

POWER ACTORS

The term **power actors**, developed by Iowa State University social scientist, Ronald Powers and his co-workers, is used to designate those individuals who **HAVE** social power and who **EXERCISE** their social power in making community decisions. **People who have social power BUT DO NOT use it CANNOT be considered power actors.**

Who Are Power Actors?

Studies by Powers on social power in midwestern corn belt communities have revealed that power actors:

- are usually males; very few women are found, though this is changing somewhat.
- are usually older than the average adults; they are generally forty years old or older.
- have above-average income; this is correlated with control of resources and some of the following factors.
- have above-average education, often are college educated.
- occupy higher-status occupations (professionals, businessmen, self-employed).
- are long-time residents of their community; either have lived there all their lives or have been residents for a long time — few newcomers are found to be power actors.
- have control over key resources (jobs, credit, money mass media, land, information).



Hahn has identified power actors in a different way. He analyzed those who regularly participated in community decision making and found patterns of certain individuals being more involved than others. He classified individuals into five major groupings.

First — PARTICIPANTS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT, such as:

- elected officials
- administrators of departments or programs
- professional and technical advisors to local governmental units (e.g., paid consultants)

- political party leaders
- public employees

Second — LEADERS IN NONGOVERNMENTAL ENTERPRISES, such as:

- owners and managers of businesses
- industrial managers and executives
- bankers
- real estate brokers
- mass media managers and executives (e.g., radio, T.V., newspapers)
- public utility managers and executives (e.g., electricity, gas, water)
- professionals (e.g., M.D.'s, lawyers, dentists)
- large land-owners

Third — HEADS OF NONPROFIT PUBLIC SERVICE AGENCIES, such as:

- hospitals
- private schools
- public charities

Fourth — DIRECTORS OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS, such as:

- neighborhood associations (which are becoming increasingly active in most cities)
- civic clubs (Rotary, Kiwanis, JC's,)
- business and professional groups (e.g., Chambers of Commerce, American Medical Association, American Bar Association)
- minority group organizations (e.g., NAACP, Urban League)

Fifth — CLERGYMEN AND LABOR LEADERS.

Some Comments About Power Actors

Individuals and/or groups

While we usually think of power actors as individuals, we should also consider groups or organizations which act as a unit in exercising social power. Thus, regardless of whether the individual members have social power, the group may be influential in communal decision making. Organiza-

