# Article information:

Full article: A Ladder of Citizen Participation  
<https://www-tandfonline-com.ezproxy1.lib.asu.edu/doi/full/10.1080/01944363.2018.1559388>

# Article summary:

1. Citizen participation is a term for citizen power and the redistribution of power that enables excluded citizens to be included in determining plans and programs.

2. There are eight levels of citizen participation, arranged in a ladder pattern, with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the end product.

3. The bottom rungs of the ladder are manipulation and therapy, which are levels of "non-participation" that have been contrived by some to substitute for genuine participation.

# Article rating:

Appears moderately imbalanced: The article provides some useful information, but is missing several important points or pieces of evidence that would be required to present the discussed topics in a balanced and reliable way. You are encouraged to seek a more balanced perspective on the presented issues by exploring the provided research topics and looking at different information sources.

# Article analysis:

The article "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" by Sherry R. Arnstein provides a typology of citizen participation in social programs, using examples from federal programs such as urban renewal, anti-poverty, and Model Cities. The author argues that citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power and the redistribution of power that enables have-not citizens to be included in the political and economic processes. The typology is arranged in a ladder pattern with each rung corresponding to the extent of citizens' power in determining the plan and/or program.

While the article provides a useful framework for understanding different levels of citizen participation, it has some potential biases and limitations. One limitation is that the ladder only includes eight levels of participation, which may oversimplify the complexity of citizen engagement in social programs. Additionally, some characteristics used to illustrate each level may be applicable to other rungs on the ladder.

Another limitation is that the ladder juxtaposes powerless citizens with powerful ones, which may not accurately reflect reality since both groups are not homogeneous blocs. Each group encompasses divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups. Moreover, while the article acknowledges roadblocks to achieving genuine levels of participation on both sides (powerholders' resistance to power redistribution and have-nots' inadequacies), it does not explore these issues in depth or provide evidence for its claims.

Furthermore, while the article highlights how manipulation and therapy can substitute for genuine participation by enabling powerholders to educate or cure participants rather than enable them to participate in planning or conducting programs, it does not explore counterarguments or provide evidence for its claims. For example, some may argue that education or therapy can be valuable components of citizen engagement if they are designed collaboratively with participants and aim to empower them rather than reinforce existing power structures.

Overall, while "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" provides a useful framework for understanding different levels of citizen engagement in social programs, it has some potential biases and limitations that should be considered when interpreting its claims.

# Topics for further research:

* Critiques of citizen participation in social programs
* Power dynamics in citizen participation
* Alternative frameworks for citizen engagement
* Education and therapy in citizen participation
* Intersectionality in citizen participation
* Case studies of successful citizen participation in social programs

# Report location:

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