hong (2000) writes independent of occupation, social class affects values. He contends that women from higher classes place more emphasis on autonomy than women of lower classes.

Several academic works found that socioeconomic background continues to impact persons well into adulthood. Hansen (1996) found that levels of social and cultural capital differ amongst persons from different class backgrounds. Her work showed that when persons from lower class backgrounds achieve mobility into the upper class they do not achieve the same level of acceptance amongst their peers as persons raised in the upper class. Kaufman (2003) similarly wrote that persons who achieve social mobility often form identities and take actions to endear themselves to the group they currently belong to. Johnson (2002) argues that work values can change as a person ages and are not necessarily set in childhood. However, her research found that young adults transitioning into the work world who came from higher socioeconomic backgrounds placed less emphasis on monetary rewards and job security and instead focused more on the level of influence their work had. Therefore, the social class under which one grew-up can have a substantial effect on how one approaches work as an adult. This effect occurs independent of parental values.

My hypothesis also depends upon the idea that persons whose parents imparted a similar set of values will adopt similar narrative styles in how they describe working as street-level bureaucrats. Therefore, the intergenerational transmission of values is an important concept to this work. Several studies support this notion. Writing in the wake of William Julius Wilson's *The Declining Significance of Race*, Ogbu (1979) contends that "subordinate-group parents" impart values on to their children that teach them how to be successful in future subordinate roles (p. 3). He contends that these values are different than white-middle class values. Hitlin (2006) found that social values taught by parents influence children's career choices. He writes that a parent's focus on either autonomy or conformity directly affects a

person's ability "to experience self-direction within one's own occupation" (p. 28). In looking at the intergenerational transmission of poverty, Ludwig and Mayer (2006) found that parents transmit their preferences for work hours in how they model "work behavior" and "children model their work habits on their parents work habits" (p. 185). Kasser et al (1995) found that children whose mothers they described as "cold" were more likely to value materialistic success (p. 908). These children's mothers were also more likely to value conformity as opposed to self-direction. Finally, Rogers et al (1991) found that parents who worked at jobs with different levels of control (i.e. do they control nothing, objects, people, etc.) approach parenting differently. For example, mothers with lower levels of control at work were more likely to use physical discipline where mothers with higher levels of control were looser with rule enforcement. The authors go on to argue that these differences in parenting styles affect childhood development.

Despite the above examples, some scholarly writings on the intergenerational transmission of values have yielded decidedly mixed results. Black et al (2005) found no definitive causal link between parental education and a child's education. Mattei and Niemi's (1991) study produced mixed results when they attempted to examine the intergenerational transmission of political values. McBroom et al (1985) found that who made the decisions in the family and whether or not families made those decisions collaboratively helped in explaining some of the variance in the intergenerational transmission of values. However, they tempered their ultimate conclusions by noting that influences outside of the family can have just a great of impact on a child's value development as what occurs inside the family.

Aside from the above exceptions, the literature ultimately demonstrates solid evidence of value differentiation between persons from different class backgrounds. Furthermore, parents successfully impart values to their children. For purposes of this study, the reader should note that a person's attitude towards work appears to be directly linked to their parents' attitudes toward work. While results on the intergenerational transmission of values often require nuanced explanation, the amount of support for this idea within the field provides a solid

foundation for linking parental values related to work and the work-related values children develop into adulthood. Where this project attempts to expand on the literature is in an examination of how the values children gain from their parents and from their socioeconomic backgrounds translate into the narrative approach they use to describe street-level bureaucracy.

Based on the literature, one would expect lower and working class participants to express an aversion to bureaucratic discretion and instead focus their energy on constructing state-agent narratives. Also, one would expect participants who grew up in families where decision making was not collaborative, where parents were more authoritarian, and where the parents stressed following the rules over independent thought to favor the state-agent narrative. In contrast, one would expect middle class participants to favor autonomy and self-direction. Therefore, they would view their roles as street-level bureaucrats in terms of relationships and circumstances, not rules and regulations. Likewise, participants who grew-up in homes with parents who encouraged independent thinking, were more lax with rules enforcement, and allowed children to make decisions would be less likely to feel constrained by policy pressure, and would therefore be more likely to use the citizen-agent narrative.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

3.1 Sample Characteristics

This section provides the reader with a description of my data set and is only intended to highlight basic demographic features of the sample I studied. I originally interviewed thirteen participants for this study. The data comes from eleven semi-structured interviews with street-level bureaucrats across the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Interviews averaged approximately fifty-one minutes. I encouraged the participants to choose the location of the interview so that they would be most comfortable. However, because I asked questions about times when participants altered, adjusted, or disregarded policy as well as questions on the relationship between them and their supervisors, I specifically requested that the interviews be conducted at a location outside of their work. Only one participant insisted upon being interviewed at the office. I do not believe that this affected the responses I received. The other participants selected public places to conduct the interviews, usually either coffee shops or restaurants.

Due to the method of selection, all of the participants were highly educated. At the time of the interviews five had obtained a bachelor's degree and six had obtained a master's degree. As stated in the literature review, educational levels can affect how one utilizes discretion in a bureaucratic setting. I would expect different responses from persons who had obtained only a high school degree or had not graduated from college. Likewise, I would expect to find differences in the responses between persons who have a professional or doctoral degree and those who have a Bachelor's Degree. Due to the uniformity of the education levels of this sample, this was not an issue in this study. Five of the participants were male and six were female representing a surprisingly even distribution for purposive sampling. It should be noted that on the demographic survey, I asked participants for the number of years they worked in a

social service setting. I amended this when out on the interviews. While all of the participants worked as street-level bureaucrats, not all of them worked in social services. I explained the discrepancy by asking them to list their time working in the public sector or in a non-profit job similar to their current roles. Participants also worked for a variety of different organizations. This diversity represents organizations at the federal, state, and local levels. Based on the patterns that emerged in participant responses, it did not appear to matter for this sample at which organization one worked for, what level of government one worked or, or whether or not one worked for a government or non-profit organization. Table 3.1 lists each of the participants' demographic information.

Table 3.1 Participant Demographic Information

Participant	Race	Gender	Education	Experience	Age	Current Employer
Earl	Black	Male	Master's Degree	3-5 years	31-40	The Texas Department of Aging and Disability Services
Sam	White	Female	Bachelor's Degree	0-2 years	31-40	a local nonprofit childcare center
Perry	White	Male	Master's Degree	3-5 years	31-40	a local city government
Kevin	White	Male	Master's Degree	10-15 years	Over 50	United States Small Business Association
Janis	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Female	Bachelor's Degree	0-2 years	21-30	a local non-profit domestic violence shelter
Doris	Black	Female	Bachelor's Degree	3-5 years	21-30	United States Social Security Administration
Sean	White	Male	Master's Degree	6-10 years	41-50	Meals on Wheels
Krystal	White	Female	Bachelor's Degree	3-5 years	41-50	Meals on Wheels
Natalie	White	Female	Master's Degree	16+ years	Over 50	United States Small Business Association
Harper	White	Male	Master's Degree	6-10 years	41-50	The Texas Department of Agriculture
Pam	Black	Female	Bachelor's Degree	3-5 years	21-30	Texas Department of Family and Protective Services

Participants reported a variety of different household structures. As discussed in the literature review, differences in family structure can affect children's development and which

values they emphasize later in life. Using family structure as an independent variable to examine street-level bureaucratic discretion is beyond the purview of this paper. However, I recognize that the differences in structure could in-part explain the differences in approach to discretion. Participants were asked to check off with whom they lived for most of their childhood. Nine participants stated that they lived with their mother and father. Of those nine, one reported growing up with a mother and step-father. One reported living with only the mother for a few years after the parents split up. Another lived with the mother for a few years, then the father for a few years, and would then switch back. Two participants had parents who died during their childhood. Four participants grew up with their mother and father in the same household. Two participants reported growing up with extended family in the home.

