

- REPUTATION and SOCIAL STANDING have traditionally been sources of social power. Witness the “old” or “aristocratic” families who always have members actively involved in public affairs.
- MATERIAL RESOURCES, as already mentioned, have usually been rightly perceived as giving individuals social power. These can be money, land, or other sources of wealth.
- OBLIGATIONS that an individual may “collect” from others, and “cash in” at certain crucial moments. These are not monetary debts but debts of favors. Most skillful politicians are very adept at this process; one of the most renowned was the late President Lyndon Johnson when he was United States Senate majority leader.
- CONTROL OVER JOBS is an obvious source of social power. Many corporation executives and business owners have used this resource to their advantage, some very skillfully, other less so.
- CONTROL OVER CREDIT is a similar resource. Witness the popular cartoon of the evil banker foreclosing the mortgage of the poor but beautiful widow, in order to force her to submit ...! Thus bankers and banks have usually been perceived as having such social power. However, today there are many other sources of credit, such as union pension funds, commercial loan companies, and even government agencies.
- CONTROL OVER MORALITY is very often an overlooked source of social power, but can be very powerful. A community where most residents belong to a strict religion can be dominated by that church’s leaders, both laity and clergy. The emerging “Moral Majority” movement in the United States is another example. “Blue laws” are a manifestation of such social power in many communities.

COMBINING AUTHORITY AND CONTROL of resources. Usually, when one analyzes people who have social power, it becomes apparent that most of them will use a subtle combination of authority and control of resources. There is often an interplay between these two sources of social power. People who have resources will often use their resources to obtain positions of authority. Other individuals will use a position of authority in order to increase their control of resources.

## Why Do Only A Few Participate?

A different way of asking “where does social power come from” is to ask, as Hahn did, “why do some participate, while many others do not?” The answers to this question yield a somewhat different perspective on the sources of social power. According to Hahn, active participants in community decision making exhibit three significant qualities:

**First** — the ABILITY to participate.

Active participation is dependent upon several factors:

- having the TIME to participate (to go to meetings, to work on projects, etc.).
- having the ENERGY, mental and physical, to participate.
- being AWARE of where, why, how, and when to participate, that is, knowing the “ins and outs” of participating in a community.
- UNDERSTANDING the issues and HOW TO INFLUENCE directions of decisions.
- having COMMUNICATION SKILLS, and being able to bring ideas and views to bear on decision making effectively.
- having access to INFORMATION that is useful for decision making.
- possessing the SELF-CONFIDENCE to participate with others and in public.

These attributes are usually characteristic of the more educated and higher socioeconomic “classes.”

**Second** — a SENSE OF OBLIGATION to participate.

This is a key characteristic of those actively involved in decision making. A sense of obligation means:

- having a SENSE OF CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY and consequently becoming involved in public affairs.
- being CONCERNED WITH LONG-RANGE (and frequently abstract) PUBLIC PROBLEMS AND ISSUES.

This sense of obligation results from a number of factors: education, affluence, and especially family socialization influences. These attributes are also usually correlated with higher levels of education and higher socioeconomic groups.

**Third** — SELF-INTEREST.

As a major motivational factor influencing individuals to become involved in decision making,