

## PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF ADVOCATES AND MAINTENANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS IN A CITIZEN ADVOCACY PROGRAMME

P. O'Brien, B. Tuck, J. Elkins and R. Cummins

### Introduction

Wolfensberger (1971, 1977) introduced the concept of citizen advocacy in which a volunteer represented the interests of another person who had difficulty in meeting either his or her instrumental or expressive needs. The advocate formed a one to one relationship with the person in need (a protege). Wolfensberger (1971) defined six desirable characteristics for advocates: that the advocates have a history of community residential stability, a willingness to participate in a programme orientation, an understanding of the specific advocacy mission, competence in the assigned advocacy role, commitment to the advocacy mission and a good moral character. In addition, he proposed that advocates should join an action group in their communities that represented the needs of people like their protege.

These characteristics became the basis for recruitment of suitable volunteers by the National Association for Retarded Citizens (NARC, 1974). The qualifying characteristics that were recommended by the National Association were an ability to get along with a variety of people, residential stability, a belief in advocacy, patience and empathy to share both the frustrations and joy of the accomplishments of an intellectually disabled person and an ability to accept a protege. More recently the Association for Retarded Citizens (ARC) ("Selecting Advocates", 1986) revised its list of characteristics to include a willingness to undergo orientation, and to join a relevant action group, as well as the potential for relationship continuity.

Another study that resulted in the identification of advocacy characteristics was promoted by the Texas Research Institute on Mental Retardation. This

**Patricia O'Brien, Ph.D.,**  
New Zealand Society for the Intellectually Handicapped, P.O. Box 2199, Auckland.  
Corresponding Author.

**Bryan Tuck, Ph.D.,** Education Department, University of Auckland, Auckland.

**John Elkins, Ph.D.,** Professor of Special Education, Schonell Special Education Research Centre, University of Queensland.

**Robert Cummins, Ph.D.,** Faculty of Arts, Victoria College, Toorak Campus, Melbourne.

study, which was conducted over four years, surveyed citizen advocacy programmes throughout the U.S.A. The findings resulted in three manuals on how to set up an advocacy programme (Baucom, 1980), how to train volunteers (Rude, 1980) and resources for advocacy (Texas Tech University, 1979). Qualities for advocates not previously mentioned by Wolfensberger and ARC included positive attitudes towards life, an ability to cope with stress and frustration, tolerance, mental stability, communication and interpersonal skills, reliability, assertiveness and maturity.

Although the aforementioned characteristics have been used to guide the recruitment of advocates (Wolfensberger, 1971; NARC, 1974; Baucom, 1980), the efficacy of such characteristics for maintenance of the advocacy partnership has not been studied. Therefore it is not known whether the identified characteristics are actually critical for the development and maintenance of an advocacy relationship.

The purpose of the study was two-fold, first to identify the personality characteristics of advocates who applied to participate in a citizen advocacy programme. Secondly to identify those particular characteristics which correlate

with maintenance of an advocacy relationship

## Procedure

### *The Sample*

The study was conducted as part of an evaluation of a citizen advocacy programme in Melbourne, Australia over three years during which 59 advocacy relationships were made, with 21 in the first, 23 in the second and 15 in the third year. The age range for the advocates was 19 to 54 years with a mean age of 30 years. There were 45 women and 14 men. Twenty advocates were recruited from the community and 39 from Victoria College, Burwood Campus, Melbourne, where they were undertaking a graduate training course in Special Education either on a full or part-time basis. Table I shows the recruitment pattern over the three years. Only advocates recruited in the first two years were studied since the third cohort had insufficient potential time to maintain their involvement.