3.2 Data Collection

As stated above, this study was based on eleven semi-structured interviews. I recruited participants using the UT-Arlington School of Urban and Public Affairs Alumni e-mail listserv. The listserv includes persons who graduated from either the undergrad or graduate program at School of Urban and Public Affairs at UT-Arlington. See Appendix C for the recruitment e-mail used. This listerv allowed me to reach thousands of persons whose college studies would naturally translate into jobs in the public or nonprofit sectors. The likelihood of finding street-level bureaucrats was higher within the group I chose to recruit from. Although many potential participants responded to my call, most either did not fit the criteria of the study or lived outside the Dallas-Fort Worth area. When a volunteer's description of their work appeared to satisfy the criteria for a street-level bureaucrat based on Lipsky's definition, I arranged to meet with them. After the interviews I utilized snowball sampling to obtain contact information for other potential participants. I decided to use snowball sampling to expand the participant pool beyond persons who graduated from UT-Arlington. This sampling technique was not random, of course, but I utilized this approach for several reasons: convenience, diversity of organizations in the sample, and uniformity in education levels of the participants. While the results are not generalizable to

all street-level bureaucrats, they are nonetheless representative of well-educated street-level bureaucrats working in government and non-profit agencies in the Dallas-Fort Worth area.

I chose qualitative methods via semi-structured interviews because as Esterberg (2002) writes this approach is useful in “exploring a topic in detail or in constructing a theory” (p. 87). This exploratory study seeks to do both. Esterberg also cautions the interviewer against revealing too much of himself in the interview. In line with this advice, I presented very little of myself to the participants. However, I believe that my identity as a street-level bureaucrat helped me understand my participants’ perspectives. My experience allowed me to better tailor my questions.

I utilized an interview guide for all the interviews (see Appendix A). However, as is the case with any semi-structured interview process, I adjusted and changed questions during the course of the interviews based on participant responses. I began the interviews with a discussion of the participants’ jobs. I started with simple questions on how they came to work for their current organization and then moved into questions regarding the clients they serve and their decision making process. I reserved the last half of the interview for questions on the participants’ childhood. I structured the interview in this way to allow time to establish rapport before moving into the more personal questions regarding family life and socioeconomic background. While all the interviews covered all the information listed in the final guide, Earl and Sam (participant code names) were not directly asked about using creativity in their work, or the final questions regarding their childhood and their jobs. These questions were not present on the original guide. However, both provided this information. I added these questions to the interview guide after participants mentioned using creativity at work and as means to comfortably end the interview. I recorded each interview on a digital voice recorder. I then listened to the interviews multiple times. During the first few listens I engaged in a detailed note taking process. I finally listened to the interviews a couple of more times to extract relevant quotes.

3.3 Measures

After I completed each interview, I engaged in a detailed note taking process. In my examination of the literature there were four groups of parental values which appeared to correlate directly with how children view work and develop work related values. The first value I examined was the family decision making process (see Appendix A, Questions 14, 18, 19, and 20). Responses ranged from homes in which participants stated that the children made most of the decisions, or no one did, to homes where one or both parents made all of the decisions. Second, I looked at whether or not participants described their parents as more authoritarian or permissive (See Appendix A, Questions 14, 15, 19, and 20). I placed participants in either the authoritarian or permissive subgroup based not only on the direct question, but on types of discipline used in the home, and the overall household atmosphere participants described. Third, I divided participants into groups based on whether they felt that their parents stressed the value of following the rules or independent thought (See Appendix A, Questions 14, 18, 20). Finally, I placed participants into groups based on how they described their parents' views toward work, specifically whether or not participants' parents viewed their jobs primarily as a means to provide for the family or as passionate endeavors (See Appendix A, Questions 11,12, and 13). I used the categories as ideal types and responses generally fell somewhere in between closer to one or the other. Table 3.2 shows the categorization for each participant's childhood family values using fictitious code names.

Table 3.2 Participant Childhood Family Values

Participant	Authoritarian v. Permissive	Independent Thought v. Following the rules	Family Decision Making Style	Caregiver Approach to work
Earl	Authoritarian	Following the Rules	Caregivers made decisions	Exhibited passion for their jobs
Sam	Permissive	Offered no definitive response	Children made decisions	Viewed as a means to provide
Perry	Permissive	Independent Thought	Collaboration between caregivers and children	Exhibited passion for their jobs
Kevin	Permissive	Independent Thought	Caregivers made decisions	Exhibited passion for their jobs
Janis	Authoritarian	Following the Rules	Caregivers made decisions	Exhibited passion for their jobs
Doris	Authoritarian	Independent Thought	Caregivers made decisions	Viewed as a means to provide
Sean	Permissive	Offered no definitive response	Children made decisions	Viewed as a means to provide
Krystal	Permissive	Independent Thought	Children made decisions	Exhibited passion for their jobs
Natalie	Authoritarian	Independent Thought	Caregivers made decisions	Viewed as a means to provide
Harper	Permissive	Following the rules	Children made decisions	Exhibited passion for their jobs
Pam	Authoritarian	Independent Thought	Collaboration between caregivers and children	Viewed as a means to provide

The ratio of permissive to authoritarian backgrounds was 45% to 55%. A total of 55% of the respondents reported that their parents stressed independent thought over following the rules. Approximately 27% reported that their parents stressed following the rules and 18% offered no definitive answer. When asked to describe who made the decisions in the home, 45% of respondents reported that their caregivers made the decisions, 36% stated that the

children made decisions for themselves, and 18% reported that decision-making was a collaboration between children and caregivers. Finally 55% of respondents reported that their parents exhibited passion for their jobs and 45% reported that their parents viewed their jobs as a means to provide for their families.

After examining parental values, I divided the group into different socioeconomic backgrounds based on four variables: parental occupation (see Appendix A, Question 12), parental education level (See Appendix B), self-reporting (See Appendix B), and the participants' general description of their home life (See Appendix A, Questions 16, 17, and 20). Participants reported a wide variety of educational backgrounds for their parents and other persons with whom they grew up. This diversity allowed for an increased level of context in constructing the participants' socioeconomic status as a child. A lack of uniformity in this category was important to the study as parental education and occupation have been shown to affect children's values (see literature review). Parental educational backgrounds ranged from grade school education only all the way up to doctoral degrees. Parents of participants held jobs ranging from unemployed or disabled, to garbage collector, electrician, government employee, elementary school teacher, housewife, nurse, manager of a construction company, pastor, and college professor. Some came from backgrounds where the parents stressed education and some came from backgrounds where their parents did not stress the importance of education.

