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California School Psychologists' Advocacy Efforts Related to Contractual Caseloads

Tess A. Melendrez
Walden University

Walden University

College of Health Sciences and Public Policy

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Tess A. Melendrez

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Review Committee
Dr. Mary Brown, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Victoria Landu-Adams, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Victor Ferreros, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
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Abstract

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by

Tess A. Melendrez

MA, Chapman University, 2013

BS, California State University, Fullerton, 2008

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

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Abstract

Despite the evolving role of school psychologists, policies have failed to address the high student-to-school psychologist ratios. The purpose of this study was to determine the predictability of contractual caseload advocacy among California school psychologists and their use of resources to engage in policy-oriented learning strategies. A quantitative research design was used, and data were collected from school psychologists in California (N = 138) who completed an online questionnaire. The theoretical foundation was Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's advocacy coalition framework. Ordinal logistic regression indicated that school psychologists' location and job were not statistically significant predictive factors for advocacy for contractual caseloads. Binary logistic regression was used to analyze data, and advocacy for other issues within the field of school psychology and NASP membership were found to be statistically significant predictive factors of school psychologists' use of NASP resources to engage in policy-oriented learning. While statistically significant predictive factors were not found related to caseload advocacy among California school psychologists, the data indicate that school psychologists are advocating for other issues that impact students, such as mental health and social justice. Further research is recommended to better understand the advocacy efforts of school psychologists. Decreasing these caseloads would create positive social change in that students would be able to receive adequate behavioral, academic, and social–emotional support within the school setting provided by their school psychologist.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandfather, Jose Enrique Nuñez. My grandfather's education consisted of the raw Cuban landscape and his natural drive to succeed in providing his family with more opportunities than he had growing up. His bravery and tenacity for a better life brought him to the United States with our family over 60 years ago. My educational career was inspired by the sacrifices, sweat, and hard work of my grandfather, as well as his encouragement over the years. While he is no longer with us on this earth, I hope he sees me attaining one of my biggest accomplishments and his biggest dream for me: earning my Ph.D. We did it, abuelo!

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

Public education has significantly evolved over the past several decades. As time has passed, various laws, including the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), were created at the federal level to ensure all students are being educated, especially students with disabilities. IDEA was enacted in 1975 to establish protections for students with disabilities (Yell, 2006), and its reauthorization in 2004 identified school psychologists as service providers who support the academic, social–emotional, and behavioral success of students (Fagan & Wise, 2007). As a result of their expanded roles within the school system, the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) established a set of professional standards and practices in 2010, which includes a recommended caseload ratio of one school psychologist to 500–700 students (Skalski et al., 2015).

While federal policies were enacted to protect students with disabilities and ensure they are able to access the curriculum, policies have not reflected NASP's caseload recommendation for school psychologists. Currently, the national school psychologist to student ratio is 1:1,381, almost doubling and tripling the recommendation set forth by NASP (Walcott & Hyson, 2019). This is a problem because increased caseloads impact the quantity and quality of services that school psychologists offer students, families, and schools (Bahr et al., 2017). To address the shortage of school psychologists across the country, NASP has created several resources to encourage school psychologists to advocate for decreased caseloads via local, state, and federal

policy change (Skalski et al., 2015). While these resources are readily available, it is unknown whether school psychologists are using the resources to advocate for decreased caseloads. Additionally, if school psychologists are using the NASP resources, it is unknown what type of position the school psychologists hold and how they are using the advocacy resources. This is important to understand because a person's position within their professional network and the way they engage in advocacy impacts those being represented (Weible, 2008). Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the factors that predict advocacy among school psychologists, specifically as it correlates to their professional network position and geographical location.

Background

The public education system has greatly evolved over a relatively short period of time, especially in special education. As a result of the work of various advocacy groups and landmark court cases, the federal government initiated its involvement in educating students with disabilities in 1970 by passing the Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA; Yell, 2006). Twenty years and several amendments later, Congress renamed this act as the IDEA of 1975. This change allowed adjusting the act's language to reflect inclusivity for all students with disabilities (Yell, 2006) while mandating district-level special education services, including those provided by school psychologists (Fagan & Wise, 2007).

While school psychologists have been in the schools since 1975, the profession has existed since the 1890s. The term *school psychologist* first appeared in academic literature in 1898, and by 1945, the American Psychological Association recognized the

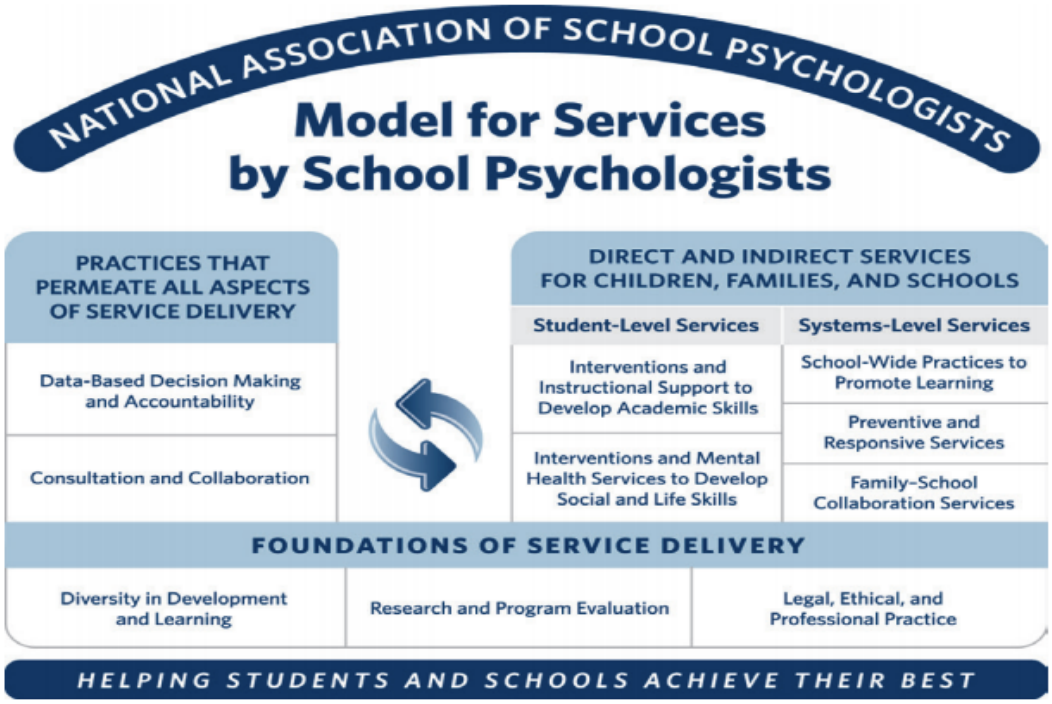
profession by creating its own division within their structure (Fagan & Wise, 2007). Until the reauthorization of IDEA in 2004, school psychologists' primary role was to identify the special class placement for students with disabilities, and their role was viewed as an ancillary member of the school district; however, school psychologists' role was expanded to support the academic, social–emotional, and behavioral needs for all students by utilizing evidence-based practices and interventions (Fagan & Wise, 2007). Through this trajectory, the field's professional organization was established in 1969; the NASP offered a foundation for the field's training and growth along with its ethical standards practice model, and by 1991, concerns began to build regarding the shortage of school psychologists within the school setting (Fagan & Wise, 2007).

In 2010, NASP established the practice model, also known as the model for comprehensive and integrated school psychological services, which "provides the framework for supporting effective practice at both the individual and system levels" and promotes the breadth and depth of practice of the school psychologist as it pertains to positive outcomes for students, families, and schools (Skalski et al., 2015, p. 1).

Figure 1 provides an overview of the model and its components. Based on the service delivery model that was established, NASP "recommends a ratio for schools implementing this comprehensive model of one school psychologist to 500 students (1:500) depending on [the] level of need within the student population" (Skalski et al., 2015, p. 2). Despite their recommendation, the average school psychologist-to-student ratio in the United States is 1:1,381 (Walcott & Hyson, 2018).

Figure 1

National Association of School Psychologists Practice Model



Doubling and tripling the recommended school psychologist-to-student ratio has been found to implicate negative impacts for students. School psychologists have reported a decreased ability to meaningfully contribute time to address the behavioral and emotional needs of students as their caseloads increase (Eklund et al., 2017). Additionally, early career school psychologists have reported that having too many evaluations decreases their perceived ability to elicit change through consultation and collaboration with other educators (Newman et al., 2018). Large caseloads impede school psychologists from providing direct and indirect services to students and do not allow them to utilize their skill set to support schoolwide learning (Bahr et al., 2017).

As a result of the identified barriers to providing efficient school psychological services, researchers have recommended that school psychologists increase their advocacy efforts. For instance, Bahr et al. (2017) found that school psychologists with higher caseloads were unable to utilize their skill set to engage in consultation and collaboration with educators, as opposed to their counterparts who had lower caseloads. As a result, the authors recommended increased attention toward advocacy to expand the role and function of school psychologists through policy and legislative reform (Bahr et al., 2017). Increased advocacy would elicit the systems change needed to mitigate the barriers to providing school psychological services within schools (Castillo et al., 2016). To further understand the role of effective advocacy among school psychologists, Rogers et al. (2019) interviewed 21 school psychologist advocates and found that advocacy required building a network of like-minded colleagues, devoting time to gaining expertise in the field, and being patient and persistent in pursuits. The researchers also added that most interviewees recommended advocacy-specific training for current and newcomer school psychologists (Rogers et al., 2019). NASP (2019) also created the *Policy Playbook*, which provides school psychologists with guidance for professional and legislative advocacy and includes tips and examples for advocacy.

While research exists that focuses on the need to address high school psychologist-to-student ratios and the need to advocate for systemic change, educational policies continue to discount the need to address school psychologist-to-student caseloads. Even with the availability of resources, school psychologists must engage with the material to develop the skills and confidence for effective advocacy practices (Jones

et al., 2017). Additionally, the type of expertise an advocate poses and the way in which they share information can impact their ability to elicit policy change (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Based on this review, advocacy is an important approach to changing policies related to high school psychologist-to-student ratios, but research is lacking regarding the advocacy efforts of school psychologists. Thus, the purpose of this study was to collect data regarding the predictive factors of advocacy among school psychologists in California, as well as their use of NASP resources to engage in their advocacy efforts.

Statement of the Problem

There is a problem in special education policy regarding the lack of contractual caseloads for school psychologists. The problem, specifically, is that it is not known why California state policies have remained unchanged regarding the role of school psychologists. Since 2010, NASP has recommended a 1:500 school psychologist-to-student ratio. This recommendation, though, has been discounted in the state of California, which has negatively impacted the roles and functions of school psychologists. The national average school psychologist-to-student ratio is 1:1,381, decreasing the school psychologists' ability to meaningfully engage in service delivery (Bahr et al., 2017; Eklund et al., 2017; McNamara et al., 2019). Many possible factors contribute to this problem, including systemic and institutional barriers, a perceived lack of ability on behalf of the school psychologists, and limited time and resources (Newman et al., 2018; Rogers et al., 2019). Other researchers have investigated high ratios by studying how state-level policies impact the roles and functions of school psychologists,

budgetary limitations within California, individual experiences of school psychologists who actively advocate for change, and the importance of advocating for policy reform related to school psychologist-to-student ratios (Bahr et al., 2017; Eklund et al., 2017; NASP, 2019; Rogers et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, none of the existing literature has included a review of the predictability of California school psychologists using NASP advocacy resources as a way of policy-oriented learning strategies to reduce the school psychologist-to-student ratio. Consequently, this study fills this gap by contributing to the body of knowledge needed to address the problem of high school psychologist student caseloads and adds to the research surrounding school psychologists' use of NASP resources and their involvement in advocacy. Specifically, the data collected and analyzed can be provided to professional organizations and coalitions regarding California school psychologists' awareness of advocacy tools and how they are using them to advocate for policy change at the local and state levels. This type of policy change will contribute to positive outcomes for students, as they will gain increased access to school psychologists who are trained to provide them with direct and indirect services that support their academic, social–emotional, and behavioral growth.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative study is to determine the predictability of California school psychologists' contractual caseload advocacy efforts based on their region and the type of position they hold within their district or organization, as well as their use of policy-oriented learning strategies. As a way of

encouraging policy advocacy, NASP (2019) recently released a handbook outlining specific tips, advice, and best practices related to advocacy. Previous research has discussed the successes of active advocacy for policy change; while NASP provides research-based advocacy strategies, it is unclear if—and to what extent—school psychologists are using these resources to actively advocate for policy change. Because the state of California is so large, I will divide it into three regions to statistically compare advocacy efforts in the state. The variables of the three California regions (northern, central, and southern), network positions, and use of NASP advocacy resources were investigated to determine whether they predict advocacy efforts among California school psychologists.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following research questions and hypotheses address the predictive factors of school psychologists' advocacy efforts and use of NASP resources to engage in policy-oriented learning. The nature of this study is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

RQ1: What are the predictive factors for contractual caseloads advocacy among school psychologists in California?

$H_0 1_1$: California school psychologists' advocacy efforts are not significantly predicted by region.

$H_a 1_1$: California school psychologists' advocacy efforts are significantly predicted by region.

$H_0 1_2$: California school psychologists' advocacy efforts are not significantly predicted by their network positions.

H_a1_2: California school psychologists' advocacy efforts are significantly predicted by their network positions.

RQ2: To what extent does California school psychologists' region predict their use of the NASP resources as a way of engaging others in policy-oriented learning?

$H_0$2: California school psychologists' region does not significantly predict their use of the NASP resources as a way of engaging in policy-oriented learning.

H_a2: California school psychologists' region does significantly predict their use of the NASP resources as a way of engaging in policy-oriented learning.

RQ3: To what extent does advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology predict the use of NASP resources among California school psychologists?

