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PERCEPTIONS OF BOROUGH INCORPORATION HELD BY
COMMUNITY LEADERS
IN DELTA JUNCTION, ALASKA

By

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Bachelor of Arts, University of Portland, Portland, Oregon, 2002

Thesis

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Perceptions of Borough Incorporation held by community leaders in Delta Junction, Alaska

Chairperson: Dr. Rebecca Richards

Regional governments exist in an overwhelming majority of the United States and are often considered a necessary and natural progression of a developing region. Alaska offers a unique opportunity to explore perceptions of regional incorporation, as it is the only remaining state in the Union to have unincorporated area. Thus, after a rural region of Alaska petitioned the state legislature to politically incorporate, I conducted qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews with local community leaders to explore their perceptions of the proposed incorporation.

Existing literature often refers to leaders as either elite, self-interested individuals or as functional, community-interested individuals. This study explored the perceptions of incorporation held by formal and informal community leaders to ascertain the degree to which support or opposition to borough incorporation was based on this proposed 'interest' dichotomy. These results were then interpreted in the context of the rural restructuring that has arguably been occurring in the state, and specifically the Deltana region. These interpretations led to the creation of a values orientation framework through which I described leaders' opinions as either 'future focused' or 'historically grounded'.

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CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Alaska is the ‘Last Frontier’ and with that motto comes a lifestyle based on self-sufficiency and individualism. The Alaskan constitution reflects these values in the opening lines of the constitution’s section dedicated to the Declaration of Rights. The inherent rights outlined in Article 1 are that “...all persons have a natural right to life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, and the enjoyment of the rewards of their own industry...” (The Alaska Constitution 1956). Thus, individuals have a “natural right” to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

The collective well-being of a community of individuals is also recognized in the state constitution through the designation of the regional borough government as the focal point of local government. The constitution emphasizes a “liberal” construction of local government with the goal of allowing a community to have the ability to design and construct a local or regional government that best suits the needs of that group of individuals (Morehouse & Fischer 1971: 58). In addition to the previously stated individual rights, the constitution also includes a statement regarding the “corresponding obligations to the people and to the State”, clearly linking the individual to not only his or her well-being, but also to the community at large (The Alaska Constitution 1956). Hence, Article I of the Alaska constitution frames individual rights in the context of potentially incompatible collective obligations. This tension between individual rights and collective obligations is explored in this study.

The Alaska constitution constructs “citizens” in a manner similar to the conceptualization of citizens in the United States’ constitution with a few variations. The Alaska constitution includes in the inherent rights above, the right to “enjoy the rewards

of [one's] own industry” and “that all people are entitled to equal rights, opportunities and protection under the law” (The Alaska Constitution 1956). However, the Alaska constitution omits some of the more specific statements of rights that other state constitutions have opted to include because its framers believed that those rights were either too specific or unnecessary for protection in the constitution and were better addressed as legislation (Harrison 2007).

This decision reinforced the framers' belief that individual rights were best left as liberally protected as possible so that legislation was to be enacted only when those rights needed to be limited. In contrast, the Oregon constitution specifically offers prisoners protection from “unnecessary vigor” and the New Jersey constitution protects the right to organize and bargain collectively. Such specific rights are not included in the Alaska constitution and it has been proposed that further delineation will only occur as the need arises (Harrison 2007: 24).

Unlike many other state constitutions that specify all rights and authorities of the regional and local levels of government, the Alaska constitution devolves all authority to the incorporated regional or local level unless otherwise noted¹ (Harrison 2007: 177). In doing so, the Alaska constitution constructs a two-tiered level of government that consists of state government and the borough or city government. The Alaskan Declaration of Rights explicitly states that “all people have corresponding obligations to the people and to the State” (The Alaska Constitution 1956). This statement establishes the ties between

¹ The entire State of Alaska is divided into boroughs; however, not all boroughs are politically incorporated. There exists one large unorganized borough that encompasses all the unincorporated regions in the state. There can exist incorporated cities within the unincorporated borough, such as Delta Junction, however the governmental body and associated powers with that city only extend to the city limits, and possess no legal authority in the surrounding unincorporated region.

the individual and the community at the lower tier of government and the individual and the State at large at the second and higher tier of government.