While scholars have long recognized occupation and education as reliable indicators of class, scholarship often views self-reporting as unreliable (Girod and Tofigh, 1965). However, much of this study relies on participant perceptions and therefore their perception of their socioeconomic status as children is important. Kaufman (2003) also used self-reporting of class in his study on how a person constructs their identities. He writes "instead of relying merely on external variables such as level of education or the amount of autonomy in the workplace, analyses of social class and social transformation should consider these external variables in the context of the individual's own understanding of his or her social-class standing and, equally

important, how this social-class standing is manifested in everyday life” (p. 486). I agree with his assertion and therefore chose to include self-reporting as a measure of an individual’s class. Table 3.3 lists how I categorized each participant in groups based on socioeconomic backgrounds. Based on the above factors I determined 18% of the participants to have low income socioeconomic backgrounds, 27% to have working class SEBs, 27% to have middle class SEBs, and 27% to have upper middle class SEBs.

3.3 Participant Socioeconomic Backgrounds

Participant	Caregiver Occupations	Caregiver Education Levels	Self-Selection	Author Categorization
Earl	Pastor and Teacher	Some college credit, but less than 1 year & Bachelor's Degree	Working Class	Working Class
Sam	Electrician, worked at a warehouse, and delivered newspapers & worked off and on at various jobs.	High School graduate and Associate's Degree	Low income	Low Income
Perry	College Professor & Leadership/Development Trainer for a Telecommunications Firm	2x Doctoral Degrees	Middle Class	Upper/Middle Class
Kevin	Pastor and worked out of the home	Bachelor's Degree and Professional Degree	Middle Class	Upper/Middle Class
Janis	Military Officer and Teacher	Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree	Upper/Middle Class	Middle Class
Doris	Coordinates paperwork between hospitals and doctors & Garbage Collector	Some college credit but less than 1 year and High School graduate	Low income for ages 0-10 and upper/middle class for ages 10-18	Working Class
Sean	Disabled & maid in a hotel/made donuts at a coffee shop	12 th grade no diploma and Nursery school to 8 th grade	Low income/working class	Low income
Krystal	ER Nurse and Construction Management	2x Bachelor's Degree	Upper/Middle Class	Upper/Middle Class
Natalie	Post office employee and department manager at Montgomery Ward	High School Graduate and 3 rd grade	Working Class	Working Class
Harper	Government Geologist	Master's Degree	Middle Class	Middle Class
Pam	Secretary for Immigration/Naturalization and Post Office Employee	1 or more year of college w/no degree & High School Diploma	Upper/middle class	Middle Class

After dividing the participants into subgroups based on socioeconomic background and parental values, I then examined the responses for each group to see how they described their daily activities, their clients, their levels of freedom from supervision, what guided their decision making process (personal discretion, policy, or supervision, etc.), and finally, how they described their use of creativity in their work and/or if they ever altered or adjusted policy. These categories were used as a proxy to judge whether or not participants utilized the citizen-agent or state-agent narratives in describing their work. Participants who utilize the citizen-agent narrative were those who were more likely to make decisions based on their clients' situations and not personal self-interest. They were more comfortable utilizing personal discretion. They used policy as tool to address each client's individual situation. If policy was not adequate, citizen-agents reinterpreted or disregarded the policy. Citizen-agents described their jobs using story-telling. Participants utilizing the state-agent narrative would be more likely to describe their decision making in terms of rules, policies, and their own self-interest. State-agents would also be less likely to utilize story-telling as a means for discussing their daily activities at work. Responses from persons using the state-agent narrative rarely mentioned clients on a personal level, focused heavily on organizational pressure, and were more likely to strictly adhere to policy guidelines. Responses from persons using the citizen-agent narrative began with a description of an individual client, rarely mentioned organizational pressures, and showed comfort in liberally interpreting policy. Overall, I determined that participants were state-agents if their descriptions of their work were policy or organizationally based and citizen-agents if their descriptions of their work were more client or situationally based. Table 3.4 shows how I grouped each participant into either the state or citizen-agent narrative style; 45% used the state-agent narrative and 55% used the citizen-agent narrative.

Table 3.4 Participant Narrative Style

Participant	Citizen-Agent or State-Agent Narrative
Earl	State-Agent
Sam	Citizen-Agent
Perry	Citizen-Agent
Kevin	Citizen-Agent
Janis	State-Agent
Doris	State-Agent
Sean	Citizen-Agent
Krystal	Citizen-Agent
Natalie	State-Agent
Harper	Citizen-Agent
Pam	State-Agent

Once I classified participants into groups based on parental values, socioeconomic background, and narrative style, I then ran cross-tabulations to see if any patterns emerged. I looked for relationships between each parental value and narrative style, and then looked for relationships between socioeconomic background and narrative style. Several interesting patterns emerged.

It is important for the reader to note that this study uses attitudes as a proxy for behavior. While I did ask questions about instances regarding individual actions on policy, my goal in this study was to determine if a street-level bureaucrat's background can affect which narrative they employ to describe their work. The interviews sought to determine if persons from similar backgrounds viewed street-level bureaucracy similarly. While not necessarily the traditional approach to policy study at the street-level, using attitude as a substitute for behavior is not without precedent. Riccucci (2005) used this approach in her study of street-level bureaucrats implementing TANF policies in Michigan. She found that a worker's attitude toward TANF as a policy acted as a "reference point" in how they made their decisions (p. 102). For Riccucci, establishing a worker's attitudinal approach was just as important as examining the decisions they actually made. This study uses a similar starting point. A worker's attitude toward

street-level bureaucracy via narrative style is just as important as how they actually implement policy. I employed methods to elicit responses that would allow me to measure these attitudes.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

4.1 Parental Values

I divided the interviews into differing subcategories based on participant responses to different sets of questions. Of the eleven participants, two described the decision making process in their families as collaborative; both parents and children participated in the process. Perry stated “each of us children as well as the parents, all of us maintain our independence in decisions, yet we use consultation.” Four participants reported that the children primarily made decisions in the family. In these interviews children wielded high levels of autonomy and influence. One participant stated “I would say they [the kids] were involved in the decision making process a lot.” Another stated: “I kinda made my own decisions...my dad would always say Krystal there was no disciplining you, I would say something and you would say no! He just wouldn't do it, so I was pretty headstrong...I would just do whatever.” The final five participants reported that one or both of their parents were responsible for decision making. These participants grew-up in families where children had little or no say on family decisions. Kevin stated “mom and dad would decide something and tell us what the decision was. There was no penetrating that.” Not only did the parents make the decisions, but those decisions possessed an impenetrable finality.

When asked about whether they would describe their parents as more authoritarian or permissive, four participants described their parents as permissive. These participants described growing up with little discipline. They were also quick to describe their parents as permissive. Five of the participants reported mixed results. They viewed one parent as authoritarian and another as permissive. Several of these participants expressed hesitancy in answering this question. They could not commit to describing their household as either

authoritarian or permissive, but felt it necessary to articulate a divided description of how each parent acted. Of those five, I classified two of the participants as having permissive backgrounds and three as authoritarian. I based this decision on the participants' descriptions of rule enforcement and discipline in the home. One of the five participants reported a dichotomously mixed background. When asked about her parents, Sam reported "definitely my dad was authoritarian, absolutely because God said it is this way and this is what it's going to be and you need to follow the rules...my mother...she's as permissive as you can get." I ended up classifying her background as more permissive than authoritarian based on the amount time she spent with each parent, how her parents enforced rules, and the high level of autonomy she exhibited as a child. Finally, two of the participants described their households as authoritarian. Like the participants who described their parents as permissive, this group responded quickly and assuredly. Doris said "authority, I'm the momma I'm the daddy...it was just everything, this is what it is, I'm the mom don't ask, did you just ask me why? Cause I'm the mom and I said so."

