



12-1976

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GT1976  
D7543

Political Science 997  
Independent Study



A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF  
COMMUNITY INFLUENTIALS AND THE AVERAGE CITIZEN

by Dawn Doyle

12/3/76

Say not, "I have found the truth," but rather,  
"I have found a truth."

Kahlil Gibran

## CREDITS

Many thanks go to Dr. Pedeliski who introduced me to the community power subject matter and showed great interest in my success. Credit is also due Dr. Kweit, who was my advisor and consultant. I would like to express appreciation for Dr. Kweit's extension of his knowledge of resources, methodologies, and writing skills to me. Special thanks is reserved for Mike Klemetsrud who operated as my guide in Devils Lake and who helped complete the interviewing of persons.



## PREFACE

This study is made upon the premise that in a given social realm there are certain persons who are active in community concerns to the point they routinely affect the outcome of policy decisions. It is apropos, then, to label them 'influentials.'

It is suspected that these influentials differ from average citizens of the given social realm in their social status, political participation, and attitudes towards themselves as community members and the community itself. Thus, the stage for the comparison is set. The social status, political participation, and attitudes were compared between the influentials and a sample of the community citizens for significant differences. In the event that differences proved significant, certain levels of social status, political participation, and types of attitudes would be considered indicators of influentials.

## INTRODUCTION

"The American city is not run by its politicians and bureaucrats alone. They have help...of a vast array of formal and informal associations and of individuals who, although occupying no office and having no authority, nevertheless play important and sometimes leading parts in the making of public decisions."<sup>1</sup>

There are two specific reasons American cities are not run alone. In smaller towns, which do not have the financial resources of their metropolitan counterparts, volunteer manpower in the form of expertise, time, and leadership is required to make public policy and to carry on community development. Roland Warren even defines community development as the "deliberate attempt by community people to work together to guide the future of their communities."<sup>2</sup>

The second reason cities are not run by elected officials and bureaucrats alone is more complex and political than the first. When Banfield and Wilson wrote the American city is 'run,' the word 'run' connoted the administering of city affairs. Administration of city affairs is the development and execution of public policy which delineates community organization and development. In the American democratic society, the crux of development and execution of public policy is communication between elected officials, publicly employed experts, and citizens in the form of inputs and feedback to decisions. Loomis defines communication as the

"process by which information, decisions, and directives are transmitted among actors and

the ways in which knowledge, opinions, and attitudes are formed or modified by interaction."<sup>3</sup>

"The politician looks to the planner for expertise and to the public for support in the next election."<sup>4</sup> The planner not only looks to the politician for support but to the public "to whom the politician owes his job."<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the politician and planner encourage public participation in policy decisions to offer legitimization to the process. "Legitimization is giving sanction, authority, justification, or license to act."<sup>6</sup>

It becomes evident that time, leadership, and legitimization are the three functions public participants lend to community development. For these reasons it is critical for individuals concerned with community development (i.e. planners) to be able to identify, understand, and solicit assistance from citizens.

Because social inequities exist, not all citizens have an equal opportunity to participate. Causes of communication blockage are social backgrounds which breed negative attitudes toward participation (defeatist attitude), insufficient time, semantics, and prejudice impairing accurate listening.

The process of communication, as affected by the environmental factors of society mentioned above, create an uneven distribution of the ability to communicate. Communication operating in a social system as one of the processes which affects the structure of the system helps to explicate why some persons become prominent public participators while others



are suppressed.

"A social system is composed of the patterned interaction of members. It is constituted of the interaction (communication) of a plurality of individual actors whose relations to each other are mutually oriented through the definition and mediation of a pattern of structured and shared symbols and expectations."<sup>7</sup>

Prominent public participators can be referred to as 'community influentials.' "By influential is meant the ability to get others to act, think, or feel as one intends."<sup>8</sup> The rise of influentials can be accounted for through their economic status, education, position in life, or activity. "A leader, for instance, is ordinarily understood to be a prominent and active person."<sup>9</sup>

A term to cover leadership and the strata of society from which leaders usually come is 'elite.'

"The concept of elite is classificatory and descriptive, designating the holders of high positions in a given society. There are as many elites as there are values. Besides the elites of power, there are elites of wealth, respect, and knowledge to name a few."<sup>10</sup>

Because the term elite can be connotative of a type of government structure, the neutral term influential will be used as an alternative word.

In addition to communication there are other functions and institutions which are elements of the social system that enable certain persons to become influential and others to remain without influence over public decisions. According to Roland Warren, a community performs the following tasks: production-distribution-consumption, socialization, social

control, social participation, and mutual support. "Socialization is the process through which the social and cultural heritage is transmitted."<sup>11</sup> "Social control is the process by which deviancy is either eliminated or somehow made compatible with the functions of social groups."<sup>12</sup> The community, using the concept of division of labor, contracts for services with sub-units of the social system. Within the context of the community, institutions are the sub-units.

"Partly on the basis of larger cultural and systemic patterns, partly on the basis of local choice, the locality-relevant functions are allocated within the community to one type of operational auspices, or another, taking on rather different characteristics in accordance with their differential allocation."<sup>13</sup>

Max Weber contends one way of dividing a community's social system is according to its major institutions: economy, local government, family, religion, welfare, recreation, education, and health. If the community is organized and functions according to the institutional areas, Weber suggests, the concept of social power very likely exists within each sub-unit creating several sources of community influentials who do not have to be influential over the community as a whole to affect public decisions. The various sources of power are known as polymorphism in the social system.