$H_0$3: California school psychologists' advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology does not significantly predict the use of NASP resources.

H_a3: California school psychologists' advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology does significantly predict the use of NASP resources.

RQ4: To what extent does NASP membership predict the use of NASP resources among California school psychologists?

$H_0$4: California school psychologists' NASP membership does not significantly predict their use of NASP resources.

H_a4: California school psychologists' NASP membership does significantly predict their use of NASP resources.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation used for this study is Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's (1988) advocacy coalition framework (ACF). ACF provides a lens that can help psychologists understand how multiple actors use various mechanisms to produce change over time (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017). While there are several components to ACF, there are three main theoretical emphases: (a) policy change, (b) advocacy coalitions, and (c) policy-oriented learning. This study focused on the policy-oriented learning pathway to advocacy.

Policy-oriented learning is a way of influencing policy by changing and reinforcing the beliefs of coalition members and stakeholders (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017). This includes the use of political strategies and the attributes of the actors, which "include their belief system, resources strategies, and network contacts" (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017, p. 152). Several factors impact policy-oriented learning, including how individuals interpret information and their environment, individuals' learning styles, and how individuals socially interact with their environment to influence policy (Witting, 2017). While social interactions, leadership, and information are important components of policy-oriented learning, the way in which these are presented to various actors can impact learning within and between coalitions. Thus, this individual's role can morph into three different positions based on their network and environment: policy entrepreneur, policy broker, and advocate (Ingold & Gschwend, 2014).

Each network position plays a different role within the advocacy group and engages with learners in a different manner. The individual in a broker position can be

considered the top tier within the network as this person holds the authority to enforce policies and possesses the resources to impact learning (Ingold & Gschwend, 2014). The advocate can be considered the intermediary as they often mediate conflict between competing coalitions and often facilitate collaboration (Ingold & Gschwend, 2014). The lower-tiered position of the entrepreneur possesses and uses real-life information and data to connect policy with outcomes (Ingold & Gschwend, 2014). Additionally, entrepreneurs make up the largest group of positions within a network, and others tend to value their expertise (Ingold & Gschwend, 2014). The three positions within an advocacy network are not static; "everyone can occupy one of these positions at a given time" (Ingold & Gschwend, 2014, p. 3). Overall, each network position has its own access to resources and influence.

Due to their training and experience, school psychologists can hold any one of these positions at any given time. School psychologists have been known to hold leadership roles, placing them in the role of broker. Similarly, school psychologists collaborate with various advocacy groups to improve upon educational policy and can act as an advocate. School psychologists also possess the real-world experiences of an entrepreneur to educate learners about how policy impacts practices at the school-site level. Further, school psychologists have access to all network positions because of their training, position, and affiliation with professional organizations. Identifying the network role of school psychologists can provide insight into their policy-oriented learning techniques and their potential audience.

Definitions

The following definitions are important to the study as they apply to the research questions and purpose.

Advocacy: NASP (2019) views advocacy as the process of eliciting others' understanding of a perspective as well as acting toward the cause. Two types of advocacy are identified: legislative advocacy, which focuses on presenting or changing legislation, and grassroots advocacy, which refers to asking the public to join the efforts in asking for legislative change (NASP, 2019).

California regions: Data regarding school psychologists' geographical location of practice was split into three regions. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2019), California's population includes approximately 39,512,223 residents. Thus, for this study, the state was split into the following three regions: southern California = 10 counties, central California = 13 counties, and northern California = 35 counties.

Network positions: The role a coalition actor takes within their network (Ingold & Gschwend, 2014). These positions include policy entrepreneur, policy broker, and advocate. The policy entrepreneurs use available resources and a heuristic approach to inform policy (Mintrom, 1997). The policy broker is intermittently involved in the policy-change process by sharing new information to coalition members and opposing coalition members (Sabatier, 1988). The advocate is an ancillary member of the coalition who holds a leadership position and comfortably works within the parameters of the coalition (Mintrom & Norman, 2009).

Policy-oriented learning: Changing the beliefs of individuals by helping them understand a problem and related solutions by way of political strategies (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993).

School psychologist: NASP (2020) describes school psychologists as school-based team members who have earned an advanced graduate degree and specialize in supporting the learning, mental health, and behavioral needs of children and youth. Additionally, school psychologists work closely with families, schools, and the community to support and strengthen their connection with their learning environment (NASP, 2020).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study is quantitative research using ordinal and binary logistic regressions within a non-experimental design. Due to the size of California, I split the state into three regions to allow for statistical comparisons: northern, central, and southern. Data were collected regarding school psychologists' position within their network, the frequency of their advocacy efforts, their use of NASP advocacy resources as a way of engaging in policy-oriented learning, and their NASP membership. The independent variables were the school psychologists' region (1 = northern, 2 = central, 3 = southern), their network position (1 = broker, 2 = advocate, 3 = entrepreneur), their advocacy efforts related to other issues in the field of school psychology (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = somewhat frequently, 4 = very frequently), and their NASP membership (1 = yes, 2 = no). The dependent variables were the advocacy efforts of the school psychologist for contractual caseloads (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = somewhat frequently,

4 = very frequently) and their use of NASP resources (0 = yes, 1 = no). Using an ordinal logistic regression for RQ1 allowed for a predictive interpretation regarding California school psychologists' advocacy efforts. Additionally, a binary logistic regression was used to answer RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4 where the region (1 = northern, 2 = central, 3 = southern), advocacy efforts related to other issues in the field of school psychology (1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = somewhat frequently, 4 = very frequently), and NASP membership (1 = yes, 2 = no) were each the independent variable, respectively, and the dependent variable was the use of NASP resources (1 = yes, 0 = no).

Data collection involved school psychologists self-reporting their network position, region, advocacy efforts, and NASP membership via an online objective survey utilizing a rating scale. The survey was circulated through a local professional organization website or online newsletter, via email, and through social media. The results of this research can provide more data for coalitions and professional organizations regarding the advocacy efforts among school psychologists within the state of California. Specifically, using a predictive quantitative design can help leaders understand who is more likely to engage in advocacy regarding contractual caseloads and focus on supporting advocacy efforts among those who are not engaging in these efforts. Additionally, collecting data regarding school psychologists' positions within their networks can also support NASP's efforts to create relevant and effective advocacy tools for its members, especially because several resources are only available to members only.

Data were collected via an online survey sent to practicing school psychologists in the state of California. The link to the survey was sent via email, through social media, or

through the local professional organization newsletter. The survey was constructed using previously administered items found from existing survey tools and adapting them with author permission. Secondary data were not used from the state or national professional associations of school psychologists.

Assumptions

Two assumptions were made in this study. The first was that school psychologists would have a working knowledge about the priorities set forth by NASP, which would allow them to advocate for things like the shortage of school psychologists and the increased need for mental health support. This is a reasonable assumption to make as NASP publishes many documents and resources related to these topics; additionally, practicing school psychologists will have firsthand experience with these topics. The second assumption was that school psychologists participating in the study would answer the questionnaire honestly. Completing the questionnaire anonymously may elicit honest responses so the data collected are valid.

Scope and Delimitations

This study solely focused on the advocacy efforts of school psychologists as opposed to those of other school-related staff (i.e., teachers, administrators, counselors). While there would have been benefit in including the efforts of other staff members who support student learning, it would have increased the scope of the study, which may have extended the time and funding needed to complete this particular research scope. Additionally, the focus on the study is advocacy efforts related to school psychologist-to-

student ratios and it is important to understand the efforts set forth by professionals in the field as they have a deeper understanding of their role within the school system.

Another factor that impacted the scope of this study was that questionnaires were only sent to school psychologists in California. While narrowing my focus to one state limited its generalizability, doing so ensured all participating school psychologists would have the same educational training and credential. California school psychologists have been exposed to similar information regarding the scope of practice of a school psychologist and can draw from a similar educational foundation.

This study was guided by ACF, which was selected because of its theory related to policy-oriented learning and its alignment with the recommendations set forth in NASP's resources related to advocacy. Narrative policy framework was also considered for the current study due to its foundation related to the way in which policies are presented and framed to an audience, specifically focusing on the form and content of the narrative (Shanahan et al., 2017). While this would have applied to the way school psychologists are advocating for lower ratios, it would have limited the analysis to the message as opposed to the effort set forth in engaging in advocacy. Additionally, ACF specifically addresses the process of making others understand one's perspective through policy-oriented learning, which is an important factor as many still do not fully understand the role of school psychologists within schools.

Limitations

A potential challenge of sending survey links via email was the availability of the school psychologists' contact information on school district websites and the amount of

time it would take to collect this information. Challenges also arose with the creation of a survey. When selecting survey items from existing surveys, I needed to contact authors and ask permission to use certain items from their surveys. This could have posed concerns with the amount of time it would take to reach out and hear back as well as the possibility that permission might not be granted. Creating a survey posed its own challenges due to the time and effort it took to develop and vet a survey to ensure its validity and reliability. To mitigate any biases, I consulted with my committee members and mentor in the field of school psychology. Additionally, using a non-experimental research design poses threats to both internal and external validity, thus limiting the generalizability of the data.

Significance

This study has several implications for the advancement of the field of school psychology, the continual refinement of the ACF, and the positive impact on student support within the school system. In the next three subsections, I review this study's implications as it related to practice, theory, and social change.

Practice

The results of this study will provide information regarding the frequency with which school psychologists are engaged in advocacy efforts for policy change regarding their caseloads. Because there is a variety of resources and tools available for advocacy and awareness and advocacy is a major thoroughfare for policy change, information gathered from this study could inform school psychologist professional associations and coalition members about the advocacy practices of school psychologists in California.

The role of school psychologists has evolved since its origins in the early 19th century, and caseload demands have been a concern for the past three decades (Fagan & Wise, 2007); however, educational policy has not reflected the new demands of the job. By collecting information regarding the predictability of school psychologists' advocacy efforts for these changes, coalitions supporting educational policy change related to contractual caseloads can be improved.

Theory

ACF theorists have also created a future research agenda to better inform and improve the framework. One of the areas that needs additional focus and research is that of the policy broker, entrepreneur, and advocate roles as actors within the coalition (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017). This study adds to the ACF literature by specifically focusing on the advocacy efforts of these three coalition actors and provides further analysis on strategies they use to elicit policy learning.

Social Change

This study will contribute to positive social change as it relates to positive outcomes for students in the areas of academic achievement, mental health, and behavior. By focusing on advocacy efforts related to school psychologist-to-student ratios, policies can be transformed to reflect caseload numbers that would allow school psychologists to support the growth of students. Advocating for reduced caseloads can potentially increase positive student outcomes overall within the educational setting.

Summary

The field of school psychology has significantly evolved since its origins in the late 1800s. This evolution has impacted the way school psychologists provide services. While NASP recommends a school psychologist-to-student ratio of 1:500, the national average is 1:1,381 (Walcott & Hyson, 2019), which impacts school psychologists' ability to engage in NASP practice model services (Bahr et al., 2017; Eklund et al., 2017; Newman et al., 2018). Despite these findings, California legislators have not changed educational policy to reflect contractual caseloads for school psychologists. School psychologists must advocate for their field, especially decreasing the school psychologist-to-student ratios. ACF posits that policy change is most impacted by actor qualities and how actors engage others in policy-oriented learning (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017). I used ACF to analyze how school psychologists' region and network position predict advocacy and how school psychologists' region predicts their use of NASP resources to engage others in policy-oriented learning about decreasing school psychologist-to-student ratios. Additionally, I analyzed how advocacy efforts for other issues within the field of school psychology and NASP membership predict school psychologists' use of NASP resources.

In Chapter 2, I provide a review of literature as it pertains to advocacy within the fields of education and psychology and within the field of school psychology. Because advocacy practices and efforts among school psychologists have not been widely studied, I will provide a review of literature related to advocacy efforts and practices within the education and psychology fields overall. Additionally, I will review the pertinent aspects

of ACF related to the current study. These aspects include policy-oriented learning and actor network positions as a way of influencing policy change.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

School psychologists across the United States are struggling to provide school-based services to students because of the elevated school psychologist-to-student ratios. While the NASP recommends a ratio of 1:500, the national average more than doubles the recommendation. This poses a problem to school psychologists, especially in California, because state policies have not been changed to reflect the use of contractual caseloads. Researchers have evaluated the possible factors that contribute to this problem and recommend that school psychologists actively advocate for aligning educational policies to NASP's recommended caseload ratio. While others have considered how state-level policies, budgets, and personal experiences of advocacy efforts impact school psychologists' caseload ratios, no one has examined advocacy efforts among California school psychologists. Specifically, the literature does not include research related to the predictive factors of advocacy among school psychologists or the resources and strategies used to influence policy by sharing information with key coalition members and stakeholders. Thus, using ACF, I conducted this study using a non-experimental quantitative design to examine predictive factors of advocacy among California school psychologists to gain a richer understanding of advocacy efforts and to identify any areas of need or support in relation to advocacy.

Literature Search Strategy

Multiple databases, search terms, and strategies were used to search peer-reviewed literature for the current study. The databases used included Walden

University's general EBSCO database, ERIC, and APA PsychArticles. Additionally, Google Scholar, Open Library, and JSTOR were used to collect research related to ACF seminal work. The following search terms were used: *advocacy coalition framework, ACF, policy-oriented learning, policy broker, broker, policy entrepreneur, policy advocate, advocacy, advocate, advocating, advocacy efforts, public education, school psychologists, school psychologist, school psychologist roles, school psychologist caseload, field of school psychology, teacher, teachers, teacher unions, qualitative, qualitative research, quantitative, quantitative research, school, education, classroom, K–12,* and *psychologist*. The literature search was bound by the 2017 to 2021 publication date range to establish current themes of study. Due to the narrow range of research related to advocacy among school psychologists, the scope was broadened to include advocacy within the community, among educators, and within the broad field of psychology.