I also asked participants to discuss which value they felt their parents stressed more strongly: following the rules or independent thought. Three participants unequivocally stated that their parents stressed following the rules. Janis laughed when I asked her this question and stated "following the rules, did you catch the Catholic part? Ok, just checking." The question to her was so obvious that she implied it was not even worth asking. Six of the participants reported that their parents stressed independent thought over following the rules. Perry said, "Independent thought, we were about as much independent thinkers as you can be...our [his parents] philosophy has always been to let ya'll do it...let ya'll make your decisions and do your thing and take our hands off the brakes." Lastly, there were two participants who could not offer a definitive description of which value their parents stressed more. Each offered a token answer to the question, but all were hesitant and could not provide specific examples to back up their weak assertions.

The final parental value I asked participants to discuss involved how the participant's parents viewed working. Five participants reported that their parents viewed work as a means to an end. For this group, a job was something one did to make money and support a family. While these participants reported that their parents may have liked work, they did not feel that their parents viewed work as an endeavor of passion, but instead one of necessity. Doris stated that her mother "felt like she had to work because she had three kids by 21, so it wasn't like something that she wanted to do it was like it pays the bills." In describing his mother, Sean stated "for her work was something you had to do." This group had parents who worked to provide. Six of the participants reported that their parents expressed passion about their jobs and thrived in their fields. They talked specifically about how their parents enjoyed working in careers that contributed to society, had high levels of security, were intellectually stimulating, and allowed them to interact with others. I encourage the reader to re-visit Table 3.1 to see each participant's categorization.

4.1.1 Relationships Between Work Identity and Family Values

4.1.1.1 Family Decision Making

In looking at the sample in total, I noticed only one defined relationship between the participants' family decision making process and whether or not they constructed their work identities using the state-agent or citizen agent narratives. Persons who reported that the children made the decisions in their family were more likely to utilize the citizen-agent narrative. Three of the four participants in this sub-category described their job strictly based on situational and client pressures. For example, in an approximately fifty minute interview, Sean utilized stories about clients eight times to describe the problems he faced at work, what guides his decision making process, and times in which he bent or altered policy. He shaped his identity as a street-level bureaucrat based not on policies, rules, and regulations, but on the clients he delivered services to. In a similar vein, when describing one of the difficulties in his work (being seen as the enemy), Harper stated, "you're going to meet people and they're gonna say I didn't

do anything, I'm not saying you did, I'm just doing what I have to do, ask you questions, I'm here for you to tell your side of the story, and I think my background put me in good standing cause I'm used to talking to people." He constructed the problems he encountered and the solutions to those problems, not in terms of policy but in terms of client interactions. The fourth participant's description was somewhat mixed, but she leaned toward the citizen-agent narrative. She described her decision making process in terms of a rebellion to "ridiculous" rules. However, her decisions on when to break the rules were neither arbitrary nor designed to make her job easier (either of which would be more state-agent narrative). Instead, she articulated a citizen-agent narrative in seeing her work as an opportunity to "change the world." The pressure she felt to break rules came from her desire to create a more enjoyable experience for her clients.

Participants who described growing up in households where the decision making process involved a collaboration between parents and children, or described households where the parents made the decisions used both state and citizen-agent narratives. There was little internal consistency in either of the groups. A slight majority of the participants who reported that their parents made the majority of the decisions also constructed their work identities using the state-agent narrative. However, a slight majority is hardly enough to argue a strong relationship. Within this sample of eleven street-level bureaucrats, persons who came from backgrounds where the children made the majority of the household decisions describe their work using the citizen-agent narrative. There does not appear to be a relationship between participants whose parents made the decisions or collaborated with them in making the decisions and use of the state or citizen-agent narrative.

4.1.1.2 Authoritarian or Permissive

An almost perfect match in responses existed within this subcategory. Of the six participants who described having backgrounds where their parents were more permissive than authoritarian, all utilized the citizen-agent narrative. As a group, these participants were more likely to use stories about clients when they discussed how they made decisions and what

guides their decisions. They were more likely to go above and beyond policy in their work with clients and see their jobs as missions or as some called them, “quests.” Their identities as street-level bureaucrats were not dependent upon organizational pressures, supervisory pressures, or policy pressures. Instead, they constructed their identities through their clients.

Krystal typified this group. She was quick to describe her father as permissive. She reported that she did not receive any discipline because she was too stubborn to listen. She offered no hesitation when describing her childhood as more permissive than authoritarian. She stated, “My dad would always say Krystal there was no disciplining you, I would say something and you would say no! He just wouldn’t do it, so I was pretty headstrong...I would just do whatever, and I’m the stronger one [sibling] because of that.” Clearly rules and discipline were not part of her childhood. Her responses to questions about her job typified the citizen-agent narrative. In discussing the importance of her job, she stated “I can’t do something I don’t believe in.” She was proud to say “my clients really open up to me and tell me things because I go into their home and they’ve got all my attention and they’ve got me and I don’t want anything from them and I’m going to give them something and make sure they’re ok.” On the section of the interview guide focused on her work, Krystal answered questions almost exclusively through stories about her clients. Her use of the citizen-agent narrative pervaded the entire interview. While Krystal’s responses fit perfectly as a representation of the relationship between a permissive household during childhood and the use of the citizen-agent narrative, her answers were not unique. Each of the six participants within the permissive subcategory offered descriptions of their jobs as street-level bureaucrats that fit more closely with the citizen-agent narrative.

In contrast, persons who described their parents as more authoritarian tended to favor Lipsky’s state-agent narrative in describing their work as street-level bureaucrats. This subgroup’s responses often involved references to policy pressures and constraints. This group of five participants was also more likely to discuss organizational pressures, changes to

organizational structure, adjustments in policy, and limits to time and resources. Several of the participants did use stories when talking about their work or about their clients. However, they were just as likely to answer questions about clients in abstract terms or with a specific reference to policy. In the stories this subgroup of participants told, policy constraints or changes to the rules emerged as central themes. They based their description of street-level bureaucracy on how they applied the rules, instead of on the uniqueness of a client's individual circumstances. These findings do not mean that the subgroup took its jobs less seriously or approached it with less enthusiasm. Nor does it imply that these participants viewed their work as any less important. Instead, participants from authoritarian backgrounds constructed their identities as street-level bureaucrats not through the identities of the clients, but instead through organizational and policy pressures.

