



ECAY6003: Advocacy: Maintaining Independence in Service Provision

Theme 3: Tensions in Professional Advocacy



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Links to Previous Modules

We have discussed the tensions that are faced by Advocates in previous Modules, for example;

- ECAY4004 Agency, Empowerment and Anti-Oppressive Practice
- ECAY4005 Multi-Agency Working: Policy in Practice
- ECAY5003 The Evolving Landscape of Advocacy Provision

These tensions include: different goals, lack of funding, different attitudes and norms, lack of communication and lack of trust, among others. (see, for example Cheminais, 2009)

All of these tensions can be seen as ‘external’ to the advocate

In this Theme we will explore a tension that could be considered to be ‘internal’ to the advocate.



A Matter of Perspective

- In our last Theme we discussed the need to separate **advocating on behalf of a client** (e.g. in a multi-agency meeting) from **advocating for change in the system or society**
- Another way of looking at this is the difference between **professional advocacy** and **political advocacy or 'activism'**
- This is the main tension that we will be exploring in this Theme

What is the difference between professional and political advocacy?



A Matter of Perspective

Sir David Bell, when he was Chair of the Financial Times, has argued that there are three types of people:

1. Leaf people; who just see leaves
2. Tree People; who see trees and leaves
3. Forest people; who understand that leaves and trees make up forests and that forests are very different

(Bell, 2007)

What point do you think that Bell is making here?



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A Matter of Perspective

Bell (2007) goes on to state that Julia Middleton's work is about being a 'forest person', in that it is about people:

'however different their personalities, however diverse their backgrounds – who all see the same situation at the same time, will come to recognize how much they have in **common** and how, together they can start to change things'

(Bell, 2007)



A Matter of Perspective

- In this Theme we will be using Middleton's work to explore the tensions that can exist in a system that does not effectively meet the needs of all
- In doing this we will be looking at the idea of 'activism' that we have discussed in the previous theme.
- Therefore, in this Theme we will be looking at the tension between '[advocating for change](#)' (or activism) in society and being a professional advocate, representing an individual client

Julia Middleton

- Middleton's career began in the early 1980's when she founded the Head Start programme which linked employers with young people who had been failed by the education system*
- In 1989 she founded the charity Common Purpose in order to promote positive leadership in society (Common Purpose, 2023)
- In 2007 she published *Beyond Authority: Leadership in a Changing World*
- Her key themes include finding 'common purpose' to promote change

Finding Common Purpose

Middleton argues that leadership for change involves engaging with:

- Networks
- Partnerships
- Coalitions
- Working Groups, and
- Community Partnerships in order to find 'common purpose'

This idea has strong links with the ideas of social capital that we have discussed in previous Modules.

Advocating for change

Terminology:

- We have frequently discussed the confusion of terminology when talking of advocacy
- For the majority of this degree we have focused on professional advocacy which is a 20th century development
- However, the concept of advocacy is much older and has been used for many centuries
- For example, the role of the Devil's Advocate was part of the Catholic Church for centuries until it was abolished by Pope John Paul II in 1983.
- The dictionary definition also gives a sense of how long the concept has been around
- This is why people can talk of being an advocate for change



Alliances for Change

Whether working with:

- Informal groups
- Alliances of groups, or
- Formal networks

Middleton encourages leaders/professionals to ask the following questions:

- Who carries authority?
- Who leads?
- Who's personality dominates?
- Who has legitimacy in leadership?

Advocating for change

Middleton argues that advocating for change involves working with:

- A common, agreed, purpose in support of communities, families and individuals
- A sense of focus on the change needed
- A sense of knowledge/experience based 'authority'
- A mandate from both individuals and organisations

(Middleton, 2007)

What do you think is meant by 'authority' here? 

In this context it can be taken to mean 'power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior' (Merriam-Webster, 2023)



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“Natural” Authority?

