

self-interest is usually associated with a desire to preserve:

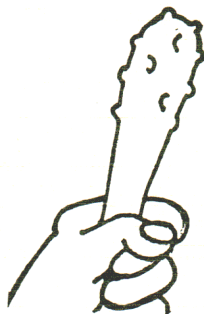
- MATERIAL GOODS, such as monetary or real wealth.
- the SOCIAL STANDING one has within the community; or the reputation the family has developed over time.
- the CONTROL OF RESOURCES, such as those already mentioned earlier.
- IDEALS, BELIEFS, and VALUES that prevail and are held by those active in decision making.

As with ability and sense of obligation, this attribute is more prevalent among the upper socioeconomic and educational groups. However, self-interest has recently proved to be the major motivation for the involvement of less educated, less wealthy, and lower-status individuals. Hahn and others argue that self-interest is the key force in motivating disadvantaged people to become involved in their communities. Once involved, they can develop the other requisite qualities which will facilitate continued participation.

How is Social Power Exercised?

Social power is exercised in three major ways: by **coercion**, by **influence**, and by a blend of **both**.

By **COERCION**, we mean the use of raw power — that is, the power to force people to do something they would not ordinarily do. Thus, arm twisting, threats (actual or implied, subtle or overt) and intimidation are some of the methods used to force people to accept or do something they would not normally do or accept.



By **INFLUENCE**, we mean the use of controlled power — that is, the power of persuasion — using resources and authority to influence people to do certain things willingly. Thus, reasoning, providing information, educating, and giving rewards (extrinsic and intrinsic) are some of the methods used. Personal charisma is also a key factor in persuasion.



The most common approach in exercising social power is to use **BOTH COERCION and INFLUENCE**. The most effective users of social power, those who are able to hold it for a long time, are those who are able to achieve a proper balance between the two, with a broader emphasis on influence. In most cases where the two are blended, coercion is exercised very carefully and subtly.

In using social power in community decision making, whether by influence, coercion, or a blend of the two, individuals can do one of two things; they can either **FACILITATE** or **BLOCK** decisions and actions.

Thus, individuals using social power can help determine the outcome of community decisions. They can **FACILITATE** or promote certain decisions, or they can **DELAY** these decisions.

These individuals with social power can also help determine the kind of resources that can be used for making and implementing decisions. They can **FACILITATE** or **BLOCK** access to needed resources.

Further, they can help determine the nature and scope of efforts by those outside the community. Again, they can **FACILITATE** or promote, or they can **BLOCK** or delay access to outside assistance. This latter operation has become more apparent in recent years in our interdependent society and governmental assistance programs — both on the federal and state levels.

Summary

SOCIAL POWER is influence over others' behavior. It rests upon authority and control of resources, and requires: 1) ability, 2) a sense of obligation, and 3) self-interest. It is exercised by a combination of coercion and influence within the process of making and implementing community decisions.