Janis typified the relationship between the description of strict authoritarian parents and the state-agent narrative. She described her upbringing as very authoritarian based on her parents' religious backgrounds and careers. When asked whether or not they were permissive or authoritarian she stated, "Authoritarian, in everything. They are very black and white people. They do not believe that there is a gray area. They do not believe that critical thinking should always happen. They think that there is a time and place to think about the critical issues." She describes her work in terms of the organization's goals. When discussing her clients, she described their situations in terms of how their circumstances will affect their ability to fulfill the goals of the organization. She also discussed the ideas of limited resources, not only with money, but with her time and energy. While answering a question on what guides her decision making process, she stated

"looking at the program and the decision I make on the level that I am the case manager and I'm at the bottom rung of the agency and looking at it from that view where everybody deserves housing under any circumstances, but also looking at it from the flip side where you have X amount of money to spend, this is why you spend, this is how you're supposed to spend it, this is what the goals are, it's kind of like this overlapping of like a worker bee versus an administrator kind of view point."

At no time during this exchange does Janis talk about a particular client or even the identity of the group of clients she interacts with. Instead, her focus is on the organization, its rules, and its boundaries.

4.1.1.3 Independent Thought or Following the Rules

No strong relationships existed between this parental value and whether a participant utilized the state-agent or citizen-agent narrative. Of the six participants who reported that their parents stressed independent thought over following the rules, half described their jobs in terms of being state-agents while the other half utilized the citizen-agent narrative. This group represented a heightened level of diversity in other categories as well. They reported different styles of decision making, a differing level of investments in their clients, and different levels of comfort in using discretion. Some relied on policy to make decisions. Others utilized their supervisors and the rest relied on their experience and personal judgment. Based on the high level of differing responses, whether or not a parent stressed independent thought did not appear to correlate with how the street-level bureaucrats approached their work, viewed their clients, or viewed themselves as agents.

The two participants whose parents represented either a mix of independent thought and following the rules, or whose parents did not stress either value, were more likely to view their work as citizen-agents. Because the households did not stress either value, it is impossible to claim that either independent thought or following the rules impacted their construction of their identities as street-level bureaucrats. I also do not believe that the lack of emphasis on these values impacted their approach to work. Based on the inconsistency of responses in the entire sample regarding these values, it is more likely that another set of parental values was more influential on determining the position a participant took toward their jobs.

Of the three participants who reported that their parents stressed following the rules over independent thought, two constructed their work identities in terms of the state-agent narrative and one utilized the citizen agent narrative. While this group showed more internal

consistency than the above group, I believe that the responses differed enough within the subsample to dismiss any relationship. Two of the participants clearly defined their work identities in terms of being a state-agent. The other clearly defined his work in terms of being a citizen-agent. As with the above groups, I believe that it is more likely that other parental values influenced the street-level bureaucrat's description of client interactions, reliance on policy, and job identity construction. As I will discuss later in this work, I was surprised by these findings. I expected there to be a stronger relationship between the values of independent thought and following the rules and a worker's use of the state-agent or citizen-agent narratives.

4.1.1.4 Parental Views on Work

Several interesting patterns emerged when I examined the relationship between the state versus citizen-agent narrative and how the participants described their parents' views on work. In looking strictly at the sample in terms of two groups, those participants whose parents felt more of a passion toward their work were more likely to use the citizen-agent narrative. Four of the six people within this subgroup utilized the citizen-agent narrative. Interestingly, when one views this subgroup as a continuum, it is clear that the parents who exhibited more passion toward their work were more likely to have children who described their jobs as citizen-agents. They described their work decisions and work identities through their interactions with their clients, as opposed to organizational and policy pressures. There was one notable outlier. Janis reported that her parents exhibited high levels of passion for their work. One was a teacher and the other an officer in the military. Based on her descriptions of her parents' personalities and her description of the jobs they performed, both of her parents appear to approach their work from a very rules oriented place, much like state-agents. She shared her parents' passion for her work, but like her parents does so from the state-agent narrative. Organizational and policy pressures influence her decision making far more than her interactions with clients. Interestingly, the results indicate that that parental passion for employment is a value that may

transmit through generations. Furthermore, parental passion for work correlates with the use of the citizen agent narrative.

In contrast those who stated that for their parents work as just a means to support the family showed an affinity for the state-agent narrative. Five of the participants reported that for their parents work was something they did to make money. This categorization does not mean that these parents did not work hard. Nor does it mean that they did not enjoy their work. Several of the participants reported that their parents worked long hours and/or worked multiple jobs. Some reported that their parents enjoyed their work and the people they worked alongside. These participants instead reported that their parents were more likely to view their job as a rational pursuit of means to provide for their families. It was something they “just did.” Of the five participants, three described their own approach to work as street-level bureaucrats through the lens of the state-agent narrative. Unlike the group whose parents described their work as more of a passion or calling, this subgroup did not show consistency along a continuum. In other words, it did not matter with what level the parents viewed their jobs as simply jobs. Either end of the continuum was just as likely to produce a worker who used the state-agent narrative as it was to produce a worker who utilized the citizen-agent narrative. This inconsistency indicates that there is a very weak relationship between a parent viewing their job as a means to an end and whether or not a street-level bureaucrat constructs their identities in terms of the state-agent or citizen-agent narrative. Therefore, while the relationship clearly exists between passion for work and street-level bureaucrats’ use of the citizen-agent narrative, a parents’ view of their job as a functional means to an end does not strongly correlate with which narrative the street-level bureaucrat employees.

4.2. Socioeconomic Background (SEB)

Based on participant responses, I categorized the interviews into four different socioeconomic groupings: poor/low income, working class, middle class, and upper-middle class. As noted above in the methods section, I based these groupings on participant responses

to the demographic survey. Most of the participants self selected into the categories under which I placed them. However, as participants began to discuss their childhood background, many provided a more in-depth analysis of their socioeconomic status that ran contrary to their self-selection. Therefore, I based categorization not only on the demographic survey, but on participant responses.

Like several other of the independent variables in this study, the reader will find it helpful to think of socioeconomic status (SES) as a continuum. While clear lines of demarcation do exist between some of the groups, this is not always the case. The most notable example of this is in the difference between working class and middle class. I believe that the differences between these groups are significant. However, I recognize that researcher bias plays a role in setting the boundaries, particularly when using qualitative methods. Please refer to the methods section for a detailed description on how participants were categorized into different groups.

I determined that two participants fit into the poor/low income category. These persons self-selected into the low income group. They were direct in their description of their household SES growing up. Sean stated “we were pretty poor, we didn’t have much, a lot of hand-me downs, Salvation Army, Goodwill stuff, it was pretty difficult.” Sam offered no hesitation when selecting the low income box on the demographic survey. Next along the continuum were three participants who I determined to be working class. Two of the three self-selected into working class and the third selected low income for the first half of her childhood and upper middle class for the last half of her childhood. However, her answers to the demographic survey as well as her description of her childhood clearly situate within the working class. Next, three of the participants had middle class childhoods. This was the most difficult group to categorize. Two of the participants self-selected into upper-middle class. Again, their responses to questions on the demographic surveys place them within the middle class. One of the three middle class participants could have been placed in the upper middle class, however the description of her childhood coupled with parental occupations more readily fit her within the middle class. This is

a case where a different researcher looking at the same data may disagree. Finally, I classified three participants as upper middle class. One self-selected into upper/middle class and the other two self-selected into middle class. I had no reservations about my categorization of these individuals. It was clear that their backgrounds met the criteria for upper/middle class.