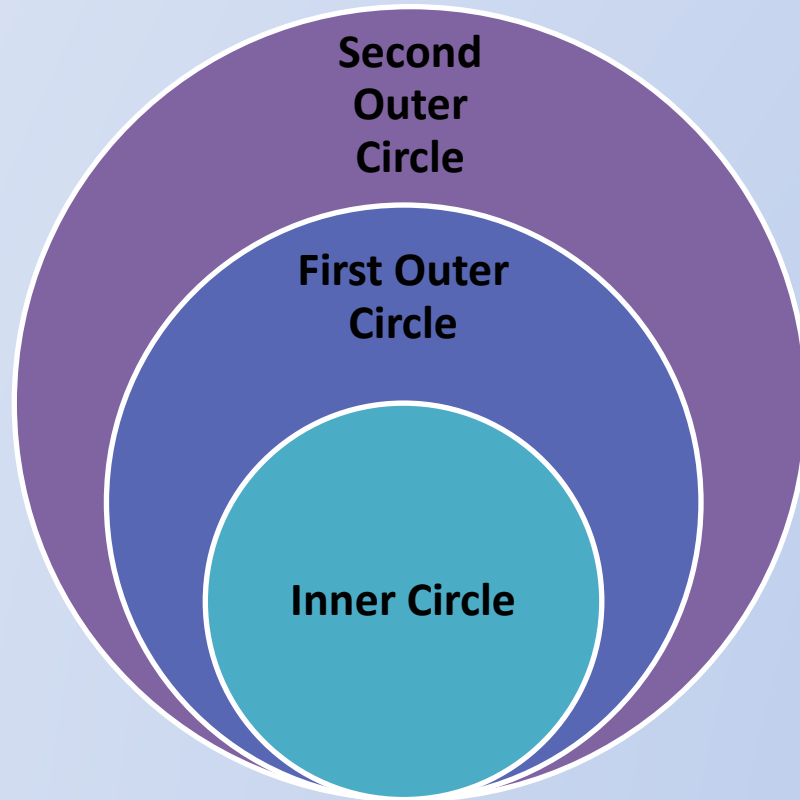
Bearing in mind our working definition of authority as *‘power to influence or command thought, opinion, or behavior’* we can now ask the following questions:

- Should we recognise boundaries?
- That is, should we work in Silos?
- Or, those vertical management systems that retain us
- What happens when we move out of our Circle of authority?

Are you familiar with the concept of a circle of authority? 

Circles of Authority

Middleton defines circles of authority for a 'leader' as follows:



- The inner circle are those in the 'leader's' immediate circle/department
- The first outer circle is the 'leader's' organisation as a whole
- The second outer circle can be seen as society as a whole

(Middleton, 2007, pp. 4-6)

Inner Circle Leaders

- Are Leaders with legitimate authority
 - They are in control
 - Can use that control to a greater or lesser extent
 - People follow them
- They operate within their 'Circle of Authority'
- Their boundaries coterminous with their budgets
- Example: a department
- Recognition for work done in this space
- Training for the leader often focuses on being more effective in their circle

(Middleton, 2007)

Outer Circle Leaders

- Their power usually derived from a position of legitimate authority by:
 - Power of personality
 - Knowledge
 - Expertise
 - Experience
- Because outer circle leaders cannot directly control those they are talking to they have to influence and persuade
- “If your project is worthwhile and the environment is fundamentally reasonable, you will get a good hearing, as long as you behave professionally and allow others to disagree” (Middleton, 2007, p.32)