The occupations of the 20 advocates who responded to recruitment advertising in the community are listed in Table II. Sixteen of the 20 had tertiary qualifications or were studying at the time of recruitment. All 39 of the college volunteers had completed initial teacher

**TABLE I**  
Place of Recruitment for Advocates

Year	Place of Recruitment for Advocates		
	Community	College	Part-time
1st	8	8	5
2nd	5	12	6
3rd	7	4	4
Total	20	24	15

<b>Marital Status</b> (N = 59)		<b>Occupation of comm. volunteers</b> (N = 20)		<b>Accommodation</b> (N = 59)	
<b>Type</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>No</b>
Married	20	Teaching	4	With parents	14
De facto	5	Helping prof.	4	Own house/flat	25
Single	34	Clerical/Sec.	3	Renting	18
		Sales	1	Boarding	2
		Managerial	1		
		Student (F/t)	7		

training with 24 undertaking a full-time graduate course in Special Education at the time of recruitment, 11 were working full-time in special school facilities studying after hours and 4 were combining home duties with study. The advocates' marital status is presented in Table II with just over half the group being single. The majority of advocates lived in their own home or rented accommodation (Table II).

### **Personality Characteristics of the Advocates**

The California Personality Inventory (CPI) (Gough, 1975) was used to measure the personality characteristics of the advocates. The CPI is a 480 item true-false test comprising 18 basic scales which are grouped into four broad classes of: measures of poise, ascendancy, self-assurance and interpersonal adequacy; measures of socialization, responsibility, intrapersonal values and character; measures of achievement potential and intellectual efficacy and measures of

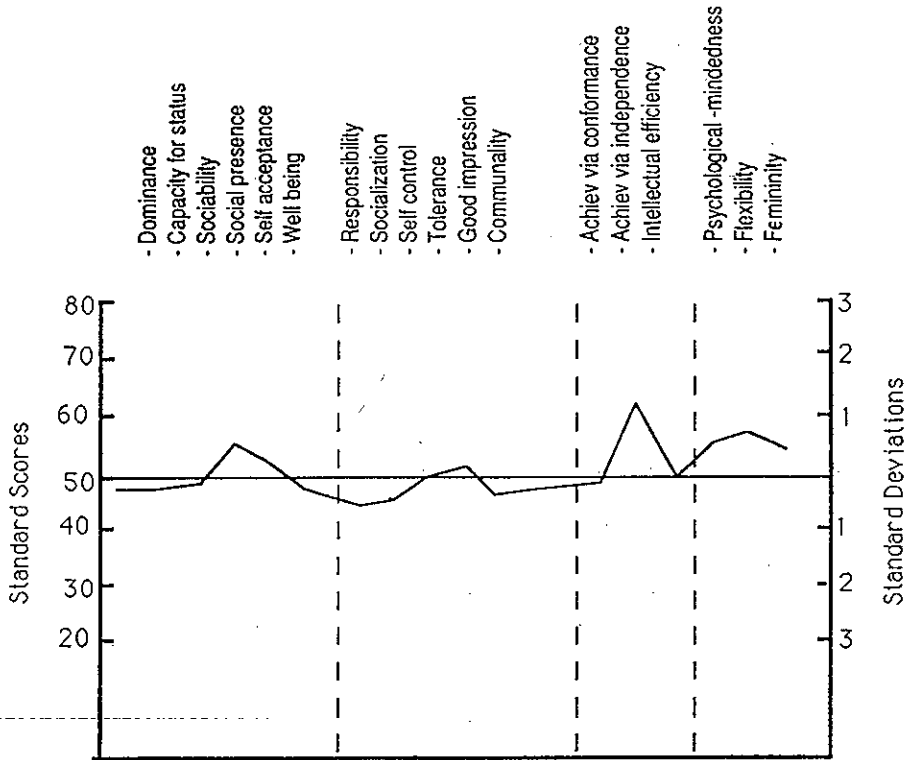
intellectual and interest modes. Advocates completed the inventory within two weeks of being matched with their proteges. The co-ordinator of the citizen advocacy programme explained the purpose for gathering the data, discussed the CPI and went over the instructions and the advocates completed the inventory within their own time.