When searching for current research related to ACF, many of the articles found were either literature reviews or used a different theory within the framework; thus, the articles referenced in the reviews were searched and many were used for the current study, especially those pertaining to theory of policy-oriented learning. Much of the seminal work was found using Google Scholar, Open Library, and JSTO, as they were often not available through the Walden University Library.

Theoretical Foundation

Advocacy Coalition Framework

The theoretical framework used in this study was ACF, which has evolved since its inception in the early 1980s. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) combined various theories over several years to address the weaknesses of policy process theories. The overarching purpose of the framework is to explain the change in belief and policy over long periods of time (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Since its development, the authors made three significant changes to the framework to address some of the concerns brought forth by several case studies conducted across the world (Sabatier & Weible, 2007).

ACF was developed as a framework to provide policy researchers with universal language and units of measurement and to provide an understanding of the complexities of the policy process (Sabatier & Weible, 2007). Within the framework are several assumptions and theories that highlight specific parts of the policy process, as well as how these parts interact with each other. There are six assumptions within the ACF that operationalize its components and include the following areas: the use of policy subsystems, beliefs are structured within a three-tiered system, actors, public policy, the use of scientific information, and long-term perspectives. Based on years of additional research by the original authors and other scholars, Jenkins-Smith et al. (2017) provided an updated and refined explanation of the framework as it stands today.

Policy Subsystems as the Primary Unit of Analysis

Policy subsystems were originally defined as a group of actors who deal with policy problems (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). Jenkins-Smith et al. (2017) refined

the definition by clarifying that the subsystems are based on the policy topic, territorial scope, and the actors that influence the subsystem operations both directly and indirectly. The authors stated that these subsystems should be used as the primary unit of analysis for understanding the policy process, as they contain several elements that can be used in research interpretation and application. These subsystem elements include the way the components interact to impact output, how actors are differentiated, the way in which subsystems are related, the authority or potential for authority that subsystems possess, and the evolution of change within the subsystem.

Beliefs Structure

The beliefs of policy actors are explained within a three-tiered structure. Deep core beliefs are those that are part of an actor's foundational belief system and are difficult to change. Policy core beliefs are those aligned with an actor's interest in the policy area, can include normative and empirical information, and can be difficult but not impossible to change. Secondary beliefs are also policy-specific but are aligned with administrative decision making and the search for information for the purpose of informing policy changes. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1999) specified that the behavior of actors based on their beliefs ranges from the endogenous nature of the secondary beliefs to the partial endogenous nature of policy core beliefs to the exogenous nature of deep core beliefs.

Actors

Actors are individuals within a subsystem who directly or indirectly influence the subsystem's affairs. Actors are organized into advocacy coalitions based on their shared

beliefs and the way they coordinate their strategies for policy change. Organizing actors in this fashion makes it easier for researchers to analyze due to stability over time.

Public Policy

Varying definitions of public policy have existed in previous policy process research. According to Jenkins-Smith et al., (2014): "Analysts applying the ACF should … interpret policies not just as the actions or inactions of government but also as the translations of belief systems as manifested in goals, rules, incentives, sanctions, subsidies, taxes, and other instruments regulating any given issue" (p. 486). This definition provides an understanding of actors' sustained advocacy efforts over time as well as how they interpret public policies based on their belief system.

Scientific Information

The use of scientific and technical information was not originally considered in the authors' early research. One of the most important reasons for including this component is to better understand policy debates and how information is integrated with beliefs and knowledge.

Long-Term Perspective

Given the indefinite nature of policy processes, the authors postulated the use of a long-term perspective when understanding processes and change. The authors recommended using a timeline of 10 years or more when interpreting policy processes but caution researchers from taking this recommendation too literally, as it may hinder individuals from applying the framework when longitudinal data are not available or applicable. "The general meaning behind this assumption is the recognition that

understanding public policy requires focusing on temporal processes that characterize public policy over time" (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2014, pp. 142–143).

The combination and interaction of the aforementioned assumptions create the scope of ACF, which is depicted in Sabatier and Weible's (2007) flowchart. Appendix A depicts the overall policy process according to ACF. Jenkins-Smith et al. (2017) succinctly described the chart as follows:

> The policy subsystem is represented by the rectangle on the right illustrating a case with two competing coalitions representing their actors' beliefs and resources. The two coalitions use various strategies to influence decisions by government authorities that affect institutional rules, policy outputs, and, eventually, policy outcomes. These decisions then feed back into the policy subsystem but also can affect external subsystem affairs. (p. 144)

Based on the scope of ACF, Jenkins-Smith et al. (2017) created three theoretical emphases: policy change, advocacy coalition, and policy-oriented learning. Understanding the change and stability of policies is a major focus of the ACF; thus, the ACF posits that public policies and programs are the result of policy-oriented beliefs and can be understood and measured hierarchically. Jenkins-Smith et al., went on to outline four pathways to policy change (external sources, internal events, policy-oriented learning, and negotiated agreement) and developed two hypotheses. Advocacy coalition is the second theory to develop from the scope of ACF, which is made up of actors who share policy core beliefs and coordinate their efforts to influence the policy subsystem. Four additional concepts were recently added to the advocacy coalition theory and

include dominant and minority coalitions, overcoming threats to collective action, principal and auxiliary coalition members, and resources/strategies/activities. The theory consists of five hypotheses, but only one has largely been confirmed. The last theory is policy-oriented learning and is considered a prominent pathway to explain policy change. Policy-oriented learning refers to lasting changes in thought and behavior that are a result of experience and that impact the belief system of an individual or group. The theoretical foundation of policy-oriented learning includes four explanatory factors: attributes of forums, the level of conflict between coalitions, attributes of stimuli, and attributes of actors. While five hypotheses were proposed, the authors stated that the hypotheses have received mixed support and identified a need for more research.

Rationale

The ACF is used to interpret changes in belief and policy over the course of time (Sabatier & Weible, 2007), and in the current study, I attempted to address a problem regarding the unchanging educational policy to address school psychologist-to-student ratios. While the role of school psychologists has evolved over the past several decades, state and federal regulations have not been changed to reflect the comprehensive role of the school psychologists and the need for contractual caseloads. The current study's overall problem aligns with the premise of the ACF as a whole.

The specific ACF theory used for the current study is the policy-oriented learning theory. As previously discussed, this theory describes the way in which changes in an individual's or group's thoughts and behaviors impact their belief system (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 2017). Upon narrow consideration of this theory, the authors posited four

categories of explanatory factors, one being the attributes of actors. This category includes an actor's belief system, resources, strategies, and network contacts; however, for this study, the actor's resources and strategies were used to interpret the school psychologists' advocacy efforts and their use of NASP-provided resources.

Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) stated that actors within a subsystem can also serve as policy brokers, allowing them to mitigate conflict between opposition and aiding in reaching an agreement and facilitating learning. While the authors did not predestine the definition of who can be a broker, they did specify that the broker can be affiliated with any type of organization. Since their seminal work, researchers have defined three types of actors, building on the role of the policy broker (Ingold & Varone, 2012) and adding the policy entrepreneur (Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996) and the advocate (Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Witting, 2017). In this study, the distinct actor roles were used to interpret the data regarding the roles or positions school psychologists hold within their schools, districts, organizations, or communities.

Building from the Framework

While the origins of the ACF began with U.S. energy and environmental policy, it has been used in over 300 studies across the world, in different languages, and across varying policy areas; however, its broad application has also surfaced problematic components of the framework (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017). Pierce et al. (2017) calculated the number of policy areas that researchers used and found that the ACF was used in the areas of environmental or energy issues, public health, education, science and technology, social welfare, foreign and defense, economic and finance, urban planning

and transportation, and others. While environmental or energy issues were used the most (n = 70), the authors found fourteen articles related to education.

More recently, Wang (2020) used the ACF to examine which actors formed coalitions around Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), as well as their policy preferences. The author used a mixed-methods approach to analyze 30 testimonies from ESSA congressional hearing and was able to identify four coalition groups. The author recommended that future research continue to address how coalitions surrounding education laws change over time, similar to the recommendations of Jenkins et al. (2017).

While the current study is not using the authors' assumptions regarding long-term perspectives of policy change, it will add to the framework's scope of use within the educational policy area. Additionally, the current study will build on the ACF's type of actors by attempting to further operationalize their roles and definitions. Additional ACF research is needed to generalize findings (Pierce et al., 2017), as well as show causal claims and describe how things happen (Wellstead, 2017). Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (2007) generally encourage researchers to test specific theories within the framework in order to refine definitions and update the framework. Thus, the current study will add to the broad ACF literature.

Literature Review

Advocacy Efforts and Outcomes

Advocacy efforts and practices among school psychologists are not readily studied. Since school psychologists work within the educational setting, I reviewed literature pertaining to advocacy among other stakeholder groups within the field of

education, such as teachers, administrators, and ancillary staff members. Additionally, since school psychologists are recognized by the American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association, 2020), I also reviewed advocacy literature as it related to the field of psychology as a whole.

Education

Advocacy has been studied within the broad field of education, mostly addressing the training and resources needed for advocacy, as well as the advocates' experience in advocacy and advocacy outcomes. In this area, researchers used qualitative designs by interviewing participants or conducting case studies.

Grice and Parker (2017) evaluated the staff members of an after-school program and their role as advocates for the community. Specifically, they evaluated the staff members (teachers, administrators, and graduate students) as Educational Cultural Negotiators (ECNs), which they defined as individuals who provide direct and indirect advocacy for students of color based on a mixture of their personal experiences and knowledge of mainstream schools. Similar to the concept of a policy broker from the ACF, the authors define one of the ECNs roles as a cultural broker since they have knowledge about the experiences of people of color and the education system, they develop and implement various initiatives for the community, and they often served as mediators to ease tensions between the community and the school.

The authors utilized a qualitative design by combining research interviews and critical race methodology. Data were collected at a Midwestern school that was predominantly white and was located in a suburban/metro area. The after-school program

was designed to address and close the academic gap between students of color and white students and lasted from 2004 to 2009. The program activities included tutoring, workshops with guest speakers, student-centered discussions, and cultural field trips. The study took place at a second location, an elementary school in the western U.S. populated by primarily Latina/o students, focusing on the exposure of post-secondary education. Findings indicated that the ECNs were able to elicit academic excellence from students because of their personal experiences of people of color and their knowledge of the school system. Participants viewed advocacy within this context as a full-time job and the authors recommended that all site-level teachers and administrators should also engage in advocacy leadership.

Jones et al. (2017) also conducted a qualitative study to understand advocacy within the education setting. Specifically, the authors used a hermeneutic phenomenological research design with the collective sense-making framework to explore why five teachers sought involvement in educational policy within a grassroots teacher organization. The researchers first observed the teacher group discuss their involvement in advocacy related to ESSA, then they conducted in-depth, semi structured interviews with five of the teachers from the group. Findings indicated that the process of understanding advocacy of the ESSA elicited stronger advocacy efforts about educational policy. In other words, because they engaged with the policy process and used the resources of their organization to understand ESSA, they became more efficient advocates.

Taking a different approach, Bradley-Levine (2018) studied teachers who engaged in direct and indirect advocacy work for marginalized students in their schools and communities. The author conducted case studies at three different schools of teachers who developed a program for their school, advocated for full inclusion programs for students with mild to moderate disabilities, and advocated for English-language learners. A critical ethnographic approach was used to collect observational and interview data from 36 teachers, administrators, and support staff across the three schools. The author found that "in all three cases, teachers who advocated have had an influence on the work of colleagues in their buildings, as well as across their districts or institutional spaces" (p. 58). The author also posited that teachers were viewed as leaders because of their advocacy work.

The previous studies appear to assume that advocacy is an innate act within the field of education; however, Bond (2016) conducted a qualitative, descriptive case study involving three undergraduate, preservice teachers in the Southwestern United States. The participants participated in two hour-long legislative advocacy training and one hands-on experience in which they traveled to the state capitol and interviewed the state representative. The findings indicated that the participants acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to participate in legislative advocacy. Additionally, the involvement of professional organizations appeared to aid in providing the knowledge and experience necessary to advocate for the profession.

Within the field of education, researchers have studied advocacy within different capacities but primarily focused on advocacy efforts among teachers. From this review,

we know that the act and foundation of advocacy can be taught (Bond, 2016) and that gaining an in-depth understanding of policies will likely elicit advocacy efforts for education policy (Jones et al., 2017). Engaging in advocacy also elicits learning and influences colleagues (Bradley-Levine, 2018). Additionally, advocacy outcomes can improve when combining one's personal and technical knowledge (Grice & Parker, 2017).

Field of Psychology

Researchers have also considered the role of advocacy among psychologists as a whole. When considering the definition of advocacy within the role of a psychologist, one may think of it as defending the specific needs of their clients within the micro-level of their lives. To further understand the meaning of advocacy and operationalize its meaning in Italy, Dryjanska (2019) used the three-step approach to surveying 145 licensed psychologists across seven regions of Italy. Because there is no translation for the word advocacy in the Italian language, the researcher's goal was to operationalize this term to explore its implications within the cultural context. Findings indicated that the words that are associated with advocacy within the Italian language include influence, patronage, support, and lobby. The researcher also found that how a psychologist defined advocacy impacted how they put it into practice, recommending that further research surrounding advocacy among Italian psychologists continue. While the concept of advocacy appears to be a well-defined concept in the United States, this study sheds light on the varying ways individuals can define and engage in advocacy. While advocacy is clearly defined in the United States, this study demonstrates its subjectivity; thus, further

research is needed to evaluate how school psychologists advocate, which would then lend more knowledge to its operational definition.