4.2.1 Relationships Between Work Identity and Socioeconomic Background

The interviews yielded a strong relationship between socioeconomic background and which narrative the participant employed to construct their identities as street-level bureaucrats. With two exceptions, the responses followed a continuum from citizen-agent to state-agent back to citizen-agent. The participants who described their childhood as poorer constructed their identities using the citizen-agents narrative. As the classification of participants moved toward the working and middle classes, participants became more likely to describe their jobs in terms of the state-agent narrative. Finally, at the wealthier end of the continuum, participants viewed their work in terms of the citizen-agent narrative. There were two important outliers. Janis who was toward the upper/middle class end of the continuum viewed herself as a state-agent. Harper, who was more middle class, viewed himself as a citizen-agent. Had Janis employed the citizen-agent narrative and Harper utilized the state agent narrative, the continuum would have matched perfectly with the participants' socioeconomic backgrounds. The rest of this section outlines the results within each socioeconomic subgroup, and concludes with a more detailed examination of the outliers.

Both participants classified as poor or low income described their jobs using the citizen-agent narrative. Both were likely to make decisions in terms of clients, especially if the decision benefited the client. When asked to summarize what he viewed as the connection between his childhood and his approach to his work, Sean stated,

“When I was a kid and into a teenager when having the flexibility, well I don’t know if it was flexibility, but the freedom to go out and do what I wanted, I did a lot of exploring...and I would investigate...I was constantly trying to figure out how things worked...It was like having this big lab to work in...I think that may have been influential early on in me, just looking at things and trying to figure out, and looking at something that’s complex and saying that doesn’t fit...and that’s sort of just growing up and living

life with that freedom to just be curious about things and really trying to look into things and investigate things...I think I just applied that to a different area of my life.”

Note that in this quote he mentions the words “freedom” and “flexibility.” He talks about investigating a complex world. For the participants who grew-up in socioeconomically disadvantaged homes, both reported having this freedom. Neither were bound by rules or constrained by authority. Likewise, as street-level bureaucrats, the low income participants do not view their work world as a minefield of rules and regulations. They make decisions based on their interactions with their clients.

All three of the participants from working class backgrounds utilized the state-agent narrative when describing their jobs. Two of the three participants classified as being from middle class backgrounds utilized the state-agent narrative. Therefore, of the six participants classified as either working or middle class, five employed the state-agent narrative. This group of five was more likely to cite policy when making decisions. They were more likely to express discomfort in using their discretion. They made their decisions based neither on the individuality of the client nor on their relationship with their client. Instead, this group of five stressed the role of policy, their supervisors, or the mission of the agency. Earl stated “I don’t try to wiggle to give somebody more hours just because I feel sorry for them.” The plight of the individual client was not his concern. He viewed himself as a successful street-level bureaucrat because he implemented the policies consistently to each client regardless of individual circumstances. While a bit more tempered in her response than Earl, Natalie echoed his sentiments when she stated, “one of the challenges that we have is that we are a government agency with a mission and sometimes it’s hard to keep that balance there, where we still have this mission but we have these other things that we have to do exactly precisely right you know because you’re still trying to get that money out there.” She recognizes the “mission” of her agency, but then immediately states that the rules and regulations temper any desire to act as a missionary. With the exception of Harper, all of the participants from working and middle class socioeconomic

backgrounds utilized similar narrative styles as did Earl and Natalie. The state-agent narrative pervaded the median of the sample.

I classified three participants as upper/middle class. All three used the citizen-agent narrative when describing their work. Interestingly, as a subgroup, these three participants were the most likely to use storytelling when discussing their jobs and who they interact with. While this was also true of the lower income subgroup, the use of storytelling was more prominent amongst the upper/middle class participants. They viewed policy as either a means to get clients services or an obstacle to overcome in getting clients services. They constructed the entirety of their identity as street-level bureaucrats based on their clients' identities and their interactions with those clients. For example, Krystal reported "I have sole discretion. Being that I am a mother of a disabled kid, I understand how hard it can be for caretakers ok...I will make an exception [to giving services to a client that would also help their caretaker]." Krystal shapes her decision making via her own experiences and identity as a mother, then based on who the client is, and finally makes decisions that go above and beyond what policy dictates. Her statement typifies the citizen-agent narrative approach. In a similar vein, Kevin stated that his childhood has "given me a different viewpoint of what government is supposed to do...my viewpoint is that we are there to serve, and in the small little bit of the little tiny program I've got, my goal is to make certain that I have served those people. It's the highlight of my day when someone says, I just can't believe you responded that fast." He views his success or failure as a street-level bureaucrat in terms of service to the clients and in being able to provide the client with resources. The identity of the client is more important to the construction of his work identity than how he operates within organizational guidelines.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The data yielded several interesting results. I want to begin, however, with a brief overview of which of the variables showed weak relationships. First, whether or not participants described their parents as more focused on independent thought or following the rules showed a weak relationship with which narrative style the street-level bureaucrat employed. At the outset of the study I expected persons from households where parents stressed independence to be more likely to employ the citizen-agent narrative. Likewise, I expected persons raised in more rules oriented households to describe their work in terms of the state-agent narrative. My theory behind my pre-study assumptions was that persons from environments with a focus on rules and regulations would view their work through the lens of rules and regulations. This did not prove to be the case. It is possible that this set of parental values did not transmit between generations. It is also possible that I improperly worded the questions or that there were problems with this group's self-reporting. However, I believe that independence is not necessarily an essential characteristic of street-level bureaucrats who use the citizen-agent narrative. The ultimate difference between state and citizen agents is not in their willingness to act independent of policy. It is instead a difference between how they construct their identities as workers, either in terms of organizational and policy pressures, or in terms of their relationships with their clients.

Secondly, there was only one pattern that emerged between the decision-making style a family adopted and whether or not a worker utilized the citizen or state agent narrative. There was no relationship between the uses of a particular narrative and if a participant grew up in a household where parents made decisions or parents and children collaborated to make decisions. There was one notable exception within this subcategory. Persons who reported

growing up in households where the children made the majority of the decisions were more likely to describe their work using the citizen-agent narrative. This group was not accustomed to making decisions based on rules and guidelines. The formative organization in these participants' lives lacked structure. Therefore, they made decisions based on the situation they found themselves in and the people they interacted with. This clearly translated into how they viewed their jobs as street-level bureaucrats. This group described their work in terms of their clients and in terms of the situations under which their clients operated. Policy and organizational guidelines were ancillary characters to their narratives.

A stronger relationship existed when I examined how participants reported that their parents viewed work. The street-level bureaucrats who stated that their parents saw their jobs as careers and were passionate about the work they did were more likely to view their own jobs as citizen-agents. This value worked on a continuum such that the more passion the participant described their parents exhibiting, the stronger the use of the citizen-agent narrative. Citizen-agents exhibit a personal connection to their work because they link themselves to their clients. They do not make decisions based on policy, but instead by avoiding the strictures of policy and deciding cases based on getting to know their clients' individual circumstances. These participants saw their parents exhibit a personal connection to their jobs and this connection translated between generations. In contrast, participants whose parents saw work as a means to provide for a family, a means to make money, or simply a job were more likely to employ the state-agent narrative. While in some cases equally passionate about their work, participants lacked a personal connection to the job because they described their work not in terms of clients, but in terms of rules and regulations. Again, I believe that this value translated from parent to child. This finding supports Kohn's (1972) work. Kohn found that parents transmitted work related values to their children in attempt to prepare them for their future roles. Interestingly, this latter relationship was not as intense as the former. The weaker the bond

between the parent and their job did not necessarily translate into a stronger use of the state-agent narrative from the participant.