Thirty-seven of these 44 subjects who joined the programme in the first two years completed the CPI and their scores were used to investigate whether personality characteristics could be used to predict maintenance of relationships. Ten of these advocates remained in the programme for a period up to six months, 11 for a period of between 7 to 18 months and 16 for a period of between 19 to 24 months.

### **Results**

A mean profile of the standard scores of the CPI for advocates is presented in Figure 1. For the purpose of the study the male and female raw scores have been converted into standard scores

**FIGURE 1**  
**CPI Profile of Advocate Subjects**



Do	Cs	Sy	Sp	Sx	Wb	Re	So	Sc	To	Gi	Cm	Ac	Ai	Ie	Py	Fx	Fe
47	47	48	55	52	47	44	45	50	51	46	49	48	61	50	55	57	54

Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV
Poise Ascendancy Self-Assurance Interpersonal adequacy	Socialization Responsibility Interpersonal values and character	Achievement potential Intellectual efficacy	Intellectual & interest needs

in order to present them together in an advocate profile. The 18 scales of the profile are grouped into the aforementioned four broad classes (Gough, 1975).

Figure 1 presents the advocates standard scores on the 18 CPI subscales. The mean standard scores on the CPI subscales ranged from 44 for the subscales of Responsibility to 61 for the subscale of Achievement via Independence. The advocates means ranged within plus or minus one standard deviation of the published norm group (50, 10). The highest mean scores for individual scales were obtained within Classes III and IV and these were 60 for Achievement via Independence and 58 for Flexibility.

In exploring whether the personality characteristics of the advocates could be used to indicate what type of person would maintain their advocacy relationships longest, a MANOVA was run across the three maintenance groups (0 - 6 months, 7 - 18 months and 19 - 24 months), with the 18 scales of the CPI as the dependent variables. The obtained F value was significant ( $F_{obt} = 3.03$  (Pillais),  $p < .001$ , d.f. 36). Univariate F tests identified four of the subscales as having significantly different means

across the three maintenance groups. They were the subscales of Well-Being ( $F(2, 34) = 5.84$   $p < .01$ ), Community ( $F(2, 34) = 7.07$   $p < .05$ ), Academic Achievement ( $F(2, 34) = 4.46$   $p < .05$ ), and Flexibility ( $F(2, 34) = 7.06$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Multiple range tests using the Scheffe procedure were conducted on each of the four scales in Table III. In relation to Well-Being, the 19 - 24 month maintenance group ( $\bar{x} = 51.25$ ) was found to be significantly higher ( $p < .05$ ) than the 7 - 18 months maintenance group ( $\bar{x} = 38.63$ ). (No other significant differences between groups were found.) For Community both the 7 - 18 months maintenance group ( $\bar{x} = 50.9$ ) and the 19 - 24 month group ( $\bar{x} = 51.5$ ) were significantly lower ( $p < .05$ ) than the 0 - 6 month group ( $\bar{x} = 52.5$ ). Whereas for Academic Achievement no two groups were found to be significantly different, although the 19 - 24 month group had the highest score of 65, compared to 56 of the other two groups. With regard to Flexibility, the 19 - 24 month group ( $\bar{x} = 64.8$ ) was significantly different ( $p < .05$ ) to both 7 - 18 month ( $\bar{x} = 50.3$ ) and the 0 - 6 month group ( $\bar{x} = 52.5$ )

TABLE III  
Means of CPI subscales across maintenance groups

Subscale	0 - 6 months			7 - 18 months			19 - 24 months		
	N	$\bar{x}$	s	N	$\bar{x}$	s	N	$\bar{x}$	s
Well-Being	10	46.8	8.3	11	38.6	12.1	16	51.3	7.9
Community	10	36.4	17.8	11	50.9	5.5	16	51.5	6.9
Academic Ach.	10	56.4	12.3	11	56.6	6.6	16	65.0	6.8
Flexibility	10	52.5	10.5	11	50.3	11.4	16	64.8	10.7

## Discussion

The advocate profile on the CPI was not marked by any extremely high or low scores. The advocates were pictured as an average group of people with a leaning towards achievement and intellectual pursuits. With the highest two mean scores being for Achievement via Independence and Flexibility the group of advocates was characterised by independence and self-reliance, accompanied by confidence, assertiveness and a sense of adventure to fulfill personal pleasure (Gough, 1975).