Ford-Paz et al. (2020) conducted a qualitative study to understand the role of psychologists' advocacy efforts for public health policy. A case study was conducted and followed the You're Not Alone (YNA) initiative that was developed in Chicago, Illinois to advocate for the health and wellbeing of refugee/immigrant children and families. The psychologists' involvement included a series of trainings for various community members, spanning over 15 months with 1,642 participants. Findings indicated that

> psychologists with certain expertise (e.g., trauma, PFA, immigrant and refugee mental health, translation of research into practice in community settings, and training community providers) are uniquely suited to build community and professional capacity to respond to and advocate for the public health and mental health of refugee/immigrant populations. (Ford-Paz et al., 2020, p. 135)

The authors noted the psychologists did not provide direct services and recommended further research to evaluate the impact of these trainings within the community. Overall, this study demonstrates the way in which program development and trainings can be a way to advocate for underrepresented communities. From these findings, it can be deduced that when school psychologists engage in advocacy or facilitate trainings, their efforts can produce positive outcomes for students. While the authors found the benefits to advocacy through an initiative, they did not evaluate advocacy efforts outside of it.

Similar to previous research among school psychologists, Heinowitz et al. (2012) studied perceived advocacy barriers among psychologists; however, while the majority of the previously discussed research was qualitative, the authors designed a quantitative study. An online survey was submitted to 85 adults from a graduate psychology department of a private southeastern university. The authors used Pearson correlations, a stepwise linear regression, and a principal components analysis to examine the data and found that the psychologists' awareness of public policy issues was the only barrier to advocacy. Additionally, they found that the psychologists advocated for policy issues that were both within and outside of their respective fields. The findings from this study connect with the current study in that this study attempts to evaluate how school psychologists are engaging others in policy-oriented learning, which can be done among colleagues as well.

While these studies have focused on the role of psychologists, many of these findings can be applied to the field of school psychology. In 1945, the American Psychological Association (APA) recognized school psychology as an organizational identity (Fagan & Wise, 2007), as such research related to advocacy among psychologists may be applicable to school psychologists. Based on the NASP practice model that was previously reviewed, school psychologists are trained to support, consult, and collaborate with community members and possess cultural competence.

School Psychology and Advocacy

Many of the articles related to advocacy and public policy that was found for the current study are literature reviews. The authors cited the increased involvement of

psychologists within various levels of government (Garrison et al. 2017) and the need for advocacy related to student mental health within the schools (Lewis et al., 2020). Additionally, the authors supported the ability of school psychologists to inform policy (Glassgold & Wolff, 2020) and recommended additional research regarding the role and function of school psychologists in advocacy (Oyen et al., 2019). Despite limited empirical research, the authors' focus on the context of advocacy among school psychologists focused primarily on professional-related advocacy.

The study conducted by Castillo et al. (2016) focused on the facilitators of and barriers to school psychologists engaging in practice model services. The authors constructed a survey instrument and emailed the final version to a random sample of 1,000 NASP members. A total of 267 regular and early career members responded to the survey and the authors used multiple regression to analyze the data. Results indicated that barriers to district-offered resources and supports significantly predicted all practices. The authors posited the need for increased advocacy for policy reform related to the roles of school psychologists and recommended that "professional associations should advocate for policy and laws that promote the implementation of comprehensive and integrated services through position statements and lobbying efforts" (p. 165).

McNamera et al. (2019) used quantitative results from the NASP 2015 Membership Survey results to evaluate the professional practices among school psychologists. Of the 1,247 respondents, 990 identified themselves as full-time, practicing school psychologists. Overall, the participants reported the highest level of engagement in conducting evaluations to determine eligibility for special education

services; however, school psychologists with caseloads of 1,500 students or more rated higher engagement in special education-related evaluations when compared to school psychologists with lower caseloads. School psychologists with a caseload of 1,000 students or less reported higher engagement in mental and behavioral health services, engagement in system-level services, and engagement in school-wide strategies to promote safe and supportive learning environments. The authors stated, "substantial effort will be needed on the part of advocates to gain acceptance for, and engagement in, the broad range of professional activities prescribed by the NASP Practice Model" (p. 13).

School psychologist caseloads were also evaluated from the perspective of shortages in the field of school psychology. Mann et al. (2019) used a mixed-methods design to analyze a case study about a school psychology training program's ability to graduate school psychologists as well as facilitators of and barriers to hiring and retaining school psychologists in the state of Florida. The authors found that the number of school psychologists in the state of Florida does not meet the needs of students, as there was a higher attrition rate compared to the number of school psychologists graduating and seeking employment within the public-school system. The participants provided feedback regarding strategies for retaining more school psychologists, which included reducing existing caseloads. The authors recommended advocacy for policy change related to shortage areas by changing state regulatory language.

From the literature provided thus far, all researchers made recommendations for increased advocacy efforts to elicit policy change. Additionally, Castillo et al. (2016) and

McNamera et al. (2019) found that psychologists who reported elevated caseloads reported a decreased ability to meet the needs of their students. Since there is a need to research advocacy practices among school psychologists, my study fills this gap by first evaluating current efforts among school psychologists within the state of California to advocate for decreased caseloads.

Relevant Aspects of the Theory

Policy-Oriented Learning

Policy-oriented learning is one of the three theoretical emphases of ACF. Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith (1993) originally defined it as "enduring alternations of thought or behavioral intentions that result from experience and which are concerned with the attainment or revision of the precepts of the belief system of individuals or of collectives" (p. 42). Jenkins-Smith et al. (2017) provide the most updated version of the original framework and its theories. Policy-oriented learning is considered one of the main explanations for changes in policy and beliefs among advocacy coalition members.

As previously stated, policy-oriented learning comprises four categories of explanatory factors: attributes of forums, level of conflict between coalitions, attributes of the stimuli, and attributes of actors. Attributes of forums refers to venues and level of involvement of members during discussions, debates, or negotiations. The level of conflict between coalitions is described by an inverted quadratic relationship and entails the perceived threats to coalition members' policy core beliefs. The attributes of the stimuli refer to the quality of the information and experiences that coalition members are exposed to. Finally, the attributes of actors refer to the "belief system, resources,

strategies, and network contact" of individual actors (p. 152). Some actors may also be characterized as policy brokers and mitigate between competing coalitions.

The current study focuses on the policy-oriented learning factor of the attributes of actors, specifically the role of the policy broker. In addition to the policy broker, researchers have also identified two other exceptional actors that play important roles within the policy subsystem: policy entrepreneurs (Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996) and advocates (Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Witting, 2017). Each contributes a unique role within the subsystem and their knowledge can impact the network structure (Weible, 2008). This is an important distinction because it establishes their network position and impacts the way in which they communicate with other actors or the type of information they share (Lenhoff et al., 2019). Since school psychologists can function within various roles, the current study utilizes these network positions to evaluate the way in which they advocate for decreased caseloads and engage others in learning about the need for policy reform.

Broker. Sabatier (1988) originally identified brokers as individuals who mediate conflict between competing coalitions by proposing new ideas. While these actors are central members within a network, they are not regularly involved in activities (Weible, 2008). Individuals who can serve as brokers include scientists, journalists, and civil servants as they tend to use strategic behavior, knowledge, and self-interests to influence policies (Ingold & Varone, 2012). Based on the definitions that have been established and for the purposes of this study, policy brokers were defined as school psychologists who hold positions as researchers and work within non-profit organizations.

Entrepreneur. The entrepreneur is considered a core actor who uses all available resources to continue the shared narration or beliefs (Mintrom, 1997). They tend to approach problems with an analytical perspective to elicit policy change (Jones et al., 2009) and are invested in the policy process on a long-term basis (Ansell et al., 2009; Crow, 2010; Dudley, 2013; Weible et al., 2004;). Ingold (2011) states that entrepreneurs can include individuals from government agencies or interest groups.

Based on the definitions that have been established and for the purposes of this study, entrepreneurs were defined as school psychologists who hold positions as school psychologist practitioners and those who hold supervisor or management positions within the public or private school system.

Advocate. The role of the advocate is the least empirically supported of the three actors; thus, the current dissertation will build on research that has been conducted thus far. Mintrom and Norman (2009) describe advocates as leaders within the coalition who hold a position of authority and the resources necessary to elicit learning. While advocates have been found to employ strategies that elicit policy change (Luxon, 2019), there is a need to better understand the role as it pertains to scientists (Montpetit, 2011). Knowledge plays a crucial role in learning and the role of a scientist should be better understood within the context of policymaking (Ingold & Gschwend, 2014).

Based on the definition that has been operationalized so far, the current dissertation categorized school psychologists who hold positions as researchers, district-level or organization directors, and any position of authority that provides them with access to resources as advocates. While a researcher can also be considered a policy

broker, the researcher who is categorized as an advocate is one who actively engages in policy advocacy by "[persuading] or [pressuring] a policymaker to take a specific policy action" (Maton, 2017, p. 5).

Summary and Conclusions

Upon synthesizing the literature, researchers have found a need for and benefit of advocacy. Not only did various researchers recommend advocacy efforts to improve policies and practices but they also found that advocacy advances the respective profession of the advocate. As it relates to the current study, this means that advocacy among school psychologists would yield benefits for students and the advancement of the field. Specific to the field of school psychology, researchers have identified the need for advocacy as a way to promote more engagement in the NASP practice model, however, researchers have not further explored current advocacy efforts. While ACF research has found that policy-oriented learning has the most impact on policy change, educational policies regarding school psychologist-to-student ratios have not been adjusted at the state or federal levels. Thus, this study fills the gap in knowledge regarding school psychologist advocacy efforts and their use of NASP resources, specifically in the state of California, in reducing these caseloads. In the next chapter, I will discuss the methodological approach used to evaluate advocacy efforts among California school psychologists. This study yields probability values to interpret advocacy efforts based on a school psychologists' region of practice in California and their network position.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I provided a review of the literature related to advocacy within the field of school psychology, specifically the need for increased advocacy to address school psychologist-to-student ratios. ACF was used in this study to evaluate advocacy efforts among school psychologists and to interpret the data collected in the current study. Based on the previous literature, there is a need for school psychologists to actively engage in advocacy efforts; however, there is a gap in the literature related to school psychologists' current advocacy efforts. ACF literature has posited the use of policy-oriented learning strategies as the most effective way to elicit policy change; thus, I used ACF's components of network positions and stimuli attributes to evaluate advocacy efforts among school psychologists.

This chapter includes a discussion of the research design that used for the study. The chapter includes the following sections: research design and rationale, methodology, data analysis plan, and threats to validity. In the first section on research design and rationale, I focus on the overall research design of the study, including the variables, statistical analyses used, and how previous research informed the study design. In the methodology section, I outline the defined target population, sampling procedures, data collection, and instrumentation for the study. The data analysis plan section will include the process and software used to analyze the data. The last section, threats to validity, will include descriptions of the threats to validity and the ethical procedures followed throughout the study.

Research Design and Rationale

To gain insight on advocacy efforts among school psychologists, this study was conducted to analyze advocacy as predicted by a California school psychologists' region of practice/employment and their network position. Data were collected via online surveys completed by school psychologists. This non-experimental study includes four independent variables and two dependent variables. The first independent variable is the region in which school psychologists work, northern, central, and southern. The regional organization used in this study was found on the California Continuation Education Association (2021) website. The southern region was originally split into two regions; however, for this study, I combined them into one region. Appendix B lists the regions and pertaining counties used to describe locations of practice.

The second independent variable is the school psychologists' network positions according to ACF descriptors. The network position coding system is as follows: 1 = broker, 2 = advocate, 3 = entrepreneur. As previously discussed, those who are school psychologists who work as researchers or within an organization (i.e., nonprofit, community based, etc.) were categorized as brokers. School psychologists who hold positions of authority within their district or organization or who are researchers who actively use their research to advocate for the field of school psychology were categorized as advocates. School psychologists who work as practitioners or hold positions of supervisor or management within the education system were categorized as entrepreneurs.

The third independent variable is the school psychologists' NASP membership, where 1 = yes and 2 = no. The variable was added to account for the added benefits and access to resources that come with membership to professional organizations. While there are many resources readily available on the organization's website, becoming a member of NASP (2021) provides full access to their resources and professional development and networking opportunities. Thus, gathering this data will provide further insight on predictive factors for school psychologists' advocacy efforts.

The fourth independent variable is school psychologists' self-reported advocacy efforts related to other issues within the field of school psychology, such as mental health, social justice, and the NASP practice model. The self-reported advocacy efforts were coded as 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = somewhat frequently, and 4 = very frequently. This variable was added to account for school psychologists' advocacy efforts for other policy priorities that have been identified by NASP, which address other concerns found within schools.

The dependent variables of this study include the self-reported advocacy efforts of school psychologists and their use of NASP resources for the purpose of advocacy. The self-reported advocacy efforts were coded as 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = somewhat frequently, and 4 = very frequently, while the use of NASP resources was coded as 0 = yes and 1 = no.

Additional research is needed to further develop the definitions of the ACF network positions. Analyzing these network positions in the context of advocacy within

the field of school psychology may add to the ACF research and further operationalize these definitions of policy actors within the framework.

Research Design

Because I analyzed predictive factors of advocacy among school psychologists, logistic regressions were used to analyze data pertaining to the research questions posited in Chapter 1. RQ1 is: What are the predictive factors for contractual caseloads advocacy among school psychologists in California? Ordinal logistic regression was used to interpret the data collected to address this research question. An ordinal logistic regression allows for the use of more than one independent variable and an ordinally coded dependent variable (Walden University, 2016). In RQ1, the independent variables were the school psychologists' regional location in California and their network position; the ordinal dependent variable was the school psychologists' self-report advocacy efforts (never, rarely, somewhat frequently, very frequently) related to contractual caseloads.

RQ2 is: To what extent does a California school psychologist's region predict their use of the NASP resources as a way of engaging others in policy-oriented learning? For this research question, I used binary logistic regression to analyze how the school psychologists' California region (independent variable) predicts their use of NASP resources (dependent variable). School psychologists self-reported their use of NASP resources by answering yes or no. This form of logistic regression was used because the dependent variable is binary or dichotomous (see Warner, 2013). This is also true for the remaining research questions.