"The first step in clarifying the elite concept is to provide a working definition of power"<sup>14</sup> because it is a tool utilized in emerging as an influential. Max Weber defines the phenomenon of power as

"The probability that one actor within a



social relationship will be in a position to carry on his own will despite resistance regardless of the basis on which this probability rests."15

Power is generally talked about in traditional terms of coercive will or modern terms of the decision process. Power can be 'potential' (ability to use sanction) or actual (exercising sanction). "Sanctioning refers to the rewards and penalties meted out by the members of a social system as a device for inducing conformity to its norms and ends."16

Besides having latent or exercised social power, there are two kinds of social power used by different types of leaders. Authoritative power is the capability to control the behavior of others as determined by the members of the social system. Influential power is the capability to control the behavior of others which is not formally designated but based on charisma, respect, or expertise. Formal leaders as determined by the social system use authoritative and/or influential power in their sanctioning. Informal leaders have access solely to influential power.

"Since the formal authority that individuals derive from their jobs provides them with an official source of power, the power structure in an organization usually will correspond, in part at least, with the formal structure. The extent of this coincidence, however, will depend upon the informal sources of power that some members may be able to develop to augment their legitimate power. Informal sources may include those that are derived from personal expertise and informal leadership skills that enable individuals to engender loyalty. Informal power may also be derived from holding a position in which it is possible to dispense certain

favors or rewards to other people or to withhold these gratuities from them."17

A pervading theme of this paper is the better understanding of influentials by ascertaining if in fact differences exist between them and the average citizen. The first portion demonstrated the possibility of certain persons being enabled to become prominent participators through inequities in their abilities to communicate, that there may be several institutions in which influentials may be influential, and that two types of power may be utilized to assert their will.

The latter part of the paper identifies the influentials in a particular community, Devils Lake, and then compares possible points at which inequities occur between these influentials and the average citizen of Devils Lake. The tests are conducted using social status characteristics, political participation, and attitudes toward the community as points of comparison between the two samples. If in fact there is significant differences between the results in the factors, then certain levels of social status, political participation, and attitudes will be considered indicators of influentials.

## THE RATIONALE FOR THE FACTORS TESTED

As Lerner suggested above, the proposition that influentials generally are drawn from the upper strata of society seems to be a popular assumption. In substantiated studies, when measured by a combination of the more common indicators of status: income, education, and occupation, community influentials ranked high. Social status does seem to be a primary correlate of influence.

There are other demographic correlates of influence in addition to social status. Ethnic background, religion, and length of residence are examples of other sources of influence. The size, area, and content of the community affect the sources of influence which appropriately apply to each individual community. For example, a community with a homogeneous population generally can not utilize ethnic background or religion to indicate class rank. In this same community, social status and length of residence may be valid indices of influence. However, it must be noted that social status and length of residence are limited to testing potential influence. Therefore, other indicators of influentials must be tested.

Another indicator of influence may be political participation. Influentials are expected to demonstrate concern for political outcomes more than the average citizen. This demonstration may be completed through their varied political participation.

"Persons who are more psychologically



involved in politics are more likely to engage in political and campaign activities beyond voting."<sup>18</sup>

A last area of testing for correlates of influence is attitudes that are related to community activism. If attitudes determine a person's behavior, then there must be a relationship between attitudes and a person's level of participation.

The focus of this comparison studies the attitudes of one's self and one's community. The six attitudes are as follows:

1. Attitudes of influentials about themselves as an active citizen.

The influentials are expected to rate high on their activity on civic boards, their obligation to participate, and the priority of social duty.

Milbrath expresses the belief that persons more interested in politics will expose themselves to more political stimuli.<sup>19</sup>

"The more stimuli about politics a person receives the greater the likelihood he will participate in politics and the greater the depth of his participation."<sup>20</sup>

"Persons feeling a duty to participate are more likely to do so."<sup>21</sup>

Influentials are expected to express a feeling of duty to participate because upper SES persons through the socialization process often advocate civic participation. Also the feeling that one has an influence over his environment is instilled.

2. Attitudes of influentials about themselves as effective leaders

Leadership is one function that influentials lend the commun-

ity administration. Influentials are expected to express self-confidence in their leadership abilities.

"Persons with high self-esteem welcome political discussion and expose themselves readily to political stimuli."<sup>22</sup>

3. Attitudes of influentials toward the quality of life in their community

Influentials are expected to express high regard for their community's environment.

"The persons who find their community a good place to live are more likely to be active in public affairs."<sup>23</sup>

4. Attitudes of influentials about local leaders as effective

Influentials should demonstrate confidence in their community leaders' ability and diligence at their work.

"Persons having 'faith in people' and in politicians find it facilitates their participation in politics."<sup>24</sup>

"The more people believe that others are trustworthy, cooperative, and care about each other, the more likely they are to believe that government officials have these qualities and hence the more likely they are to participate in the democratic process."<sup>25</sup>

5. Attitudes of the influentials perceiving a cohesive community

Influentials, more so than others, should feel efficacy in the sum total of the community's efforts toward achieving a goal.

"Persons who perceive themselves or their group as having an impact on public policy are more likely to communicate their policy preference to officials..."<sup>26</sup>

6. Attitudes of the influentials toward government



Influentials are expected to have a positive valence towards government which induces participation. . "Approaching behavior is characterized by a positive valence between the actor and object...if one like ice cream, for example, he has a positive valence toward it."27

"Persons with a positive attraction toward government are more likely to receive stimuli about politics and to participate more."28

All three of the areas of influential indicators are patterned after Robert Presthus' methodology in Men At The Top where two small towns the size of Devils Lake were examined. Presthus utilized social status and length of residence in his demography study. He also tested participation which was contingent upon voting alone. The attitudinal dimension was divided between conservatism and political alienation.

## HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses are proffered on the premise that the influentials' beliefs and interaction in the social system do in fact differ from the average citizen. The hypotheses are listed below along with their empirical hypotheses that will be utilized in the actual examination of characteristics and attitudes. All characteristics and attitudes have quantified answers. The attitudinal questions have been assigned scores which rise as the positive intensity rises in the response accounting for the manner in which the empirical hypotheses are stated.

HYPOTHESIS 1. The social status of the influentials will be higher than the average citizen.

A. The influentials' mean score for social status will be higher than the average citizen.

B. The influentials' mean score for education will be higher than the average citizen.

C. The influentials' mean score for income will be higher than the average citizen.

D. The influentials' mean score for occupation will be higher than the average citizen.

HYPOTHESIS 2. The political participation of the influentials will be more varied than the average citizen.

A. The influentials' mean score for political participation will be higher than the average citizen.

HYPOTHESIS 3. The attitudes of the influentials will be more

conducive to their participation than the average citizen.

A. The mean score for all the attitudes of the influentials will be higher than the average citizen.

B. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about themselves as active citizens will be higher than the average citizen.

C. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about themselves as effective leaders will be higher than the average citizen.

D. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about the quality of life in their community will be higher than the average citizen.

E. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about their local leaders being effective will be higher than the average citizen.

F. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials perceiving their community as a cohesive unit will be higher than the average citizen.

G. The mean score of the influentials for satisfaction with government will be higher than the average citizen.

As mentioned before, the higher the score on an attitude the more positive the attitude. Positive attitudes are correlated with inducing behavior because of the demonstration of a positive valence through the high score. Lester Milbrath believes that having a positive valence for something will induce activity toward it.



## METHODOLOGY

The average citizen, with whom the influentials were compared, was determined by a community sampling. A sample is a finite portion of a population. Its purpose is to make inferences about the entire population from the sample statistics. The sample was used in this study because of the time and cost involved in obtaining the population data.

The specific type of sampling method used was the stratified random sample. A random sample means each of the 1,665 households of Devils Lake had an equal opportunity for selection to be interviewed for data. This randomness also included the possibility that influentials may have been selected. Stratified sampling indicates the sample is "obtained by conducting independent random samples for each defined stratum."<sup>29</sup>

"The key idea in stratified sampling is that already existing knowledge is used to divide the population into groups such that the elements within each group are more alike than the elements in the population as a whole."<sup>30</sup>

This approach was chosen because personal observation of Devils Lake revealed neighborhoods were homogeneous clusters of people according to income and age and possibly education and social activities which are often contingent upon income. Clustering is not uncommon as Floyd Hunter in Community Power Structure mentioned about Regional City.

"There tends to be a clustering of residential quarters of leaders, and a rough evaluation of the desirable neighborhoods of Regional City was made to see where men of power live in relation to these neighborhoods."<sup>31</sup>

To avoid inadvertently excluding any particular segment of Devils Lake, the city was divided into six neighborhoods similar in composition and population size. Each neighborhood was sampled by the stratified random sample method. Thus, hopefully, the average citizens' responses to status, political participation, and attitudes once quantified will reveal a true measurement representative of the community.

The determination of influentials was conducted through the synthesis of three methods already known to sociologists and political scientists: issue-oriented, reputational, and social participation. Robert Dahl in Who Governs? criticizes Hunter for assuming a few persons can and do influence all aspects of social and political decisions. Dahl contends leaders rise to the occasion in which they have interests. The influential leaders are discovered by their frequency and intensity of work on an issue. The different issues such as Max Weber's institutions: economy, education, health, welfare, family, local government, recreation, and religion, have different leaders which leads to a polymorphic or pluralistic political structure. Dahl's philosophy offers justification for the issue-oriented approach.

According to the school superintendant of Devils Lake, an influential, "When situations arise that are controversial, within the school system, ad hoc committees form to handle the problem. The committee members are not visibility the same from situation to situation." The city planner expressed a



similar opinion of membership on community committees in general, giving support to the use of the issue-oriented method.

Hunter professes the belief that influentials are centrally located at the top of one hierarchy.<sup>32</sup> Banfield perceives these influentials as the informal centralization amongst the decentralization and fragmentation of authority in the formal structure.<sup>33</sup> Presthus, who finds the reputational and issue-analysis mutually supportative, said, "The reputational method had a great deal to do with refining the somewhat gross power ascriptions provided by the decisional techniques."<sup>34</sup> Following Presthus' advise to limit the number of possible influentials or hone accuracy, the reputational method was incorporated for the analysis of influentials.

In general, the reputational approach is carried out by having community knowledgeable name persons they perceive as exercising social power. After adding the number of times persons are named, a number is selected to be a critical or cut off point in relation to the dispersion of the nominees' times mentioned. Each case is unique, so for each questioning the dispersion of times mentioned has to be examined for its trend. This critical point becomes a criterion for remaining on the list of possible influentials. The nominees equalling or exceeding the critical point are in turn interviewed as to their perceptions of persons exercising social power. The interviewing for influentials went on until the researcher was satisfied that a number of people reoccur so frequently and others

fade in frequency as to distinguish the influentials.

The reputational leadership approach is advantageous because it allows the identification of informal leaders who do not have formal authority invested in an elected position. Floyd Hunter found that a majority of his community influentials in Regional City were informal leaders.

"Of the persons studied, the largest number are to be found directing or administering major portions of the activities of large commercial enterprise."<sup>35</sup>

The fault of the reputational approach lies in its original judges, the persons chosen to begin the search, because of their knowledge of community affairs and who's who. If they are community knowledgeable they are biased by whatever knowledge they possess.

The third approach to identifying influentials is the social participation method. Social participation is especially relevant in small towns who must rely upon volunteer leadership because their revenues do not permit the large scale employment of professionals to lead public policy.