The mild elevation of the scores in Classes III and IV which reflect achievement and intellectual pursuits (Gough, 1975) is not surprising given that over 93% of the advocate sample had tertiary qualifications with 60% of the overall sample undertaking graduate teaching studies at the time of the citizen advocacy programme.

The analysis resulted in identifying some personality characteristics which appeared to contribute to maintenance. The advocates who maintained their relationships beyond 18 months exhibited a significantly higher degree of flexibility and adaptability in their thinking and social behaviour. Following Gough (1975) these advocates would be expected to display a greater degree of insight, humour and concern with personal pleasure and diversion than those advocates who terminated their relationships earlier in the programme.

A sense of well-being also differentiated advocates who maintained the relationships beyond 18 months from

their less persistent counterparts. Gough (1975) saw well-being as identifying "those persons who minimize their worries and complaints and who are relatively free from self-doubt and disillusionment" (p. 10). The finding that advocates who maintained their relationships longer than 18 months scored higher on well-being than the advocate maintenance group of 7 - 18 months suggests that a long term relationship requires people who are free from self-doubt and can cope with disillusionment. In contrast, that the score on well-being at the 0 - 6 month stage is no different to that of the 19 - 24 month stage suggests that well-being is not a variable that works to maintain relationships in the early stages.

Gough (1975) characterised people who scored high on well-being as versatile, productive and energetic. Although the score for the 19 - 24 month maintenance group was only average, it is nevertheless the case that this group was more strongly characterised by those qualities than those advocates maintaining their relationship between 7 and 18 months.

Another scale that discriminated between the groups of advocates is communality. The 0 - 6 month maintenance group has a significantly lower score than the other two groups. Gough (1975) saw people who score high on the scale as being dependable, conscientious, having common sense and making good judgements compared to persons with low scores which indicate personal problems, internal conflicts and changeability. The significant low score of those advocates who did not maintain

their relationships beyond 6 months therefore suggests that persons with personal problems as defined by the communality scale should not be selected for advocacy programmes..

Generally speaking the characteristics of flexibility, a sense of well-being and common sense seem to relate to the maintenance of advocacy relationships. It would be premature, nevertheless, without further confirming evidence, to select advocates on the basis of the identified maintenance characteristics. However, such characteristics expand those previously outlined by Wolfensberger (1971), NARC (1974) and "Selecting Advocates" (1986) which were more pragmatically orientated to the advocacy task in contrast to personality traits. Information arising from the present study of maintenance characteristics could be incorporated into advocacy training sessions where cameos of advocacy relationships could demonstrate, for example, how "flexibility" works to maintain and overcome difficulties in the relationship, or how "common sense" is used to handle previously unmet situations.

The use of standardised measures to identify the characteristics of advocates is only one option. Studies of an ethnographic nature where advocates and proteges are asked to comment on what makes for a good advocate are also needed if the essence of the personal connection between two people is to be captured in the findings.

Throughout the 20 years that citizen advocacy has existed the paucity of information on the characteristics of advocates has lead the co-ordinators of citizen

advocacy programmes to select and match advocates based upon the little descriptive information that has been available and their own intuition. The present study has opened the way for further investigations into the issue of whether intuition can be replaced or complemented by the findings of a series of systematic studies.

## Summary

The study investigated the personality characteristics of advocates who were members of a citizen advocacy programme. The advocates were found to be a group of people who were not identified by extreme personality characteristics, but rather their profile was one of average consistency. Three characteristics were identified that relate to maintenance of advocacy relationships, as well-being, flexibility and common sense.

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