The last set of parental values I examined was whether or not the participants described their parents and home-lives as more authoritarian or permissive. An almost perfect relationship existed within this subgroup. Six participants described their parents as more permissive. All six utilized the citizen-agent narrative. This group was not raised in environments where rules were the focus. Quite the opposite as many of the six described growing up with no rules. Also, the organization under which they developed their values (i.e. the family) possessed little structure. This group experienced little organizational pressure to behave according to certain guidelines. Participants from permissive households often decided how to act based on their own interpretation of events. I saw this approach translate when participants described how they acted as street-level bureaucrats. Participants from permissive households typified citizen-agents and allowed situations and clients to determine their behavior. This finding appears to support Lareau's research on the differences between "concerted cultivation" and the "logic of childrearing as the accomplishment of natural growth." Participants, who grew up in a home where their caregivers cultivated a highly regulated, scheduled, and rules-oriented home atmosphere, were more likely to use the state-agent narrative. Likewise, participants who grew-up in homes with little regulation and more independence were more likely to utilize the citizen-agent narrative. My findings differ from Lareau's work in that she interrelates a family's socioeconomic status with parental values. I separated the two and found the even without an examination of socioeconomic status, a relationship exists between a participant's narrative style if their parents were more authoritarian or permissive.

In contrast, participants who described their parents and households as more authoritarian were more likely to utilize the state-agent narrative when discussing their work. Participants described authoritarian households as organizations under which parents clearly set the rules and expected the children to act in accordance with those rules. Parents

implemented highly structured family organizations and the children acted in response to the organizational pressures and regulations. The relationship between the state-agent narrative and this type of childhood environment could not be clearer. This group of street-level bureaucrats constructed their identities and the identities of their clients in terms of policy. They did not tend to act based on the uniqueness of their clients' situations nor did they act based on their personal relationship with their clients. Instead street-level bureaucrats from authoritarian backgrounds acted in response to prescribed policies and organizational rules. While these results are similar to the subcategory of independent thought versus following the rules, it is important for the reader to note that there was only moderate overlap between the two categories. Some participants reported that their parents encouraged independence, but were also authoritarian. Others reported that their parents were more permissive, but still encouraged their children to abide by the rules. It appears that stressing of a particular value set did not translate as clearly as the creation of an overall environment. The parental focus on certain values did not relate as strongly as the family dynamic the parents created.

The second broad category of relationships I examined was between the type of narrative employed and a participant's socioeconomic background as a child. Socioeconomic background was the strongest relationship I found between a person's use of the citizen versus state agent narrative. This was especially true if one views both the independent and dependent variables along a continuum. In this case, the relationship would be U shaped. Persons with the lowest socioeconomic backgrounds were far more likely to construct a citizen-agent narrative. As the continuum moves into the working class, participants began employing the state-agent narrative. This trend continued into the middle class and then weakens as one moves toward the participants with the highest socioeconomic backgrounds. This group was far more likely to use the citizen-agent narrative. As I discussed above, there were only two exceptions to the continuum. In the middle class category Janis was ranked higher than Harper. She constructed her identity as a street-level bureaucrat in terms of being a state-agent whereas Harper saw

himself as a citizen-agent. Had Janis employed the citizen-agent narrative and Harper utilized the state agent narrative, the continuum would have maintained a perfect U shape.

Due to the methods employed, I cannot offer the reader a definitive explanation as to why socioeconomic background so strongly related with the participants' use of the state-agent versus citizen-agent narratives. However, I can theorize. First, the most interesting aspect of this relationship was the U shape. The similarities between the lower and upper class backgrounds suggest both a common household structure and a similar approach to rules. Participants from upper and lower socioeconomic backgrounds grew-up in homes with a less rigid structure. The organization under which they developed was not tightly regulated. This does not mean that the family lacked coherence or was dispersed. Instead, it means that persons in the family were allowed to act independent of the family. The family structure did not appear to guide the actions of these individuals. In addition, both groups were raised environments that were not focused on rules and regulations. Instead, family members made decisions based on the individual circumstances of a situation. I believe that children internalized the above values and then called upon these values when describing their work as street-level bureaucrats.

In contrast to the lower and upper class subgroups, middle and working class participants' parents fostered a more tightly regulated organizational home life. These participants were not free to make independent decisions based on the unique set of presented circumstances. Instead, participants from these backgrounds made decisions within the family's policy framework. Also, this group approached rules differently than the lower and upper class participants. Rules were guides not obstacles and therefore they governed their lives by a set of rules and regulations. Actions depended upon the set of rules under which a participant operated. Again, these values appear to translate into street-level bureaucracy as the middle and working class participants described their work in terms of being state-agents. This is not

surprising as state-agents construct their identities as workers through the organizational pressures and policy rules under which they operate.

Another theory for the U-shaped distribution of responses could be the ways in which different classes view the most effective means of advancement. It is possible that the higher end of the SES spectrum believes that their innate abilities trump policy and that to help both the clients and themselves, they must be willing to set aside policy directives and operate outside of the rules as citizen-agents. It is also possible that the lower classes grew-up in an environment which repeatedly showed them that reliance on guidelines and regulations was fruitless so there was no advantage for them to construct their work-related identities in terms of rules. In contrast, middle and working class participants grew-up in environments where they operated under structured guidelines and living within these parameters was met with reward and advancement. It is possible, therefore, that due to their class backgrounds these participants believed that the best way to achieve act as state-agents. They would be far less comfortable in seeing themselves as citizen-agents.

This study has several deficiencies that I wish to address. First, this work was based on a limited sample of a carefully selected group of people. The results are not generalizable to the broader population. However, I contend that the sample accurately represents highly educated street-level bureaucrats in the Dallas/Fort Worth Metroplex. Second, and related to the first issue, this work focuses on relationships and not statistical correlations. Scholars often use qualitative methods when trying to build a theory. This work does that. Quantitative methods would be more effective in determining the causal link between one's background and an approach to street-level bureaucratic discretion. Third, it is impossible for one to truly examine each of the values I presented in a vacuum. It is more correct to state that all of the above variables influence how the street-level bureaucrat constructs his/her work identity. This is a problem with much of qualitative research. Each of the variables ultimately affects each other and drawing lines between them is a relatively arbitrary process. Finally, this work focused on

parental values and a person's socioeconomic background. I argue that these two independent variables lead one to possess a unique worldview which ultimately impacts whether a street-level bureaucrat is a state-agent or citizen-agent. However, these are obviously not the only background variables which could cause a person to develop a state or citizen-agent identity. My study does not examine unique racial identities, gender differences, or generational differences. All of these factors could influence how one delivers policy and this is ultimately the point of this work. The scholarly community needs to begin undertaking a detailed examination of how a street-level bureaucrat's identity affects his/her work.

