

Introduction to Section IV:

WHO IS THE PUBLIC

It should seem elementary that if we are going to conduct public involvement, we should have a clear picture of who the public is we have to involve. As this section will indicate, the simple question, "Who is the public?" is not so simple to answer. The one basic observation which runs through all the articles is that the public is not a simple monolithic entity. There is no single public, but a number of publics.

Lorenz Aggens attacks the problem by describing the public in terms of levels of interest and involvement in decision making. He also stresses the importance of designing public involvement programs so that they appeal to levels of interest beyond decision makers alone.

James L. Creighton expands on the theme of multiple publics, and describes resources and techniques which planners can use to identify publics which may have an interest in a study.

Inn one of the earliest IWR studies, Thomas E. Borton, Katherine P. Warner, and J. William Wenrich examine the sociological literature and come up with a strategy for identifying "influentials"--those people whose attitudes are most significant in shaping a community decision.

A decade later, James L. Creighton provides specific instructions for planners in how to identify influentials and ensure their participation in public involvement efforts. Creighton also outlines some of the research findings concerning the preconditions for controversy in a community.

William D. Coplin, Donald J. McMaster, and Michael K. O'Leary discuss the value of analyzing not only who the key actors are, but their position and relative power in the situation. By developing a policy profile on a possible decision it is possible to foresee difficulties, and often design programs that can contribute to the development of a consensus.