This approach provides detailed information on formal offices held in social organizations, percentage of attendance at organizational meetings, and type of organizational participation. Robert Presthus defines participation as the sum of several factors.

"Playing an active, though not necessarily a direct role in community decisions, some knowledge of local issues, attendance at meetings, and related attempts to influence proposed measures through individual group actions..."<sup>36</sup>

However, this system may fail to identify influentials who do not visibly participate in decisions and implementation of those decisions. Banfield in Political Influence in his analysis of Chicago's issues discovered that influentials will be inactive members of committees for various reasons. For example, Colonel McCormack, Chief of Chicago Tribune, had as his pet project the building of Exhibition Hall in downtown Chicago. The promotion for the project was time consuming and laborious, so Reporter Tagge was assigned to carry on the promotion as a representative of McCormack. James Palmer, President of Marshall Field Co. did not participate as a member on the Exhibition Hall committee because he considered his presence overwhelming to small businessmen.

#### The Consummation of the Synthesis of the Approaches

The validity of the reputational approach was increased by studying the power structures for eight community issue areas. The eight issue areas were drawn from Max Weber's social system subdivisions with the exception of 'family.' The issue areas were economics, education, health, public welfare, recreation, religion, local government, and general affairs. After investigation of Devils Lake, it appeared that there were not any families who dominated the town as in the Lynds' study of Middletown. Perhaps this is a result of the complete lack of industry in Devils Lake.

On the advise of the city planner, twenty-five 'community knowled eables' were selected to choose eight influentials for



each of the eight issue areas. After four rounds of inquiries, thirteen influentials were found and three of them were original judges. See appendix A for the form used in the interview.

From the judges original lists of over 150 possible influentials, the critical point of '3 times mentioned' narrowed the list to 90. These 90 persons were interviewed as to their perceptions of 3 influentials in the eight issue areas. Using the critical point of 3 the list of possible influentials dropped to 54. When these 54 people were interviewed they were asked to select 15 people they felt were influential from any of the itemized issue areas. At this point the interviewing included the question, "Was anyone left off the lists?"

In fact 5 persons were 'write ins.' These write ins were crossed checked against the social participation list of influentials which was drawn up from data acquired from the Chamber-of-Commerce and the persons themselves. The data included that which Presthus suggested above: membership, positions, time spent, and type of activity. Two of the persons who were write ins were written in 4 times each and also appeared on the social participation index of influentials. The standards for the social participation index to influentials were 3 civic boards, 1 official position, no more than three times absent in one year, and served 1 special assignment on a board. These two persons were added to the fourth set of influential investigations.

This list consisted of 36 persons who were again mentioned

three times. All 36 were interviewed for their status, political participation, and attitudes toward the community. An identical questionnaire was administered to 5 households at even intervals throughout the six neighborhoods of Devils Lake to establish the average citizen's statistics.

The 36 possible influentials were asked to select 10 persons most influential due to the time, professionalism, or leadership they offered the community, from the list of 36 persons. The list was narrowed to a final set of persons numbering 13. The dispersion of the number of times selected was from 0 to 7 and resuming again at 18 to 29. Ergo, the critical point was 18.

#### The Questionnaire Content

The influentials (13) and the sampled citizens (30) were given identical surveys covering the three spectrums of analysis: social status, political participation, and attitudes toward the community.

The information requested included age, years of residence, income, occupation, education, ethnicity, and religion, which in any combination empirically measured can determine 'social status.' Several of the indices may be eliminated because of Devils Lake's situation.

Since the population appears quite homogeneous in ethnic origin (Aryan), ethnicity is not a valid indicator of class position. The religion (Lutheran) is also in the majority throughout the city.



Years of residence is supposed to be a good index for social rank in those areas which had influxes of immigrants or a substantial number of earlier settlers. By number of early settlers Devils Lake seemed to qualify. The population has been relatively stable with the exception of slight losses in the 1930's and a 1% increase in 1973-75. Robert Lane in Political Life intimated that the longer an individual resides in a given community the greater the likelihood of his participation in politics. In Devils Lake the average length of residence is 20.2 years and the average age is 26.4 years. The influentials average residency is 33.3 years and their average age is 52.115 years. However, 3 of the 13 influentials fall way below the average in residence at 6, 12, and 15 years while their respective ages are 42, 38, and 48. Eight influentials have resided in Devils Lake through out their life. The variation is too great to draw any sound conclusions. Also, the average citizens statistics come from the North Dakota State Planning Office and include children in their computations. A final factor in rejecting residency as an indicator of influence is the fact that low income families are virtually immobile, which means they also reside for lifetimes in one local. Generally they display inefficacious feelings and tend to be inactive in politics.

The remaining status indicators: education, income, and occupation are utilized.

Education serves as a common experience or interest upon

which groups may form. Professional esoteric interests are of a culture which binds members to a group.

On the political spectrum there have been several well substantiated studies correlating education as a significant factor in status rating. These following quotes legitimize the use of education as a status factor.

"Persons of higher SES, especially higher education are more likely to become highly involved psychologically in politics than persons of lower status."37

"Upper SES persons, especially those with higher education are more likely to develop a sense of citizen duty."38

Daniel Lerner's quote of Robert E. Park explicates the use of occupation and income as status indicators.

"...that what a man works at occupies most of his life and all of his obituary. That is, business civilization has made a man's occupation both the source of his income and the definition of his status."39

With the advent of union wage bargaining, occupation and income can no longer be considered as one factor, though. Some factory workers earn more money per annum than young professionals and managers. Lane, foreseeing the problem of equating income and occupation, successfully tested the hypothesis "persons of higher occupational status are more likely to participate in politics."40 However, categorizing jobs into standard forms for quantification purposes takes on an arbitrary cast. To remedy this situation, interviewees were asked to descriptively list their job title and then classify them-

selves into a category.