RQ3 is: To what extent does advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology predict the use of NASP resources among California school psychologists? Similar to caseload advocacy responses, the ordinal dependent variable is the school psychologists' self-reported advocacy efforts (never, rarely, somewhat frequently, very frequently) related to other issues within the field of school psychology. Participants self-reported yes or no when asked about their use of NASP resources.

RQ4 is: To what extent does NASP membership predict the use of NASP resources among California school psychologists? In this research question, the independent variable was school psychologists' NASP membership (yes, no), and the ordinal dependent variable was school psychologists' use of NASP resources (yes, no). The same research design was used to interpret the data related to RQ2, RQ3, and RQ4.

Based on the design choice, there were some constraints, including time and resources. It took approximately 11 weeks to collect enough survey responses for the current study and it took several days to sort, clean, and analyze the data set. It also took several weeks to develop the survey, which will later be discussed in this chapter. Financial resources were also needed to request for distribution of the survey via a local professional organization's web-based newsletter and website.

As discussed in Chapter 2, most of the research surrounding ACF and advocacy is qualitative; however, researchers have recommended that future researchers use designs that can result in data that are generalizable to advance knowledge within both ACF and advocacy practices. Quantitative research has been used to analyze the barriers to and facilitators of school psychologists engaging in NASP practice model activities (Castillo

et al., 2016), compare school psychologists' caseload ratios with their involvement in NASP practice model services (McNamera et al., 2019), and the facilitators of and barriers to hiring and retaining school psychologists in Florida (Mann et al., 2019). While research pertaining to advocacy among school psychologists is limited, the authors from these studies have recommended increased advocacy efforts among school psychologists.

Methodology

Population

The target population for the current study was school psychologists who work in California. While the exact target population is unknown at this time, the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.) reported that in the 2011–2012 school year California had approximately 5,490 full-time school psychologists working within schools. Note that this number does not include the number of school psychologists who work within a different capacity, such as professors, researchers, directors, etc.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

To circulate this survey across various districts and organizations, a snowball sampling was used to gather participants for the study. The snowball sampling method allows for the use of networks in identifying participants through communication (Nikolopoulou, 2022). I was able to use the local professional organization's statewide platform to distribute the anonymous self-administered web-based questionnaire created with Google Forms and allowed those who have completed the survey to forward it to others who meet the eligibility criteria for participation. Specifically, this type of snowball sampling is referred to as exponential non-discriminative snowball sampling

because participants can recruit multiple individuals to participate in the study, but that does not mean that every additional recruited individual will participate (Etikan, et al., 2015). Because participation in this study was anonymous, the sampling procedure was not followed in its truest form because participants were not able to provide me with specific information about the person/s that were receiving the forwarded survey link; however, for the purposes of this study, I interpreted the general parameters of the sampling procedures as snowball sampling since initially recruited participants were encouraged and able to share the questionnaire link with others who met the participation criteria of the study.

Prior to starting the questionnaire, participants were provided with a criteria list for participating in the study. The study's inclusionary sampling frame was that the participant be a credentialed school psychologist. The exclusionary factor would be any credentialed school psychologist who is working outside of California. A G*Power analysis was used to calculate the sample size for this study (see Faul et al., 2009). Using a power of 0.80 and medium effect size of 0.50 (Hsieh et al., 1998), a sample size of 206 was needed to yield a significant model; however, due to notoriously lower response rates for online questionnaires, I attempted to collect double the amount recommended by the G*Power analysis to gain a representative sample. While California was split into three regions in this study, participation was not evenly distributed among the three regions. This may have been due to many factors, including but not limited to participants' personal choice of completing the questionnaire, population size of the region, and

participants' choice of not forwarding the survey link to colleagues who met the participation criteria.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

A self-administered web-based questionnaire was created using Google Forms and was distributed via a local professional organization's website and email. For a fee, the local professional organization distributes links to surveys via their weekly emails and posts them on their website (see Appendix C for the study invitation). For distribution via email, I researched school psychology graduate programs in California and sent the director or head chair a link to the survey should they or their colleagues be willing to participate. The following demographic information was also collected: county of employment, age range, gender, highest degree earned, and NASP membership. Incentives for participating in the study were not offered.

Due to the nature of a self-reported web-based questionnaire format, participants were informed of the study's procedures at the beginning of the survey. I included my contact information should they have had specific questions about the study and questionnaire, and I used Walden University's informed consent resources to appropriately document informed consent. Because the questionnaire was anonymous, the participants provided implied consent by proceeding with the questionnaire and submitting their responses.

The data were collected via an online platform, and as such, participants were able to exit the questionnaire at any time. If they chose to complete the questionnaire, their final submission exited them from the study and debriefing was not necessary unless

the participant had any follow-up questions. My email address was provided before and after completion of the questionnaire should they wish to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The instrument that was used for this study includes one scale that measures school psychologists' self-reported advocacy efforts (see Appendix E for the survey). The Survey of Participation in Public Policy Advocacy was used to measure school psychologists' advocacy efforts and includes two items, while I developed an item that addressed the participants' current job.

Survey of Participation in Public Policy Advocacy

The Survey of Participation in Public Policy Advocacy was developed to assess psychologists' advocacy involvement and barriers to advocacy (Heinowitz et al., 2012). The original survey contains three sections with a total of 18 items. Section one, Involvement in Advocacy, contains two items in which the participants were asked to rate their advocacy efforts and is the section I used for the current study. While the items ask participants to rate the frequency of their advocacy efforts on a Likert scale (very frequently, somewhat frequently, rarely, never), the wording was related to psychologists advocating within their respective fields. For this study, the items were reworded to align with advocacy among school psychologists related to caseloads. Table 2 lists the original survey items and how they were rewritten to match the purpose of the proposed study.

Table 1

Original and Rewritten Survey Questions

Questions	Original	Rewritten
1	I advocate for issues within my specific field of psychology (e.g., clinical psychology, school psychology, counseling psychology)	I advocate for reduced caseloads within the field of school psychology
2	I advocate for issues outside of my specific field of psychology	I advocate for other issues related to the field of school psychology (i.e., mental health, social justice, NASP practice model, etc.)

Note. Original survey questions were from Heinowitz et al. (2012).

The original author was contacted via email to request permission to use part of the survey for the current study. I also requested information about its development, including any reliability and validity testing data, which was not included in the article. The authors stated that the survey was developed using the literature review but did not detail its development; however, it appears to align with the information that is needed for the current study.

Job Title Item

Two items were developed for the specific purpose of this study. The first item asks participants to choose their job title from a field of 9 options, one of those includes an option for "other." These items were chosen based on the ACF literature review (Ingold, 2011; Ingold & Gschwend, 2014; Ingold & Varone, 2012; Jones et al., 2009; Mintrom 1997; Mintrom & Norman, 2009; Sabatier, 1988; Weible et al., 2004). Since this item is solely for the purpose of this study, I did not test the reliability of this item; however, two doctoral-level faculty from Walden University, Dr. Mary Schnaubelt and

Dr. Victoria Landu-Adams, provided feedback to ensure content validity as it relates to the current study.

Advocacy Resources Item

The second item that was developed for this study was one that asked participants if they use NASP resources to engage others in policy-learning. The participant provided a yes or no response to this item. This item was developed based on previous ACF literature regarding policy-oriented learning, specifically that policy change is more probable with the use of quality information (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017). Similar to the previous item, I did not test the reliability of this item since it will solely be used for the purpose of this study. Also similar to the previous item, I consulted with the two doctoral-level faculty from Walden University to ensure its content validity.

Data Analysis Plan

Prior to commencing the research process, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University (10-04-22-0674736). Once the data were collected, I used SPSS to analyze the data and conduct any necessary cleaning and screening procedures. To address the first research question (What are the predictive factors for contractual caseloads advocacy among school psychologists in California?) I used an ordinal logistic regression which was interpreted with probability values. The second research question (To what extent does a California school psychologist's region predict their use of the NASP resources as a way of engaging others in policy-oriented learning?)third research question (To what extent does advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology predict the use of NASP resources among California school

psychologists?), and fourth research question (To what extent does NASP membership predict the use of NASP resources among California school psychologists?) were analyzed by using a binary logistic regression which was also interpreted with probability values.

Independent Variables/Covariates

California Regions. For the purpose of this study, California was split into three regions: Northern, Central, and Southern. As previously noted, I used the California Continuation Education Association's (2021) regional organization to identify the various counties within each region. The Northern region contains 35 counties, the Central region contains 13 counties, and the Southern region contains 10 counties. On the survey, the participants were asked to select their region based on the county in which they work. This item contained a list of the counties to ensure that the participants choose the appropriate region.

Network Positions. According to Jenkins-Smith et al. (2017), actor attributes "include their belief system, resources, strategies, and network contacts" (p. 152); however, there are no predetermined criteria for actor affiliation within an organization. Thus, for the purpose of this study, the school psychologists' professional title was used to describe their network positions (broker, advocate, entrepreneur) within their organization. Typically, one's professional title provides them with access to certain resources and contacts and school psychologists typically share similar belief systems because of their training. Based on the literature reviewed for this study, authors have not used an actor's professional title to describe their network position; however, Jenkins-

Smith et al. (2017) have identified a need to further research these actors' role within the policy subsystems.

Participants were asked on the survey to choose an option that best described their current job title, with the following available options: school psychologist practitioner, higher education professor, researcher (conduct research for specific use for advocacy), researcher (conduct research for any other use), school- or district-level administrator (i.e. principal, director, coordinator, assistant superintendent, etc.), SELPA-level administrator, supervisor/management within the public or private school system, director within non-profit/community-based organization, or other (please specify). Based on the descriptions that were available for each network position, each professional title was be coded to align with its corresponding attribute, where 1 = broker (higher education professor, researcher who conducts research for general use, director within non-profit/community-based organization), 2 = advocate (researchers who conduct research for specific use for advocacy, school- or district-level administrators, SELPA-level administrator), and 3 = entrepreneur (school psychologist practitioner, supervisor/management within the public or private school system).

NASP Membership. Since NASP membership offers unlimited access to various resources and benefits (NASP, 2021), I asked participants to self-report their membership to NASP. Participants were asked to select yes or no in response to this item.

Threats to Validity

External Validity

There are two possible threats to external validity in the proposed study. The first threat is the Hawthorne Effect which involves the participants responding to items in a specific manner because they know they are participating in a study (Streefkerk, 2020). Another threat to external validity is situation effect, which happens when generalizability is limited due to the parameters of the study (Streefkerk, 2020). This would impact the current study because participants were only be recruited from the state of California. To mitigate these threats, I used probability sampling by ensuring that the questionnaire was circulated to as many school psychologists to participate in the study so that everyone has an equal chance (Streefkerk, 2020).

Internal Validity

Multi-group studies can cause internal threats to selection bias, regression to the mean, social interaction, and attrition (Streefkerk, 2020). Based on the parameters of the study, I need to be mindful of the possibility of attrition which happens when participants drop out of the study (Streefkerk, 2020). To address this concern, I provided participants with enough information about the questionnaire and study prior to them starting the questionnaire so that they will be more likely to finish and submit the questionnaire.

Construct Validity

To address construct validity, I attempted to ensure that the questionnaire was adequately measuring the constructs of the study (Cox, 2016). The California regions are easily identified based on county limits. To established its validity, I used the parameters

set forth by the California Continuation Education Association (2021). Additionally, the network positions constructs were informed by the ACF literature review and feedback from two Walden University doctoral-level faculty.

Ethical Procedures

Institutional permissions from Walden University's IRB were obtained and provided prior to commencing the study. Respondents were recruited via email or a local professional organization website. While I utilized the services offered by the local professional organization to distribute the questionnaire, they are not considered a partner organization and thus will not be mentioned within the data collection process. Additionally, NASP is not a partner organization in the study; the organization is being referenced in the context of the study because they are the national professional organization for school psychologists and thus provide various resources related to the profession.

Participants were asked to complete an anonymous web-based questionnaire, thus their names and contact information were not collected. While demographic details were collected (i.e. age, gender, etc.), the reported results did not provide identifiable information of the participants. Prior to starting the questionnaire, the participants were provided with details about the study; however, they were able to elect to not participate or exit the questionnaire at any time. There were no participants who chose to exit the study prior to completing the questionnaire, so I did not need to omit any responses via data cleaning procedures. The responses will be securely stored within an online database that will be used with a username and password.

Summary

To test the first hypotheses, I used ordinal logistic regression to evaluate the California region and network position as predictive factors of advocacy for contractual caseloads among school psychologists, and binary logistic regression to evaluate California region, advocacy for other issues related to the field of school psychology and NASP membership as a predictive factors of school psychologists using NASP resources to engage in advocacy efforts. The population of this study entailed school psychologists who work within the state of California and recruitment to participate in the study entailed circulating the online questionnaire via a local professional organization's emailed newsletter and website. The web-based questionnaire was created by combining items from an established advocacy survey (Heinowitz et al., 2012) and creating two items that address network positions and the use of NASP resources. Threats to validity and ethical procedures were also discussed. In Chapter 4, I will discuss the results of the current study as well as provide baseline demographic and descriptive information regarding the participants.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative study was to determine the predictability of California school psychologists' contractual caseload advocacy efforts based on their region, the level of professional work position they hold within their district or organization, and their use of policy-oriented learning strategies. While previous research has been focused on advocacy among other professionals within the field of education and psychologists, advocacy efforts and practices among school psychologists have not been readily studied. This study will fill this gap by providing information regarding predictive factors to advocacy among school psychologists. ACF was used in this study to interpret the findings based on four research questions. The research questions and hypotheses were as follows:

RQ1: What are the predictive factors for contractual caseloads advocacy among school psychologists in California?

$H_0 1_1$: California school psychologists' advocacy efforts are not significantly predicted by region.

