Advantages
— Behavior, rather than reputation, is the criterion for identifying power actors.
— General and issue-specific power actors can be identified.
— Roles of power actors can be identified and traced.

Disadvantages
— Time-consuming and expensive to conduct.
— Requires highly trained people.
— Can fail to uncover covert power actors.

The Social Participation Method

Assumptions
— Power is acquired through participation in voluntary organizations.
— Active power actors are very involved in community voluntary organizations.

Procedures
— Inventory all community voluntary organizations and all persons occupying formal positions in them.
— Power actors are those individuals who occupy the highest positions in the greatest number of organizations and/or in the most prestigious organizations.

Advantages
— Identifies power actors who are active in local affairs, especially those involved with community action, not just decision making.
— Easy to conduct.

Disadvantages
— Time-consuming.
— Fails to identify covert power actors.
— Tends to identify emerging power actors, overlooking many actual power actors.
— Identifies general but not issue-specific power actors.

Once power actors have been identified, the manner in which they interact — the kinds of coalitions or cliques they form — must be studied. Only after this research is done can a determination be made of the **nature** of the power structure within a community.

Summary

POWER ACTORS may be identified by any one of four methods: 1) Positional – the people in authority in the key organizations are the power actors; 2) Reputational – those with reputation of social power among the knowledgeable members of the community are the power actors; 3) Event Analysis – the persons who participated most actively in the most community decisions are the power actors; 4) Social Participation – the individuals who occupy positions of authority in the greatest number or most prestigious organizations are the power actors.