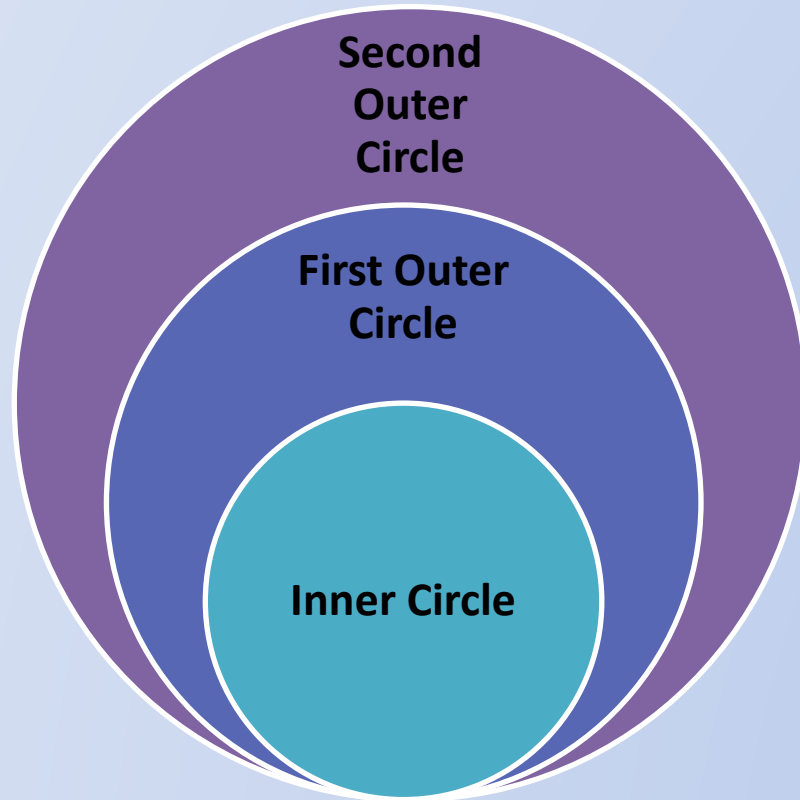
Circles of Authority

- Middleton sees that the leader is **in authority** over those in the inner circle because their role gives them power as a professional or line manager
- In terms of the first and second circles, Middleton argues that the leader is **beyond authority**, in that they need to exercise power in a different way
- We will look at Middleton's views on power later in this Theme.
- But for now we will apply this theory to the field of advocacy

(Middleton, 2007)

Circles of Authority – The tension

However, for the advocate there is an added complexity:



- The inner circle can be seen as the **advocate's role as representative of their client**
- The first outer circle can be seen as the **multi-agency network** within which they work
- The second outer circle can be seen as **society as a whole**



The tension explored

- Middleton is arguing for leaders within organisations to be agents for change
- However, the advocate is operating, on behalf of their client, in a multi-agency network
- In this context, the Advocate can only represent the wishes of their client to the network
- However they may also want to promote change in society
- But to do this they must separate their role as an **advocate for the client** and an **advocate for change**
- They cannot perform both roles at the same time as they are mutually exclusive



Measures of Power

- For Middleton, the inner circle is about the 'power to control' whilst the outer circles are about the 'power to influence'
- Thus the leader in an organisation can 'control' their team or department but can only 'influence' the organisation as a whole and **through the organisation** influence society (Middleton, 2007)
- Again I would argue that this is different for the advocate:
- They have the power to 'control' the relationship with their client (i.e. to 'manage' it within professional boundaries and protocols) **(in authority)**
- And they have the power to 'influence' the network on behalf of their client **(beyond authority)**
- But if they try to influence wider society via the network, i.e. whilst representing their client, then they have stopped being 'independent' **(beyond authority)**



Sources of Power

Middleton talks of various types of power, including the power:

- Of position – comes with the position one holds
- Of personality – comes from your ‘strength of character’
- Of ideas – comes from the quality of your ideas and creativity
- Of intellect – comes from ability to grasp facts and critical thinking
- To communicate – comes from your ability to get across your message
- To Connect – comes from having an effective network that you can draw on and expand
- To Invest – comes from having a budget or resources to use
- To Reward – comes from the ability to reward people financially or through recognition

(Middleton, 2007, p 41)

Sources of Power

- Middleton goes on to argue that these different types of power are more or less effective depending on whether one is **in authority** or **beyond authority** and calls this the effective influence range (Middleton, 2007)
- This idea concept of being in authority or beyond authority can be seen to have strong links to another concept that we have studied before: **power over** and **power to** ([see, for example Pansardi, 2012](#))
- Being **in authority** and having **power over** relate to situations where the professional has more control (e.g. of the relationship with the client)
- Being **beyond authority** and having **power to** relate to situations where the professional has less control (e.g. the network or society) but still has the power to persuade etc.



Effective Influence Range

- The effective influence range indicate how useful a form of power is depending on whether one is **in authority** or **beyond authority**, as follows:

Type of Power	In Authority	Beyond Authority
Of position	85%	10%
Of personality	60%	90%
Of ideas	80%	90%
Of intellect	90%	60%
Of communication	60%	100%
To connect	40%	100%
To invest	80%	80%
To reward	90%	10%

(Middleton, 2007, p 42-43)

Leading Beyond Authority

If you are [advocating for change](#) then you need to consider the following:

- What is the attitude of those you are trying to influence?
- Are they inward looking (operating in silos)?
- Do they see you as a busybody, on the outside looking in and causing trouble?
- Is there a failure to realise that problems don't fit neatly into departments or silos
- Failure to look 'beyond' their normal practice result in lost opportunities

(Middleton, 2007)

Legitimacy of 'power to operate'

If you are [advocating for change](#) then you need to consider the following:

- Where is 'the power to operate' obtained from?
- Is it given? – Who by?
- Is it taken? – Who by?
- Can it be lost, taken away or revoked?
- Under what circumstances might this happen?