$H_a 1_1$: California school psychologists' advocacy efforts are significantly predicted by region.

$H_0 1_2$: California school psychologists' advocacy efforts are not significantly predicted by their network positions.

$H_a 1_2$: California school psychologists' advocacy efforts are significantly predicted by their network positions.

RQ2: To what extent does California school psychologists' region predict their use of the NASP resources as a way of engaging others in policy-oriented learning?

$H_0$2: California school psychologists' region does not significantly predict their use of the NASP resources as a way of engaging in policy-oriented learning.

H_a2: California school psychologists' region does significantly predict their use of the NASP resources as a way of engaging in policy-oriented learning.

RQ3: To what extent does advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology predict the use of NASP resources among California school psychologists?

$H_0$3: California school psychologists' advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology does not significantly predict the use of NASP resources.

H_a3: California school psychologists' advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology does significantly predict the use of NASP resources.

RQ4: To what extent does NASP membership predict the use of NASP resources among California school psychologists?

$H_0$4: California school psychologists' NASP membership does not significantly predict their use of NASP resources.

H_a4: California school psychologists' NASP membership does significantly predict their use of NASP resources.

Data Collection

IRB approval (10-04-22-0674736) was granted on October 4, 2022. A study invitation (Appendix C) was submitted to a local professional organization on October 10, 2022, and was posted on the same date. As discussed in Chapter 3, responses were

submitted via Google Forms and participants were provided with a link to the survey to share with colleagues who fit the participation description of the study. Data collection ended on December 23, 2022, despite not hitting the target of 500 responses due to lack of survey submissions. A total of 138 responses were collected and, after cleaning the data, I noted five participants failed to provided responses; thus, depending on the research question and variables used, responses included in the analysis ranged from 134 to 137. While I considered eliminating cases due to missing data, it would have further minimized the number of responses for analysis, and most times, the participant provided responses for other items that could be used in the analysis. Specific information regarding the number of cases used for each statistical analysis will be discussed in the study results section.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (n.d.), there are approximately 5,490 full-time psychologists working in California; however, this number does not include school psychologists who work in a different capacity. With 138 responses, accounting for approximately 0.2% of the population of school psychologists in California, and not obtaining the 500 participants, it does not appear data from the current study can be generalized. Nonetheless, the information gathered from this study can still be used to analyze advocacy among school psychologists in a different manner or raise additional questions to further investigate.

Results

Sample Demographics

Table 2 contains demographic information for the sample that participated in the study. The majority of participants were female (82.6%), between ages 35 and 39 (23.2%), and work as a school psychologist (89.9%). Overall, the majority of participants worked in southern California (62.3%) with the most participants working in Orange County (18.8%). The majority of participants also reported their highest level of education as a master's degree (63.5%).

Table 2

Demographic Variable Frequencies

Variable	Category	Percent
Age	25–29	9.4%
	30–34	15.9%
	35–39	23.2%
	40–44	11.6%
	45–49	17.4%
	50–54	10.1%
	55–59	3.6%
	60–64	6.5%
	65 or older	2.2%
Gender	Female	82.6%
	Male	15.9%
	Other	0.7%
	Decline to state	0.7%
Highest degree earned	Master's	63.5%
	Specialist	28.4%
	Doctorate	8.1%
Network position	Broker	0%
	Advocate	8.0%
	Entrepreneur	89.9%
Location	Northern	25.4%
	Central	12.3%
	Southern	62.3%

Sample Demographics Compared to School Psychologists

While demographic data are not available specifically for school psychologists in California, there is nationwide data available to compare the current study's sample demographics. In 2020, NASP sent a member survey to 3,935 members across the nation to gather demographic data (Goforth et al., 2021). A total of 1,308 surveys were submitted. Due to general concerns regarding generalizability of studies that use voluntary surveys, the results from the current study should be used with caution when generalizing the information to a broader population (Babbie, 2017).

Age. The majority of participants in this study fell within the 35–39 years range (23.2%), followed by 45–49 (17.4%). According to a NASP member survey conducted in 2020 (Goforth et al., 2021), the average age of their participants was 43.9 years with a 25 to 86 years. While the national average age is estimated to be higher than the age range of the majority of participants in the current study, it appears the sample is somewhat close to representative of the mean age of school psychologists in the nation based on data gathered by Goforth et al. (2017).

Gender. In the current study, the majority of participants identified as female (82.6%), followed by male (12.1%), others (0.7%), and those who declined to state (0.7%). According to the demographic sample, 87.3% of school psychologists are female while 12.1% are male (Goforth et al., 2021). The NASP survey also included nonbinary (0.1%), and "prefer to self-describe" (0.2%) options, which were not included in the current study; however, an option in which the participant could decline to state was provided, similar to the current study, and both percentages fell below 1% for each

survey. Overall, the percentages of genders in the current study appear similar to those of the national average.

Education. The majority of participants in the current study reported their highest degree earned as a master's degree (63.5%), followed by specialist (28.4%), and doctorate (8.1%). The national average differed in that the majority of respondents of the NASP member survey were specialists (68.6%), followed by doctorate (22.6%), and master's (8.8%; Goforth et al., 2021). This difference may be attributed to the differing in sample sizes between the surveys or the geographically wider scope of the NASP survey. This difference may also be attributed to the requirements needed to become a practicing school psychologist. In California, individuals who wish to become practicing school psychologists must earn 60 semester units from a graduate program, pass a basic skills test, and submit an application to the state (Commission on Teacher Credentialing, 2022). Because each state has varying credentialing requirements for school psychologists (NASP, 2019b), it is possible that NASP membership survey participants hold differing degrees or credentials based on the state where they practice.

Primary Role. In the current study, the majority of participants described themselves as entrepreneurs (89.9%), which include practicing school psychologists and supervisory/management positions in the public or private school system. Approximately 8% of respondents described themselves as advocates, which includes researchers who conduct research for specific use for advocacy, school- or district-level administrators, and SELPA-level administrators. While the NASP membership survey labeled these as primary roles and provided different response options, they still included school

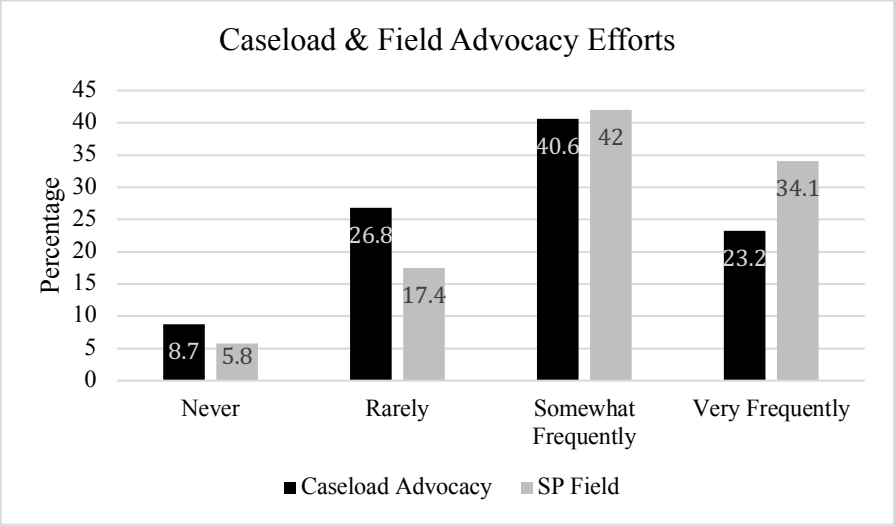
psychologist practitioner and administrator. Similar to the current study, the majority of survey respondents were school psychologist practitioners (82%; Goforth et al., 2021). Additionally, 3.8% of respondents reported that they were administrators (Goforth et al., 2021).

Distribution of Responses

Figure 2 contains the distribution of responses related to California school psychologists' advocacy practices related to caseloads and the field of school psychology (see Appendix D for survey items). The majority of respondents reported they advocate for reduced caseloads (40.6%) and for other issues within the field of school psychology (42%) *somewhat frequently*. The following examples were provided as other issues on the survey item: mental health, social justice, NASP practice model, etc. The second highest response rate indicated 42% of participants *somewhat frequently* advocate for other issues impacting the field of school psychology. While 34.1% of participants reported *very frequently* advocating for the other issues in the field of school psychology, 23.2% reported *very frequent* advocacy efforts when it came to caseload advocacy. In the area of caseload advocacy, 26.8% of participants reported *rarely* engaging in advocacy efforts. Overall, 63.8% of respondents are somewhat or very frequently advocating for reduced caseloads while 76.1% are very frequently advocating for the professional field as a whole.

Figure 2

Caseload and Field Advocacy Efforts



Upon visual comparison of the bar graph, the majority of school psychologists advocate overall on a somewhat frequently basis, with some reporting higher advocacy rates. Participants also appear to advocate more for other issues in the field of school psychology as a whole and are advocating less specifically for reduced caseloads. Additionally, more school psychologists reported rarely advocating for contractual caseloads than those who advocated very frequently. If school psychologists demonstrate similar advocacy efforts, this may explain why policy remains relatively unchanged when it comes to contractual caseloads.

Figure 3 contains response rates pertaining to participants' use of NASP resources. More than half the participants reported the use of NASP resources as a tool to engage in advocacy (55.1%). Figure 4 contains response rates pertaining to participants' NASP membership. The majority of the participants are not currently members of NASP

(63.8%). There is one missing response for each item, accounting for 0.7% of the response rate.

Figure 3

Use of NASP Resources

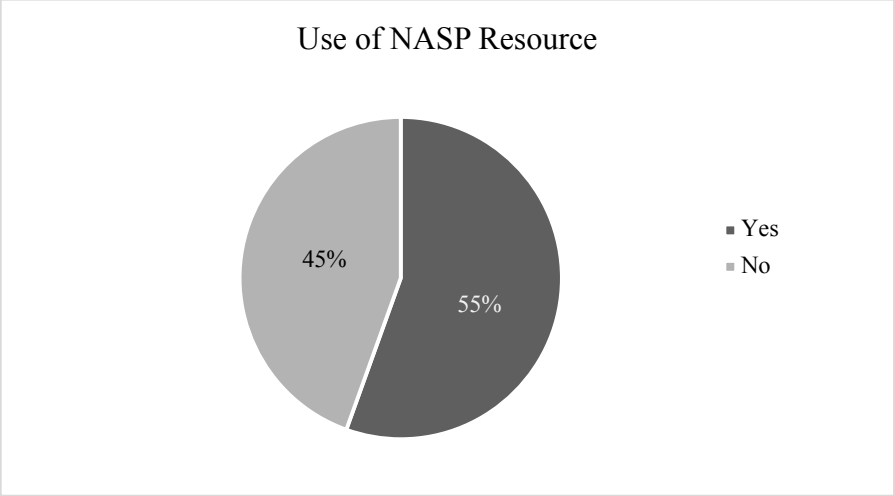
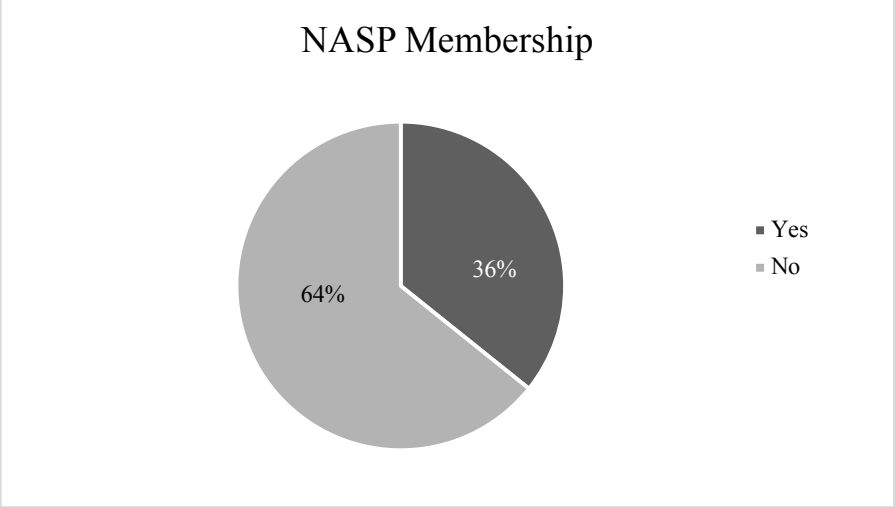


Figure 4

NASP Membership



Overall, the distribution of responses provides additional information regarding California school psychologists' advocacy efforts, which is missing in the literature.

While the majority of the participants reported somewhat frequently to very frequently advocating for contractual caseloads, a higher percentage of participants are advocating for other issues that within the field. Additionally, the majority of participants reported they are not members of NASP and do not use NASP resources as a tool to advocate for policy priorities. When considering the benefits of using quality resources to inform others about policy priorities (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017), this may also explain why state policy does not align with the NASP recommendations for contractual caseloads. Implications of this factor are further discussed in Chapter 5.

Ordinal Logistic Regression

An ordinal logistic regression analysis to investigate the predictive factors for contractual caseloads advocacy among school psychologists in California was conducted. Research question (1) asks, what are the predictive factors for contractual caseloads advocacy among school psychologists in California? The independent variable was coded 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = somewhat frequently, and 4 = very frequently. Two dependent variables were included in this model which were network positions (1 = broker, 2 = advocate, 3 = entrepreneur) and California region (1 = northern, 2 = central, 3 = southern). The analysis was conducted using SPSS and data from 134 cases were used. The predictor variables were tested a priori to verify the assumption of no multicollinearity and 1.3% of variation in caseload advocacy efforts is explained by the predictor variables, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .013$, indicating a weak relationship within the model. This can be explained by the model's sensitivity to sample size (Stuart & Rubin, 2008).

