

# *William C. Stone*

*Program: Leadership Studies*

*Title: “Community Leaders’ Perceptions of  
the Influence of the Power Elite on Local  
Decision-Making”*

*Major Professor: Dr. Ceola Ross Baber*

THEME	MICROLEVEL INDICATORS	MACROLEVEL INDICATORS
Civic Engagement	Social Involvement Political Involvement	
Social Capital and Networks	Perceived Personal Influence Small Town Dynamics Social Status	Community Connections Familial Influence
Impact on Decision-Making	Economic Influence (Wealth) Transparency in Decision-making Necessity of the Power Elite	Economic Influence (Wealth) Transparency in Decision-Making

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS / PROBLEMS:

- How do community leaders perceive the impact of the power elite on local governing bodies?

## METHODS:

- The purpose of this instrumental case study was to explore the perceptions of community leaders regarding the role of the power elite and to document the impact the power elite have on decision-making in a designated location.

## RESULTS / FINDINGS:

- Based on the results of my research I have determined the power elite at the local level proved to influence decision-making through a lack of transparency, protecting the status quo, increased access to officials, leveraging of wealth and resources, family ties, and connections and networks.

## SIGNIFICANCE / IMPLICATIONS:

- The results of this study suggest that the “average” citizen may have very little knowledge about what goes on behind the scenes politically at the local level. Hopefully the results of this research will benefit local citizens and other stakeholders encouraging a more informed voter and participant in the local civic process while better equipping them to discern the “hidden” elements involved in decision-making.