As discussed earlier, social status may be a correlate of influentials, thus setting the format for the first hypothesis: The social status of the influentials will be higher than the average citizen. The factors had to be quantified for empirical testing. The four empirical circumstances are:

1. The influentials' mean score for social status will be higher than the average citizen.
2. The influentials' mean score for education will be higher than the average citizen.
3. The influentials' mean score for income will be higher than the average citizen.
4. The influentials' mean score for occupation will be higher than the average citizen.

In order to create a social status equation the three factors were assigned equal weights and quantified by intervals.

$$\text{Social Status} = X + Y + Z$$

X (education)*	0-6 grades completed	(first quartile)	1 point
	7-8 grades completed	(second quartile)	2 points
	9-12 grades completed	(third quartile)	3 points
	13+ grades completed	(fourth quartile)	4 points
Y (income)*	0-\$2,977	(first quartile)	1 point
	\$2,978-3,792	(second quartile)	2 points
	\$3,793-7,598	(third quartile)	3 points
	\$7,599	(fourth quartile)	4 points
Z (occupation)	unskilled labor		1 point
	semi-skilled labor		2 points
	skilled labor/foreman		3 points
	clerical/salesman		4 points
	small business owner/farmer		5 points
	professional/managerial		6 points

\* Statistics obtained from the North Dakota State Planning Office



each affirmative answer and the points were summed to represent the level of political participation. The total number of points possible was seven.

For question 5, the affirmative answer was 'participator.'

For question 6, there are three salient city problems which are frequently mentioned in the newspaper: street improvements, sewer and water separation, and a youth recreation center. Minor issues are, for example, home-rule charter, planning the city's future, and high school facilities. If two issues of any type were answered it was considered an affirmative answer. The number two may be low and allowing any type, major or minor, may seem lenient, but it is extremely difficult to narrow opinion responses. What one person may consider salient another would not. All the influentials named at least two of 3 major problems and 1 minor problem. Half (15) of the sampled citizens fulfilled the criterion for the affirmative answer  $n=2$ .

For question 7, seven local officials were to be identified: 2 city commissioners, 1 local state representative, the mayor, the city planner, and the city auditor from 9 choices. If 4 of 7 were identified correctly the answer was considered affirmative. All the officials were identified correctly by 100% of the influentials. One sampled citizen identified all the officials and 20 other citizens identified 4 officials.

The final area of investigation in the study is the attitudinal dimension. Earlier in the paper the types of participatory behavior expected to result from the 6 different attitudes was established. The belief that these attitudes induce participa-

tion leads to Hypothesis 3 that the attitudes of the influentials will be more conducive to participation than the average citizen. The empirical hypotheses developed to test Hypothesis 3 are:

1. The mean score for all the attitudes of the influentials will be higher than the average citizen.

2. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about themselves as active citizens will be higher than the average citizen.

3. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about themselves as effective leaders will be higher than the average citizen.

4. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about the quality of life in their community will be higher than the average citizen.

5. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials perceiving their community as a cohesive unit will be higher than the average citizen.

6. The mean score for the attitude of the influentials toward government will be higher than the average citizen.

The six attitudes were tested by 3 pairs of questions pertinent to the portrayal of the particular attitude. For example, "If I were given the responsibility for leading a community group, I feel I could do a good job" is one question used to express the attitude of a person about himself as an effective leader. See appendix B for the total questionnaire.

The intensity of the feeling was rated on a five point scale:

strongly agree     agree     neutral     disagree     strongly disagree

Although there was a total of 6 questions for each attitude, there were only three different questions. Each of the three questions was asked from a positive and a negative point of view to ensure every question was answered in reference to its individual content. The positive/negative viewpoints maintain consistency in personal philosophy rather than allowing the respondent to reply to all questions similarly.

The 5 point agreement/disagreement scale answers were quantified to enable their summation to evaluate whether they had a positive or negative perspective and how intense the outlook was. The positively stated questions' responses were assigned point values as follows:

SA=5    A=4    N=3    D=2    SD=1.

The negatively stated questions' responses were assigned point values the opposite of the positively stated questions.

SA=1    A=2    N=3    D=4    SD=5.

According to Likert's philosophy, the responses to the elements of the attitude may be summed and the total will indicate the trend of the attitude. An individual answer of greater than 3 is considered a 'positive' answer, while 3 is considered indecisive. When the six individual answers have been totaled and exceed 18 the attitude is considered 'positive.'

Positives attitudes are correlated with an 'internal locus of control.' Internal locus of control means that a person has efficacious feelings or that he can influence outcomes through his actions. The external locus of control is



## THE RESULTS

The two samples were tested for significant difference between their means. If there is a significant difference between the two means then we can say that the characteristic or attitude are significantly different between the average citizen sample and the influentials. It is unestablished whether or not the influentials are a population in themselves or are a salient representatives of a population who are easily detected by the reputational tests.

Two Sample Test (Difference Between Means) Equation

$$t = \frac{(\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)}{\hat{\sigma}_{\bar{X}} - \bar{X}_2}$$

$$\text{where; } \hat{\sigma}_{\bar{X}} - \bar{X}_2 = \sqrt{\frac{S_1^2}{N_1-1} + \frac{S_2^2}{N_2-1}}$$

It is impossible to assume that the two populations have the same standard deviations. The hypothesis  $\sigma_1 = \sigma_2$  has been rejected by statistical calculations. It is no longer possible to simplify the formula for  $\hat{\sigma}_{\bar{X}_1} - \bar{X}_2$  by introducing the common value for  $\sigma_1$ , nor is it possible to form a pooled estimate because the populations are not of equal size. Standard deviations must be estimated separately.<sup>46</sup>

The first four hypotheses are concerned with factors composing social status for the two groups.

### EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS I

The influentials' mean score for social status will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	14	0	
average citizens	7.76	1.72	19.536888 <sup>d</sup>

\*\* d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

### EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS II

The influentials' mean score for education will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	4	0	
average citizen	2	.68	15.838736 <sup>d</sup>

\*\* d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

### EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS III

The influentials' mean score for income will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	4	0	
average citizens	2	1.1	9.7912169 <sup>d</sup>

\*\* d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

### EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS IV

The influentials' mean score for occupation will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	6	0	
average citizens	3.76	1.375	8.7729295 <sup>d</sup>

\*\* d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

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In each empirical test the evidence supports the hypothesis that the influentials have significant differences in values for social status, education, income, and occupation. The raw scores also support the statistical evidence. The influentials have an average length of education of 16.94 years. The community average is slightly over 8 years of education completed. The average income of the influentials is in excess of \$18,000.00 while the average citizen's income is \$3,792. Lastly, all the influentials are executives or professionals (100%) and only 12% of Devils Lake's population are listed as having professional type occupations in the North Dakota State Planning Department's data. According to the sample, the average citizen ranges between skilled and clerical labor.

The results of the hypothesis testing for education and income are similar to those of Robert Presthus in Men At the Top and a host of other studies mentioned by Lester Milbath in Political Participation. The significant difference in occupational types substantiates Loomis' belief that occupational differences contribute to the formulation of a hierarchy in society contingent in part to their rank.

In practice, the social status characteristics seemingly affect the ability of persons to participate in community decisions. The higher incomes afford people to easily satisfy day-to-day physiological needs. Once survival needs are satiated, concerns then, can be directed toward community issues or other social or self-actualization needs.



Better education can develop better articulation skills, resulting in self-confidence to communicate. Communication is an essential element in relating leadership qualities and in acquiring power.

Types of occupations having flexible responsibilities and hours can facilitate the participation of certain persons. For example, a bank president will have a less complicated time in escaping for day-time meetings or travel out of town compared to a factory worker who would lose money for taking such liberties.

The ramifications of social inequities caused by the environmental factors of education, income, and occupation are severe. Lower social status persons may be victims of bias against participation and under representation. The probability is great that lower status persons do not have the psyche to be concerned with community issues as intensely as the influentials; or have the education to convincingly support and express their viewpoints; or have a working situation facilitating participation. The people other than professionals in Devils Lake seem to be excluded in representation. The influentials come from the following professional/managerial fields: 1 lawyer, 1 college director, 1 public school superintendant, 1 bank president, 1 chain-store manager, and 8 business manager/owners.

The fifth empirical hypothesis tests the actual level of participation of the two groups.

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## EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS V

The influentials' mean score for varied political participation will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	6.71	.52	
average citizen	3.3	1.45	11.061562 <sup>d</sup>

\*\*d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

Again, the empirical evidence supports the hypothesis that influentials do participate in more varied political activities. Eleven of the influentials participated in all 7 activities while 2 participated in 6 activities. This high degree of varied activity suggests that political participation is an correlate of influentials.

The raw score dispersion of the sampled citizens fell heavily into 3 types of activity: voting, knowledge of community issues, and identification of local political leaders.

### CITIZENS RAW SCORE DISPERSION

voting 26/30  
identify political leaders 21/30  
identify community issues 15/30  
donated money to party or person 10/30  
attend political rallies 9/30  
work on campaign committee 5/30  
classify themselves as a participant in politics 1/30

A possible explanation of the varied political activity of the influentials may be their belief that their performance will induce certain outcomes (goals). Also, influentials may perceive political participation beyond awareness and voting necessary to convert their direct inputs into desired results.



It is also significant that if average citizens participate less their goals will adhered to less. Perhaps, the average citizens perceives his only method of participation as voting.

The last 7 hypotheses test attitudes believed to be indicators of influentials. Even though high social status is often a characteristic of influentials, not all persons of a high social status are necessarily active in influencing public decisions.

EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS VI

The mean score for all the attitudes of influentials will be higher than the average citizens'.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	22.46	1.3	
average citizen	17.01	2.1	10.070138 <sup>d</sup>

\*\*d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS VII

The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about themselves as active citizens will be greater than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	23.46	.37	
average citizen	17.7	2.58	11.734614 <sup>d</sup>

\*\*d a t score of 1.648 is significant at .05 level

EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS VIII

The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about themselves as effective leaders will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	23	1.35	
average citizen	17.76	1.89	9.9913662 <sup>d</sup>

\*\*d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

#### EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS IX

The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about the quality of life in their community will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	21.31	2.1	
average citizens	14.17	4.93	3.6060952 <sup>d</sup>

\*\*d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

#### EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS X

The mean score for the attitude of the influentials about local leaders as effective will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	21.15	1.34	
average citizens	15.23	3.14	8.4664789 <sup>d</sup>

\*\*d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

#### EMPRICAL HYPOTHESIS XI

The mean score for the attitude of the influentials perceiving their community as a cohesive unit will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	22.23	1.59	
average citizens	14.17	1.83	14.11351 <sup>d</sup>

\*\*d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

EMPIRICAL HYPOTHESIS XII

The mean score of the influentials for satisfaction with government will be higher than the average citizen.

	mean	SD	t score
influentials	23.62	3.04	
average citizen	19.43	5.9	2.9987181 <sup>d</sup>

\*\*d a t score of 1.648 is significant at the .05 level

The empirical evidence shows significant differences between the attitudes of the influentials and the average citizen. The evidence demonstrates that persons reflecting positive attitudes approximately equalling the influentials' may be persons more motivated to participate in community decisions.