I want to conclude with a brief critique of Maynard-Moody and Musheno's study. Their development of the state-agent versus citizen-agent approach to street-level bureaucracy is both unique and brilliant. However, within their writings is an implicit value judgment on which style is more desirable in a street-level bureaucrat. They clearly favor the citizen-agent narrative. Maynard-Moody and Musheno tend to write about citizen-agents as persons who work harder for their clients, are willing to transcend the confines of policy, often against their own self-interest. I disagree with this value judgment. It is true that the state-agents in my exploratory study constructed their identities as workers in terms of rules and regulations. They were less likely to discuss individual clients and circumstances. Many were more comfortable implementing policy as written regardless of who the client was or what situation they were in. However, both styles have merit. I also found that both sets of participants worked hard for their clients. All possessed a passion for their work which transcended one's narrative preference. My work offers no judgment as to which approach is more effective or desirable in street-level bureaucracy. I encourage the policy community to maintain this neutrality in any future work on the differences between the state and citizen-agent narratives.

This study demonstrates that a relationship exists between a street-level bureaucrat's background and his/her view of street-level work. Different values and different socioeconomic backgrounds affect the construction of different work-related identities. These identities shape

decision making. How street-level bureaucrats construct job related identities has implications not only for future academic work, but for the larger policy community. To effectively harness the positive potential of bureaucratic discretion, persons at all levels of the policy process must understand the complex relationship between the street-level bureaucrat and policy delivery. Street-level bureaucrats are not objective implementers of policy; nor are they simply actors responding to external stimuli either in the form of policy pressures or relationships with clients. Instead street-level bureaucrats bring the totality of their identity to bear when they make decisions. To ignore the environments under which these individuals were socialized into, one risks overlooking critical variables that contribute to how the street-level worker constructs his/her work identity. The genesis of the decision making process forms within this constructed identity. Therefore, organizational leaders, supervisors, and the street-level bureaucrats themselves must better understand how social backgrounds impact one's view of street-level work, especially if the actors desire a deeper comprehension of the complexities inherent to policy implementation.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview Guide

(These interview guide questions are a sample and may evolve based on participant responses).

1. Tell me how you came to work at (Name of Organization)
Can you describe what you studied in college?
2. Describe a typical day at work
3. Tell me about the clients your organization works with
4. Describe how much freedom from supervision you typically have in an average workday
5. Can you describe what types of decisions you make on a daily basis regarding your work?
6. How do you arrive at your decisions?
What guides you? (Supervisor, personal judgment, policy, etc.)
7. Does your supervisor ask for your input in making decisions?
If so how?
8. Can you describe a time where you were free to use your own creativity to do your job?
9. Can you describe an example of time where you altered, adjusted, or disregarded policy?
Did you feel comfortable doing this? Why or why not?
What influenced your decision to alter, adjust, or disregard policy?
10. Can you describe a time when your decision to alter, adjust, or disregard policy backfired?
11. How did/do your parents or caregivers respond to your career/course of study in college?
12. What did/do your parents or caregivers do for work?
13. Do you remember how they felt about their jobs? If so, how did you know? If not, why not?
14. How were decisions made within your family?
15. Can you describe the type of discipline your parents or caregivers used?
16. Did you participate in any team sports as a child? If so, which ones?
17. Did you participate in any extracurricular activities as a child? If so, which ones?
18. Which do you feel like your parents/caregivers stressed more independent thought or following the rules? Why?
19. Would you describe your parent or caregiver's style of parenting as more authoritative or permissive?
Why? Can you provide an example?
20. How do you feel that your childhood impacted your current approach to your work?

21. Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Participant Code #

Please place a check mark next to the blank space which best describes you. For non multiple choice questions, please enter the information in the black space provided.

Age:

21 to 30 _____

31 to 40 _____

41 to 50 _____

Over 50 _____

Are you Hispanic or Latino?

Yes _____

No _____

How do you define your racial background? (Please check all that apply)

American Indian or Alaska Native _____

Asian _____

Black or African American _____

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander _____

White _____

Other (please specify) _____

What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?

Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, AB, BS, BSW) _____

Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA) _____

Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) _____

Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD) _____

For how many years have you been employed in any social service related field (this can include internships)?

0-2 years _____

3-5 years _____

6-10 years _____

10-15 years _____

16+ years _____

What is the name of the organization for which you are currently employed?

What is your job title? _____

With whom did you live for most of your childhood (Please check all that apply)?

Mother _____

Father _____

Stepmother _____

Stepfather _____

Grandmother _____

Grandfather _____

Other (please specify) _____

What was your mother's highest degree or level of school completed?

No schooling completed _____
Nursery school to 8th grade _____
9th, 10th or 11th grade _____
12th grade, no diploma _____
High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) _____
Some college credit, but less than 1 year _____
1 or more years of college, no degree _____
Associate degree _____
Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, AB, BS) _____
Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA) _____
Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) _____
Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD) _____

What was your father's highest degree or level of school completed?

No schooling completed _____
Nursery school to 8th grade _____
9th, 10th or 11th grade _____
12th grade, no diploma _____
High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) _____
Some college credit, but less than 1 year _____
1 or more years of college, no degree _____
Associate degree _____
Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, AB, BS) _____
Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA) _____
Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) _____
Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD) _____

If you did not live with your mother or father, what was your primary caregiver's highest degree or level of school completed? (Please answer this question only if your primary caregiver was someone other than your biological mother or father)

No schooling completed _____
Nursery school to 8th grade _____
9th, 10th or 11th grade _____
12th grade, no diploma _____
High school graduate - high school diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) _____
Some college credit, but less than 1 year _____
1 or more years of college, no degree _____
Associate degree _____
Bachelor's degree (for example: BA, AB, BS) _____
Master's degree (for example: MA, MS, MEng, MEd, MSW, MBA) _____
Professional degree (for example: MD, DDS, DVM, LLB, JD) _____
Doctorate degree (for example: PhD, EdD) _____

Which best describes your family's socioeconomic status as a child: **Low Income**_____,
Working Class_____, **Middle Class** _____, **Upper Middle Class**_____, **Upper Class**_____

Please feel free to add any additional comments or questions below, and thank you for your participation in this study.

APPENDIX C

SOLICITATION E-MAIL

Dear UT-Arlington SUPA Graduate:

My name is Jesse Booher and I am a graduate student at the University of Texas at Arlington. I am currently conducting a research project on how an individual's background (such as family and education) influences decision making in social service settings. My goal is two-fold: to foster a more nuanced understanding of complex decisions in the social services, and to understand the ways in which family background and work coincide.

If you work for a government or nonprofit organization and are in a non-supervisory role, I hope you will allow me to interview you about your experiences. The interviews should average about an hour and can be scheduled at a time and location of your choosing, preferably outside of your office.

If you would like to participate, please e-mail me back. I would also be more than happy to discuss the project further if you have any questions or concerns. My e-mail address is jesse.booher@mavs.uta.edu, and my phone number is 817-475-8540.

My thanks for your consideration

Jesse Booher
Candidate, MA in Sociology & MA in Urban Affairs
The University of Texas at Arlington

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Jesse Booher graduated in 2008 with a degree in Sociology and Political Science from Austin College. In the summer of 2011 he completed two Master's degrees in Sociology and Urban Affairs at the University of Texas in Arlington. His work in graduate school has focused on policy implementation at the street-level, with a specific focus on the identities of street-level bureaucrats. Jesse currently works as an Investigator for Child Protective Services in Dallas.