The predictor variable, northern location, in the ordinal logistic regression analysis was not found to contribute to the model. The ordered log-odds (Estimate) = .384, *SE* = .374, *Wald* =1.056, *p* =.304. The estimated odds ratio favored a positive relationship of nearly 34 fold*Exp (Estimate)* = 1.852, 95% CI (-.349, 1.117) compared to the reference variable Southern location. The predictor variable, Central location, in the ordinal logistic regression analysis was also not found to contribute to the model. The ordered log-odds (Estimate) = .222, *SE* = .489, *Wald* =.206, *p* = .650. The estimated odds ratio favored a positive relationship of nearly 17 fold*Exp(Estimate)* = 1.470, 95% CI (-.737, 1.182) compared to the reference variable Southern location. The predictor variable, Advocate, in the ordinal logistic regression analysis was not found to contribute to the model. The ordered log-odds (Estimate) = .399, *SE* = .608, *Wald* =.432, *p* =.511. The estimated odds ratio favored a positive relationship of nearly 10 fold*Exp (Estimate)* = 1.889, 95% CI (-.792, 1.591) compared to the reference variable Entrepreneur. Overall, the odds of California school psychologists advocating for contractual caseloads is not significantly predicted by their location or job. Table 3 summarizes the results of the ordinal logistic regression.

Table 3

Ordinal Logistic Regression Results for Location and Job Title predicting Caseload Advocacy

	B	*Exp(B)*	*SE*	X^2	*p*	*95% CI*
Northern	0.384	1.852	0.374	1.056	0.304	[-0.349, 1.117]
Central	0.222	1.470	0.489	0.206	0.65	[-0.737, 1.182]
Southern	0[a]	.	.	.	.	.
Advocate	0.399	1.889	0.608	0.432	0.511	[-0.792, 1.591]
Entrepreneur	0[a]	.	.	.	.	.

Binary Logistic Regression

A binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict use of NASP resources among California school psychologists as an advocacy tool to inform others about policy priorities. The following research question was posed: (2) to what extent does a California school psychologist's region predict their use of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) resources as a way of engaging others in policy-oriented learning? The outcome variable NASP resources was coded 0 = yes and 1 = no. One predictor variable was included in the model which was the California region in which the participant works. In the SPSS data file, the variable California region was coded 1 = northern, 2 = central, and 3 = southern; and, as categorical predictors, they were dummy coded by using Southern as the indicator. Data from 137 cases were used in this analysis.

The Omnibus test indicates that there is not a statistically significant predictive relationship between the outcome and predictor variables, $X^2(1) = 1.362$, $p = .506$. The strength of the association between the use of NASP resources and California region was

weak, Nagelkerke R^2 = .013. Northern California location was a non-significant predictor of the use of NASP resources (*B* = .335, *SE* = .408, *p* = .411), nor was Central California location (*B* = .536, *SE* = .552, *p* = .332). Had the predictor been significant, then the positive coefficients would be taken as an indicator that California school psychologists across all regions are more likely to use NASP resources than not. Table 4 summarizes the results of the ordinal logistic regression.

Table 4

Binary Logistic Regression Results for Location and Use of NASP Resources

	B	*Exp(B)*	*SE*	*Wald*	*p*
Location				1.341	0.511
Northern	0.335	1.398	0.408	0.675	0.411
Central	0.536	1.708	0.552	0.941	0.332
Constant	0.071	1.073	0.217	0.106	0.745

Another binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict use of NASP resources among California school psychologists as an advocacy tool to inform others about other policy priorities. Research question (3) posits, to what extent does the use of NASP resources predict advocacy for other issues related to the field of school psychology among California school psychologists? The outcome variable NASP resources was coded 0 = yes and 1 = no. One predictor variable was included in the model which was advocacy efforts among California school psychologists regarding other issues related to the field of school psychology, such as mental health, social justice, and NASP practice model. In the SPSS data file, the variable advocacy for field of school psychology was coded 1 = never, 2 = rarely, 3 = somewhat frequently, and 4 = very frequently. Data from 136 cases were used in this analysis.

The Omnibus test indicates there is a statistically significant predictive relationship between the outcome and predictor variables, $X^2(1) = 15.895$, $p = <.001$. The strength of the association between the use of NASP resources and advocacy related to field of school psychology was somewhat weak, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .148$, as 14.8% of the variation in the use of NASP resources is explained by the predictor variable. Advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology is a positive and significant predictor of the use of NASP resources ($B = .853$, $SE = .230$, $p = <.001$). The odds ratio indicates that the odds of the use of NASP resources change by a factor of .091 with every one-unit increment of reported advocacy effort related to other issues in the field of school psychology, *Exp*(B) = .091. This means California school psychologists who advocate for other issues in the field of school psychology are more likely to utilize NASP resources to inform others these policy priorities. Table 5 summarizes the results of the ordinal logistic regression.

Table 5

Binary Logistic Regression Results for Advocacy for Other Issues in the Field of School Psychology and Use of NASP Resources

	B	*Exp(B)*	*SE*	*Wald*	*p*
SP Field Advocacy	0.853	2.346	0.230	13.691	<.001
Constant	-2.393	0.091	0.728	10.809	.001

A fourth binary logistic regression analysis was conducted to predict use of NASP resources among California school psychologists based on their NASP membership. Research question (4) asks, to what extent does NASP membership predict the use of NASP resources? The outcome variable NASP resources was coded 0 = yes and 1 = no.

One predictor variable was included in the model which was the participants membership with NASP. In the SPSS data file, the variable advocacy for field of school psychology was coded 1 = yes and 2 = no. Data from 136 cases were used in this analysis.

The Omnibus test indicates there is a statistically significant predictive relationship between the outcome and predictor variables, $X^2(1) = 16.246$, $p = <.001$. The strength of the association between the use of NASP resources and advocacy related to the field of school psychology was somewhat weak, Nagelkerke $R^2 = .151$, as 15.1% of the variation in the use of NASP resources is explained by the predictor variable. NASP membership is a negative and significant predictor of the use of NASP resources ($B = -1.541$, $SE = .405$, $p = <.001$). The odds ratio indicates the use of NASP resources change by a factor of .214 with every one-unit increment of reported NASP membership increases, *Exp*(B) = .214. Thereby explaining the use of chance, or odds, of being used. This means that California school psychologists who are not members of NASP are less likely to utilize NASP resources to inform others these policy priorities. Table 6 summarizes the results of the ordinal logistic regression.

Table 6

Binary Logistic Regression Results for Advocacy for Other Issues in the Field of School Psychology and Use of NASP Resources

	B	*Exp(B)*	*SE*	*Wald*	*p*
NASP Membership	-1.541	0.214	0.405	14.454	<.001
Constant	2.780	16.127	0.718	14.985	<.001

Summary

This study used logistic regression to determine the predictability of California school psychologists advocating for contractual caseloads, as well as their use of NASP resources as a way of engaging others in policy-oriented learning. Due to a lower number of participants, results cannot be generalized; but these results can add to the limited literature surrounding advocacy efforts among school psychologists. Overall, statistically significant predictors for caseload advocacy were not identified; however, two statistically significant predictive factors were identified as predicting both advocacy for other issues in the field and use of NASP resources.

The overall variation among variables was low across all models, which may have impacted by the study's sample size. Based on an ordinal logistic regression, location and network position were not found to significantly predict caseload advocacy among school psychologists. Similarly, location did not predict the use of NASP resources, according to a binary logistic regression analysis. When evaluating other predictive factors of the use of NASP resources, the current study found statistically significant predictors among those participants who advocated for other issues in the field of school psychology and those who were members of NASP. Overall, California school psychologists who are advocating for other issues within the field of school psychology or are members of NASP are more likely to use NASP resources as a way of informing others about policy priorities within the field. Chapter 5 will provide a discussion of the implications of the results, as well as the limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this non-experimental quantitative study was to determine the predictability of California school psychologists' contractual caseload advocacy efforts based on their region and the type of position they hold within their district or organization, as well as their use of policy-oriented learning strategies. This study was conducted to fill a gap in research related to advocacy practices among school psychologists and to address unchanging policies surrounding contractual caseloads for school psychologists in California. ACF was used to identify and describe advocacy efforts among school psychologists in California.

A total of 138 participants responded to an online survey regarding their advocacy efforts. Ordinal and binary logistic regressions were used to evaluate the following predictive factors among four research questions: location, network position, advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology, and NASP membership. Overall, I found that California school psychologists who advocate for other issues in the field and are NASP members are more likely to use NASP resources as a tool for engaging others in policy-oriented learning. Advocacy for contractual caseloads was not predicted by school psychologists' location in California or their network position. Additionally, location did not predict the use of NASP resources. While results cannot be generalized due to a low sample size, this information can still be used to help fill the gap in the literature and as a foundation for further research.

Interpretation of Findings

While the majority of findings in this study were not statistically significant, thus limiting generalizability, the information gathered can be used to build upon the current knowledge within the field of school psychology as well as within ACF. According to previous ACF research, a policy actor's access to resources and strategies and their belief system and contacts play a role in their ability to engage others in learning about the policy priorities of their coalition (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017; Mintrom & Norma, 2009; Mintrom & Vergari, 1996; Witting, 2007). Additionally, Weible (2008) found that actors can impact the network structure based on their unique role and their knowledge. While research regarding advocacy efforts among school psychologists is limited, various studies in the areas of education and psychology found positive impacts when individuals engaged with the advocacy process (Grice & Parker, 2017; Jones et al., 2017) and utilized various ways in which one can advocate in the field (Ford-Paz et al., 2020; Heinowitz et al., 2012). Based on the various roles and responsibilities of school psychologists and the impact of high caseloads on their ability to support students, researchers have recommended increased advocacy to change policies (Castillo et al., 2016; Mann et al., 2019; McNamera et al., 2019).

When analyzing the results regarding predictive factors for contractual caseload advocacy among school psychologists in California, their region (California county in which they were employed) or their network position (the type of job position they held) were not statistically significant predictors of advocacy. While I hypothesized school psychologists' location would not significantly predict advocacy, I hypothesized their

network position would significantly predict their advocacy. Based on results, a school psychologist's location or network position does not seem to predict advocacy. ACF researchers have identified three levels of network positions that account for individuals' access to resources within their respective positions; however, this does not appear to predict advocacy efforts among school psychologists. The majority of participants were considered entrepreneurs (89%), possibly indicating that actors functioning within this network position may lack sufficient resources, such as time, in order to engage in advocacy. For instance, participants who are practicing school psychologists with high caseloads may not have the time, energy, access, or information necessary to engage in advocacy related to contractual caseloads. Additionally, compared to advocacy for other issues within the field of school psychology, participants reported lower rates of advocacy related to contractual caseloads overall. School psychologists may be engaging in advocacy work in California, but it may be in other areas, such as mental health, social justice, or other related areas. In California, the location of their county of work does not also appear to impact their advocacy. This can be attributed to the availability of knowledge and resources online.

In the current study, I also found that California school psychologists' region of work did not significantly predict their use of NASP resources to engage others in policy-oriented learning. As previously stated, region location overall does not appear to play a role in efforts related to advocacy or the way in which school psychologists engage others in learning about the policies impacting the field. While previous ACF research does not specifically list location as an actor attribute, I wanted to consider location as an offset of

the participant's access to resources because counties within a state can have varying access to resources; however, given the increased access to online resources and information, this may inform future ACF research about omitting the use of location as an actor attribute. When considering participants' use of NASP resources, the majority (55%) reported they do not use NASP resources as tools for informing others about policy priorities; however, the majority of participants also noted they are not members of NASP (65%). This means the majority of the participants had limited access to resources because membership of professional organizations provides increased access to resources and information (see Bond, 2016), which can potentially explain a lower percentage of advocacy related to contractual caseloads. These results build on the work of Jones et al. (2017) and Bond (2016) in that possessing knowledge and engaging with materials yields positive advocacy outcomes.

In this study, I also sought to consider the extent to which the use of NASP resources predict advocacy for other issues in the field of school psychology. Results indicate that participants who use NASP resources are more likely to advocate for other issues in the field of school psychology. As previously stated, participants reported high rates of advocacy for issues other than contractual caseloads, and because most participants are not members of NASP, this may indicate there are more resources for other policy priorities available to nonmembers than resources specifically related to advocacy for contractual caseloads. If this assumption is true, then it would align with previous research that a key barrier to advocacy among psychologists is awareness of public policy issues (Heinowitz et al., 2012). While school psychologists may have

firsthand experience with managing high caseloads, they may lack the nuanced knowledge related to educational policy needed for efficient advocacy related to contract caseloads.

A final consideration made in this study was the extent to which NASP membership predicts the use of NASP resources; the results indicate participants who were not NASP members were less likely to use NASP resources as a tool for spreading knowledge and awareness about policy priorities in the field of school psychology. School psychologists who are not members of NASP may not be aware of the access to resources available to them, which may include articles, webinars, support from specific committees, and more. If the profession's national organization is providing useful resources that can support school psychologists in their advocacy work, it may be worth considering the type and number of resources available to aid school psychologists in advocacy related to contractual caseloads.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations to the validity, reliability, and nation-wide generalizability of this study. The overall non-experimental design of this study poses limitations to the generalizability of the results. The snowball sampling method used impacted the number of participants that could have been identified for the study. I had difficulty finding email addresses on websites and directories for eligible participants, especially for those who were not school psychologist practitioners. As a result, I had to rely on the participants' willingness to forward the survey link to those who met the criteria to participate in the study. Additionally, as I reviewed in Chapter 3, I was unable

to use the purest method of snowball sampling due to the anonymous and web-based nature of the sample's participation. Thus, using an interpretation of the snowball sampling method limits the generalizability of these findings.