Although the difference of means is significant at the .05 level of significance or 5% chance of error, it is an extremely close score compared to the other attitudes. For both samples the scores were the highest means of any attitude and the highest standard deviations. Satisfaction with government is the only attitude of 6 attitudes for which the average citizen expressed positive feelings. The high standard deviation reveals very erratic opinions or the inclusion of a disproportionate number of extreme values (an uncommon occurrence). The respective statistics for the influentials and average citizens were means of 23.62 and 19.43 and standard deviations of 3.04 and 5.9.

One explanation for the unanticipated scores received for satisfaction with government is that both groups have resigned themselves to the necessity of the institution of government and its function. The alternatives to government seem limited. The erratic



individual scores may reflect the ability of the questions to expose attitudes showing dissatisfaction with the governmental system of Devils Lake or the satisfaction with the system which is only part-time. The questions probably do not focus upon one finite area of government, but instead are general in nature. The general nature may prevent any sound conclusions from being made.

The five attitude dimensions of themselves as involved citizens, as effective leaders, as having effective local leaders, as having a good quality of life, and as having a cohesive community have scores which lead the investigator to believe that these types of positive attitudes are correlates of influentials. The influentials' attitudes reflect their feelings that through their contributions outcomes can be affected.

The structure of the study was organized to test social status, political participation, and attitudes as correlates of influentials. Because the direction of the methodology tests correlates of influentials, it is not clear whether or not social status, political participation, and attitudes are intercorrelated. For example, do influentials really have different attitudes from the average citizens and other upper SES persons or are the attitudes functions of the upper SES socialization process?

This study can offer in reply, the attitudinal data of four persons from the stratified random sample who had social status

scores of 14, an equal score to the influentials'.

	Person 1	Person 2	Person 3	Person 4	Av. C.	Infl.
self-involvement	14	18	21	23	17.7	23.46
self as a leader	21	15	24	28	17.76	23
local leadership	14	16	15	11	15.23	21.15
community cohesion	17	16	18	22	14.17	22.23
quality of life	13	13	12	10	14.17	21.31
government satis.	17	26	25	15	19.62	23.62
total average	16	17.3	19.16	18	17.01	22.46
committees	0	1	2	5	-	4
participation	5	7	4	5	3.3	6.71
residency	24 yrs.	20	8	1.5	20.2	33.3

The 4 sample persons do not constitute a large enough sample of high social status persons to make an inference about the entire high status persons population. However, a few empirical facts may be offered for thought. The influentials' standard deviations for each attitude were smaller than the average citizens'. This means that the raw scores were closely clustered around the mean. These four persons listed above have social statuses equal to the influentials but have the tendency to deviate far from the mean for the attitudinal empirical hypotheses as do the average citizens. For example, person 4 scored a 28 for the attitude of perceiving himself as an effective leader which is the highest score received among the interviews, average citizens and influentials alike. This

same person also scored a 10 for the attitude that local leaders were effective which is one of the lowest scores recorded in the study. These 4 persons are much more erratic in answering the attitudinal questions than the influentials.



## THE IMPLICATIONS

The influentials who have been identified offer the local government administration their time, leadership, and legitimacy. Apparently, their social status permits their freer participation which is more varied than the average citizen and their attitudes about themselves and the community are more positive than the average citizen. The influentials were identified, in part, by their extensive participation on civic boards which affords them positions of authority which are appointed not elected positions. In fact, the influentials average participation on 4 community development committees while the average citizens participates on less than one committee. This means that influentials have 4 times the representation of the average citizen. Since the influentials and the average citizen have significant differences in their social backgrounds, political activities, and attitudes, they as a minority seem to represent themselves in public decisions rather than the average citizens. In a 'democratic' society the representatives are supposed to represent their constituencies.

Schumpeter sums up the 18th century democracy of our forefathers as the "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the lection of individuals who are to assemble in order to carry out its will."<sup>47</sup>

It is mistaken to presume that all people will be represented and the decision will be totally rational. "To begin with social scientists have overwhelmingly denied the rationality of individual men..."<sup>48</sup> Today, men are so pre-condi-

tioned by advertisement that upon their questioning about the common good of man they only promulgate what the media has taught them. Lastly, the United States is too populated to be representative on a one-to-one basis. "The apparently desirable political institutions which now function in democratic states - parties, elections, and juries must therefore be explained in other terms."<sup>49</sup>

According to Schumpeter, the practiced democratic process "is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote."<sup>50</sup> This definition has been dubbed by modern political theorists the process theory of democracy.

"In respect to individual unreason, group irrationality, group power, and elite dominance, the process theory was eminently agreeable to liberals because it could embrace various seemingly undesirable phenomena and call them democratic... Not only did it legitimize the real behavior of men in democratic states, it also sanctioned the outcome of that behavior."<sup>51</sup>

The democracy is preserved in the process theory of democracy because Schumpeter believes all men are equally irrational and each man can equally pursue his own interests. "If a political system is kept open, if citizens are provided with inviolable civil rights, if the electoral system compels elites to compete in order to retain leadership, if citizens are assured the power thereby to choose policies consonant with their

individual sense of need, little more can justifiably be expected of any real political system composed of real men."<sup>52</sup>

If this definition of democracy is applicable in this form or in the variations of elitism or pluralism doubt can be cast upon the legitimacy of the political processes of small towns. Devils Lake, as stated before, does not have the financial resources to employ a large bureaucracy. The mayor and 4 city commissioners are elected and paid as part-time employees. They in turn hire full-time an auditor, city planner, various secretaries, draftsmen, and maintenance men. The commissions such as the planning commission were decreed by the city council and the appointed members must be approved by the council. On the other hand commissions such as the Community Development Corporation were not sanctioned by the city commission but operate under their auspices. There are 37 boards operating for increased community development. Part-time politicians have no way of controlling these boards and therefore the activities of these boards are not readily exposed to the public. The public does not elect these board members nor can they hold them accountable through the city commission if many of their activities are not disclosed.