Any thoughts or questions? 

Civil Society

If you are advocating for change then you need to consider the following:

- That you are engaging with 'Civil Society' to make a change

Do we know what this phrase means? 

‘ its key attributes are that it refers to public life rather than private or household-based activities; it is juxtaposed to the family and the state; and it exists within the framework of the rule of law’

(Scott, 2015)



Civil Society

- So, [advocating for change](#) involves engaging with civil society i.e. organisations, local, regional and national government etc.
- If we are engaging with civil society, we are engaging with Middleton's outer circles
- If this is the case then what types of power does the advocate for change/activist use?

Any thoughts or questions? 

Activists Operating in Civil Society: Why?

In terms of reflective practice, it is important that the [advocate for change](#) asks themselves about their motivation for acting:

- Is it in their own interest?
- Are they acting for those that they know?
- Are they acting for the 'public good'
- Who has given them the 'authority' to act



Activists Operating in Civil Society

- Middleton argues that, in order to become an [advocate for change](#) the person needs to stop delegating to the 'great they'
- By this, she means the people that we often defer to, e.g. politicians, 'those upstairs' or 'the experts'
- She argues that if people do stand up to challenge the status quo they can be seen to be doing so 'illegitimately' unless they have one of the labels above
- However, she quotes Jude Kelly – Artistic Director at the South Bank Centre as saying *"We cannot wait to be given legitimacy. We need to legitimize ourselves"*

(Middleton, 2007, p10)

Common Purpose

- Middleton's Charity – Common Purpose - runs Leading Beyond Authority programmes which assert that the leader/activist should 'jettison' certain pre-concepts, such as;
 1. Giving Instructions (rather than asking questions)
 2. Intellectual Rigour (rather than creative solutions)
 3. Adhering to Strict Hierarchies
 4. Instinct to Tidy – the desire to see things as simple when they are actually complex

(Middleton, 2007, pp.52-3)

Examples of Advocating for Change/Activism

- Throughout this Theme we have made the distinction between advocating for the individual (professional advocacy) and advocating for change (activism) – focussing on the latter
- Here are the examples we have looked at, in one place;

[University of Kansas – Community Tool Box](#)

[Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health - Advocating for Change for Adolescents](#)

[Kellogg School of Management - The role of advocates in change management](#)

[Office of Justice Programmes - Working Together - Advocating for Change](#)

[Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health - Climate change working group - about our advocating for change workstream](#)

[Aberystwyth University Students Union – Become and Advocate for Change](#)

Challenges to Middleton

- There are some who see an ulterior motive to Middleton's agenda
- They see it as an attempt to bring new people into the 'ruling elite' rather than to promote real change
- For example, the BBC has reported that 'former naval officer' Brian Gerrish believes that Common Purpose is "a secret society for careerists. The key point is that the networking is done out of sight of the general public". (Alexander, 2009)
- He puts forward this view [here](#)
- However, many academics and activists see these views as extreme and conspiracy theories

Questions

From your own perspective, consider the following:

- Is working with a 'common purpose' a good thing?
- What are the benefits of working in partnership?
- Is co-production a good idea? Or does this dilute focus?
- Is there a potential for the 'greater good' of clients/service users to become secondary the 'common purpose' imposed by a dominant group?

Any thoughts or questions? 

Closing Question

*What is the difference between
advocating for the individual (advocacy)
and advocating for change (activism)?*



Advocacy or Activism?

McCeever, McCeever & Huang (2023) see a clear difference as follows:

- Behaviors associated with activism may be viewed as more committed actions aimed at achieving large-scale change,
- While advocacy may be more focused on amplifying the voices of, supporting, influencing, or persuading others

Advocacy or Activism?

McCeever, McCeever & Huang (2023) see a clear difference as follows:

Concept	Similarities	Differences
Advocacy	- Both seek to involve multiple people and groups to draw attention to an issue - Influence the decision-making process (but at different levels)	- Goal of behavior is to get others to support ideas - Work inside a system (e.g., working with or in support of organization or multi-agency network) - Behaviors involving lower risk or lower cost - Focus on amplifying the voices of others
Activism		- Goal of behavior is to challenge ideas - Work outside to influence a system (e.g., working against organizations or individuals with power) - Behaviors involving higher risk or higher cost - Focus on execution/action

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