This factor leads to the most substantial limitation of this study, the sample size. A G*Power analysis (Faul et al., 2009) was used to calculate the sample size using a medium effect size (Hsieh et al., 1998). While results indicated that a sample size of 206 was needed to yield a significant model, I attempted to collect double that amount to get a representative sample. After several weeks of data collection, I was able to collect data from 138 participants which falls below the recommended sample size of the G*Power analysis. This means the results of this study are not reliable or generalizable based on a nonsignificant model. Despite its limitations, this study adds information regarding advocacy efforts and practices among school psychologists which is lacking in the literature.

Recommendations

I examined the predictive factors of advocacy among California school psychologists, especially related to contractual caseloads. Continued research pertaining to advocacy efforts and practices among school psychologists is recommended. While the recommended sample size for this study was 206, and I aimed to collect double that amount, a total of 138 participants submitted survey responses. Further research related to the advocacy efforts of school psychologists should include a sample size that can be used to generalize information, especially since there is limited research in the area at this time and related advocacy research was primarily qualitative. Additionally, researchers

may consider seeking feedback from participants from other states to further generalize their results, as participants in the current study worked in California.

To add to the knowledge of advocacy efforts among school psychologists and the ACF, it is recommended future research also focus on two other ACF components: policy actor beliefs and attributes of stimuli. In Chapter 2, it was reviewed that the definition of actors was described by ACF researchers as the individuals who make up coalitions and influence the organization's affairs (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017); thus, the school psychologists who participated in this study are considered actors, according to the ACF definition. In the current study, school psychologists reported lower rates of advocacy efforts related to contractual caseloads when compared to advocacy for other issues within the field of school psychology. This aligns with ACF's factor on normative beliefs, which describes the actor's priorities and values related to policies (Jenkins-Smith et al., 2017). This may be a key consideration as school psychologists may believe that advocating for other issues related to the field of school psychology, like mental health or social justice, as more impactful for students than advocating for contractual caseloads.

Additionally, it may be beneficial to also understand school psychologists' previous experience with advocacy. At times, policy actors may only remember or focus on their losses which can impact their perception on advocacy (Sabatier, Hunter, & McLaughlin, 1987). If school psychologists have experience with advocacy but have not seen the benefits or have been penalized for speaking up, they may only remember these "losses" which could impact their desire to advocate in the future. This may explain why

school psychologists are advocating for contractual caseloads at a lower rate. Further researcher would provide insights on the overall belief systems of school psychologists and potentially shed light on the impact their beliefs have on their advocacy efforts and practices.

In addition to an actor's belief system, future research would also be beneficial in the area of their attributes of the stimuli. This ACF factor posits that low-quality data attributes to uncontrollable policy phenomena, which can then lead to miscommunication among coalition actors (Jenkins-Smith, 1990). While the majority of the participants in the current study were not members of NASP, the majority also reported that they do not use NASP materials as tools to engage others in policy-oriented learning. This is not to imply that NASP resources are low-quality; however, considering the percentage of participants who were not members of NASP, many may not have access to the high-quality resources that are offered through association membership. Additionally, there may be a need to further investigate the number of resources available related contractual caseload advocacy compared to materials associated with other policy priorities. These barriers would then make it difficult for them to incorporate pertinent information into their own attributes and avoid limitations in the resources that can be provided through policy-oriented learning. Further research in this area could provide more information about what resources are available to school psychologists, as well as how they are engaging with the material.

Implications for Social Change

The current study poses potential impacts of positive social change at the individual, organizational, and societal/policy levels. At the individual level, this study provides increased awareness to school psychologists and other educational professionals about the importance of advocacy for contractual caseloads. It may allow for individuals to reflect on their own efforts and practices and provide them with some direction or encouragement to engage in advocacy.

When considering the impacts for social change at the organizational level, this study has positive implications for local school districts as well as professional organizations, especially those related to school psychology. At the school district level, district administrators can further understand the importance and need for policy change as it relates to contractual caseloads for school psychologists, which would benefit the educational services and supports of their students. Additionally, school psychologist groups within districts can utilize the results to reflect upon their district's needs as well as their own advocacy practices. This research could also be utilized as a unifying factor in building collaboration between district administrators and school psychologists to ensure that caseloads are within or close to the NASP recommendation (1:500) to improve the services being provided to students.

While the current study does not change specific state or federal policies, it can be used as a tool to engage in advocacy efforts. The study can be used to inform current coalition actors in their advocacy efforts and hopefully increase overall advocacy for contractual caseloads. Advocacy work needs to improve to elicit the policy change

needed at the state level to address high caseloads among school psychologists (Mann et al., 2019). Further advancing advocacy efforts that span to the federal level can elicit the necessary social change needed to improve educational services by staffing sufficient school psychologists to support student outcomes.

Finally, this study adds to the literature for the Advocacy Coalition Framework. Specifically, this study adds to the ACF literature pertaining to policy actors and further operationalizes the roles of the broker, entrepreneur, and advocate. Jenkins-Smith et al. (2017) suggested further research in this area to better define and understand their roles in policy-oriented learning. Providing further literature for the ACF can lead to improved advocacy practices resulting in the policy change that is needed to support the academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs of students overall.

Conclusions

State and federal policies do not address the need for contractual caseloads among school psychologists despite the benefits for students within schools. As a result, a call for increased advocacy for lowered caseloads has been made by multiple researchers to provide quality services for all students. Using reliable resources as a way of sharing information regarding policy priorities has been found to yield positive outcomes for advocacy. While research related to advocacy practices among school psychologists is limited, the findings from this study can add to the literature.

While findings from this study cannot be generalized, they provide additional information that can be added to further understand advocacy practices among school psychologists, especially within the state of California. Overall, future research in these

areas should include larger sample sizes that can generalized to the population of school psychologists. A major finding of this study is that predictive factors for caseload advocacy were not identified; the majority of participants appear to advocate for other issues within the field of school psychology. Despite multiple recommendations for increased advocacy related to lowering caseloads, participants appear more likely to advocate for other issues related to the field of school psychology. Additionally, school psychologists' use of NASP resources was found to be predicted by their advocacy for other issues as well as NASP membership. Further understanding these nuances would shed knowledge about school psychologists' advocacy efforts in general, as well as potentially identify other predictive factors or barriers of advocacy among this professional group. Further research is needed to understand advocacy practices within the field of school psychology in an attempt to elicit policy change at the state and federal levels in order to positively impact student outcomes.

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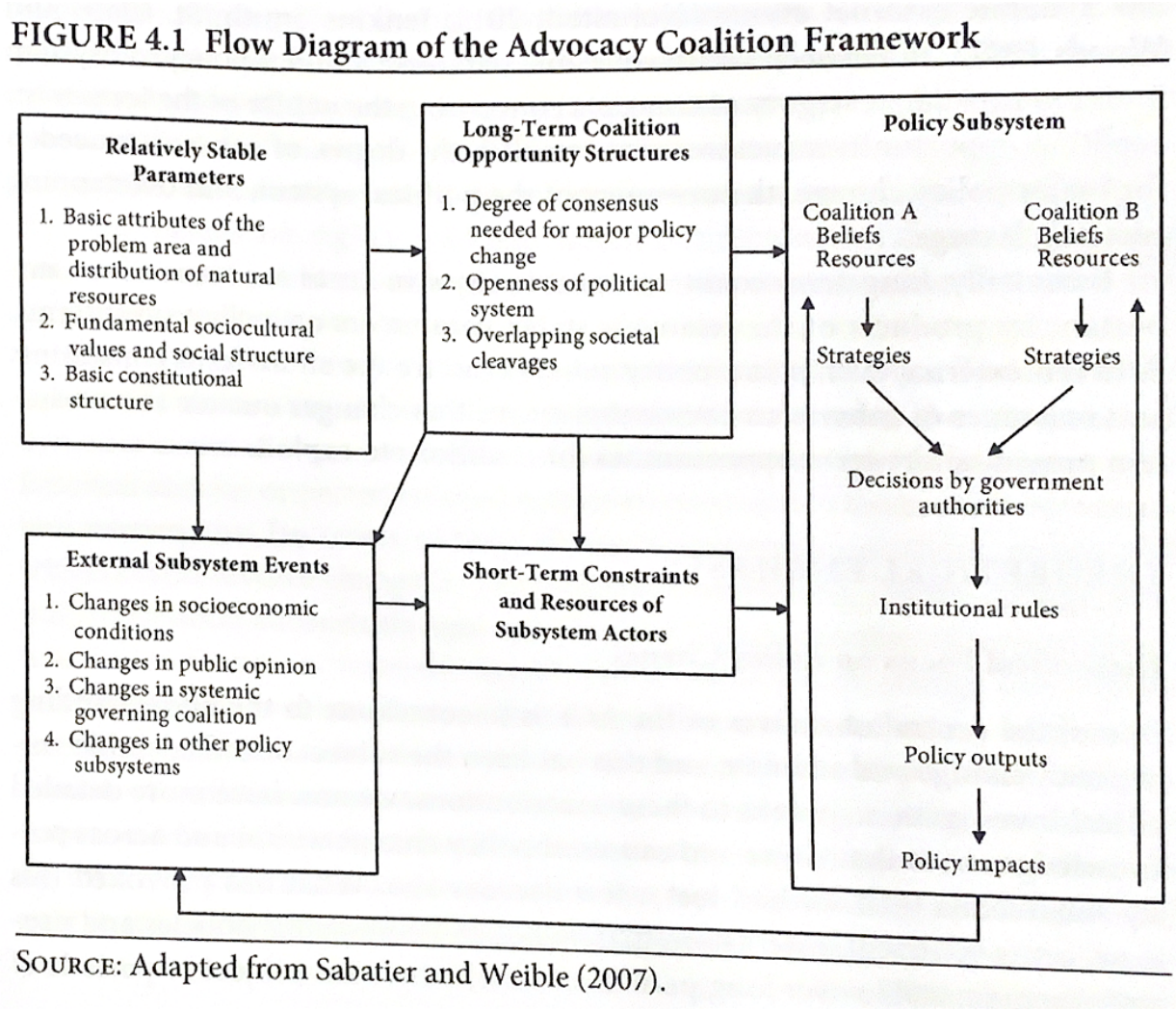
Appendix A: ACF Flow Diagram



Appendix B: Regions of California With Corresponding Counties

Northern	Central	Southern
Calaveras	Monterey	Los Angeles
Contra Costa	Kings	Kern
Mono	Inyo	San Luis Obispo
San Joaquin	San Benito	Santa Barbara
Tuolumne	Tulare	Ventura
Yuba	Fresno	Orange
Glen	Madera	San Diego
Lassen	Merced	Imperial
Del Norte	Santa Clara	Riverside
Solano	Santa Cruz	San Bernardino
Sonoma	San Mateo	
Humboldt	Stanislaus	
El Dorado	Mariposa	
Napa		
Sacramento		
Placer		
Butte		
Shasta		
Siskiyou		
Colusa		
Marin		
Mendocino		
Yolo		
Lake		
Nevada		
Plumas		
Trinity		
Modoc		
Alameda		
Sutter		
Amador		
San Francisco		
Alpine		
Sierra		
Tehama		

Appendix C: Study Invitation

California School Psychologists' Advocacy Efforts Related to Advocacy for Contractual Caseloads

You are being asked to participate in a study which has been designed to investigate and analyze the factors that predict advocacy efforts among California school psychologists as it relates to contractual caseloads. The study is unique in that it will seek to understand those factors as they relate to the school psychologists' use of NASP resources, their professional role, and their location of employment within California. Participants in this study will be anonymously submitting an online questionnaire, which is estimated to take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The study will be conducted from October 10, 2022 to December 2022, or until a random normative sample has been achieved from respondents. A summary of all results is projected to be published no later than February 11, 2023.

Appendix D: Questionnaire of California School Psychologist Advocacy Efforts

1. I advocate for reduced caseloads within the field of school psychology

- o Very frequently
- o Somewhat frequently
- o Rarely
- o Never

2. I advocate for other issues related to the field of school psychology (i.e. mental health, social justice, NASP practice model, etc.)

- o Very frequently
- o Somewhat frequently
- o Rarely
- o Never

3. I use NASP resources (i.e. Policy Playbook, webinars, articles, etc.) as an advocacy tool to inform others about policy priorities

- o Yes
- o No

4. I am a member of NASP.

- o Yes
- o No

5. Age

- o 18-24
- o 25-29
- o 30-34
- o 35-39
- o 40-44
- o 45-49
- o 50-54
- o 55-59
- o 60-64
- o 65 or older

6. Gender

- Female
- Male
- Other
- Decline to state

7. What is your highest degree held:

- Master's
- Specialist
- Doctorate
- Not applicable
- Other (please specify): _____

8. Describe your current job title:

- School Psychologist practitioner
- Higher Education Professor
- Researcher (Conduct research for specific use for advocacy)
- Researcher (Conduct research for any other use)
- School- or District-level administrator (i.e. director, coordinator, assistant superintendent, etc.)
- SELPA-level administrator
- Supervisor/Management within the public or private school system
- Director within non-profit/community-based organization
- Other (please specify): _____

9. In which California county is your job located?

- Alameda
- Alpine
- Amador
- Butte
- Calaveras
- Colusa
- Contra Costa
- Del Norte
- El Dorado
- Fresno
- Glen
- Humboldt
- Imperial
- Inyo
- Kern
- Kings
- Lake
- Lassen
- Los Angeles
- Madera
- Marin
- Mariposa
- Mendocino
- Merced
- Modoc
- Mono
- Monterey
- Napa
- Nevada
- Orange
- Placer
- Plumas
- Riverside
- Sacramento
- San Benito

- San Bernardino
- San Diego
- San Francisco
- San Joaquin
- San Luis Obispo
- San Mateo
- Santa Barbara
- Santa Clara
- Santa Cruz
- Shasta
- Sierra
- Siskiyou
- Solano
- Sonoma
- Stanislaus
- Sutter
- Tehama
- Trinity
- Tulare
- Tuolumne
- Ventura
- Yolo
- Yuba