The competition among elites to displace one another is limited to their volition and/or social norms. The 13 influentials averaged identification on 4 of 8 issue areas while the 36 possible influentials on the final interview to determine reputational influentials also averaged being identified



on 4 issue areas. They may compete between one another publicly and privately for informal power. It is significant that Schumpeter's element of election or competition by the people's vote is unavailable to the community members.

Technically, it appears Devils Lake is ruled by an unofficial oligarchy. However, if in actual sanctioning of this type of government, no public outcry denounced them, the government structure must have some kind of legitimacy. "Hunter argued that the leaders did not conspire to carry out their effective rule in secrecy; their power was usually acknowledged freely and openly, even if its involuntary and undemocratic aspects were not stressed. Presumably, therefore, the community knew of the existence of elite influence, yet that influence was never massively and radically challenged. Indeed, it must have been widely viewed as generally legitimate for there was no outcry from the vast majority of local citizens, who, as Hunter remarked without elaboration, were generally passive men even though they had no voice in policy determination."<sup>53</sup> Since the Devils Lake average citizen appears to have a limited voice in policy decisions (i.e. vote alone) and have not rebelled, their silence must legitimize the government in a theoretic sense.

After personal observation of Devils Lake due, to a bureaucrat position held, I would estimate legitimacy is awarded the coalition of influentials because they do an efficient job with what tools are afforded them. Few other citizens in the

community could do the job equally well.

A certain level of competition flows between the city commissioners. . For example, in a disagreement one commissioner punched another in the face during a council meeting. (May, 1976).

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Edward C. Banfield and James Q. Wilson, "Power Structure and Civic Leadership In Strategies of Community Organization," Fred Cox ed., Strategies of Community Organization (Itasca, Ill., F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1970) , p. 121.

<sup>2</sup>Roland Warren, The Community in America (Chicago, Rand McNally and Co., 1963) , p. 324.

<sup>3</sup>Charles Loomis, Social Systems (Princeton, D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1960) , p. 30.

<sup>4</sup>Robert Kweit and Mary Grisez, "Housing and Community Development Act of 1974-Citizen Participation and the Planning Process," (The Proceeding of the American Collegiate Schools of Planning Annual Meeting, 1976) , p. 2.

<sup>5</sup>Kweit and Grisez, p. 2.

<sup>6</sup>George M. Beal and Daryl Hobbs, Social Action: The Processing Community and the Area Development, (Iowa State University, 1969) , p. 5.

<sup>7</sup>Loomis, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup>Edward Banfield, Political Influence (Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1961) , p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Daniel Lerner and Harold Lasswell, The Comparative Study of Elites (Stanford, Cal., Stanford University Press, 1952) , p. 6.

<sup>10</sup>Lerner, p. 6.

<sup>11</sup>Loomis, p. 34.

<sup>12</sup>Loomis, p. 35.

<sup>13</sup>Warren, p. 157.

<sup>14</sup>Lerner, p. 7.

<sup>15</sup>Max Weber, The Theory of Social and Economic Organization (New York, Oxford Press, 1947) , p. 153.

<sup>16</sup>Loomis, p. 26.

<sup>17</sup>Herbert Chruden and Arthur Sherman, Personnel Management (Cincinnati, South-Western Publishing Co., 1976) , p. 71.



18 Lester Milbrath, Political Participation (Chicago, Rand McNally and Co., 1965) , p. 51.

19 Milbrath, p. 39.

20 Milbrath, p. 39.

21 Milbrath, p. 61.

22 Milbrath, p. 46.

23 Robert Lane, Political Life (Glencoe, Ill., Free Press, 1959) , 159.

24 Milbrath, p. 76.

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28 Milbrath, p. 39.

29 Fikret Ceyhun, 210 Economics (University of North Dakota, 1976) , p. 9.

30 Julian Simon, Basic Research Methods (New York, Random House, 1969) , p. 257

31 Floyd Hunter, Community Power Structure (Garden City, New York, Doubleday and Co., 1963) , p. 8.

32 Hunter, p. 137.

33 Banfield, Political Influence p. 37.

34 Robert Presthus, Men At the Top (New York, Oxford Press, 1964) , p. 59.

35 Hunter, p. 12.

36 Presthus, p. 12.

37 Milbrath, p. 53.

38 Milbrath, p. 63.

39 Lerner, p. 29.

40 Lane, p. 159.

<sup>41</sup>Milbrath, p. 103.

<sup>42</sup>Milbrath, pp. 24-27.

<sup>43</sup>Rotter, Handout Mgmt 407 Wage and Salary Administration (University of North Dakota, 1976).

<sup>44</sup>Terence Mitchell, Charles Smyer, and Stan E. Weed, "Locus of Control-Supervision and Work Satisfaction," Academy of Management Journal XVIII (Sept. 1975) , p. 624.

<sup>45</sup>Milbrath, p. 56.

<sup>46</sup>Hubert M. Blalock, Jr., Social Statistics (New York, McGraw Hill, 1960) , p. 226.

<sup>47</sup>David Ricci, Community Power and Democratic Theory (New York, Random House, 1971) , p. 54.

<sup>48</sup>Ricci, p. 56.

<sup>49</sup>Ricci, p. 54.

<sup>50</sup>Ricci, p. 54.

<sup>51</sup>Ricci, p. 58.

<sup>52</sup>Ricci, p. 59.

<sup>53</sup>Ricci, p. 93.

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