Hence, the Alaskan constitution has institutionalized an inherent tension between individual rights and collective obligations at two levels of government, but particularly at the local tier of government. Conflict may arise when citizens are asked to sacrifice individual rights in exchange for receiving public services through incorporating as a borough. How citizens perceive that exchange of individual rights for collective services may create divisions within a community.

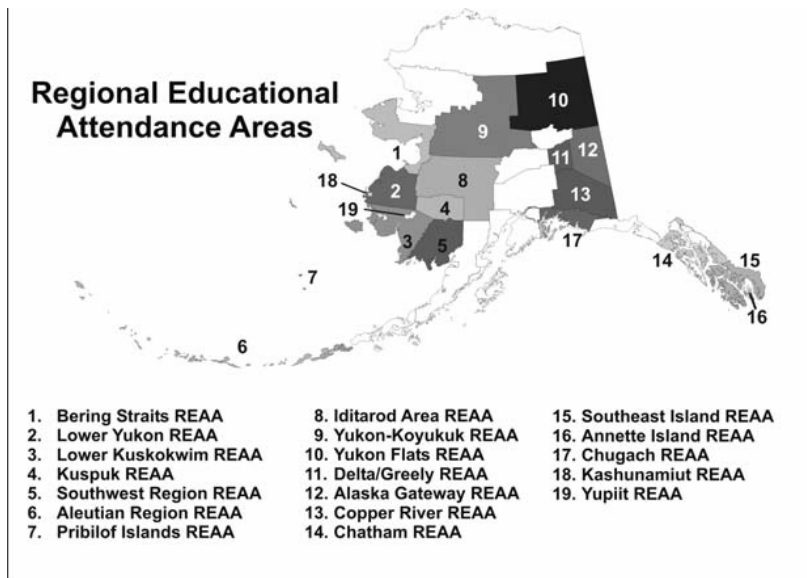
Thus, the objective of this research is to discover community leaders' perceptions of borough incorporation as being grounded in either self-interest or community-interests. This topic is explored through in-depth semi-structured interviews in an Alaskan community with formal and informal community leaders. The community that I chose, Delta Junction, Alaska, has recently struggled with the collective decision of whether or not to incorporate.

First, I will briefly describe my study site of Delta Junction, which has considered borough incorporation. Next, I will describe the process of borough incorporation in Alaska and historic resistance to borough incorporation. Chapter Two provides a more comprehensive demographic and economic description of my study site. Chapter Three explains how borough incorporation can be situated in the context of rural restructuring with specific reference to Alaska and my study site as well as the related issue of devolution. Chapter Three addresses the theoretical implications of understanding borough incorporation as a response to rural restructuring from the perspective of community leaders. Chapter Four describes the methodological choices that I made for

data collection and analysis. Chapter Five reports the results of the in-depth interviews that I conducted. Finally, Chapter Six offers interpretations and conclusions of the results within the context of the existing literature.

Regional and Community Description: Delta Junction, Alaska

In 2003, the City of Delta Junction, Alaska began writing a proposal to incorporate the surrounding local area that consists of the existing unorganized Delta/Greely Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA) as the Deltana borough. On January 3, 2006, the city submitted its incorporation proposal to the Local Boundary Commission, which is the state agency charged with making decisions regarding borough incorporation and boundaries (City of Delta Junction 2007). The proposed Deltana borough would encompass an estimated 5,892 square miles and approximately 5,760 residents (City of Delta Junction 2007). The following is a map of the Regional Educational Attendance Areas for the state of Alaska. Note number 11, the Delta/Greely boundaries in the central eastern area of the state.



Source: State of Alaska, Department of Community and Economic Development. 2004. *Local Government in Alaska*. Retrieved December 15, 2007 (<http://www.commerce.state.ak.us/dca/pub/LocalGovernmentinAlaska032004.pdf>).

The Deltana region, synonymous with the Delta/Greely Regional Education Attendance Area, is located at the eastern edge of the Alaska Range, north of the Wrangell Mountains and south of the White Mountains in the Tanana River valley. The City of Delta Junction is located along the east bank of the Delta River, 14 miles south of the confluence of the Delta River and the Tanana River. The city is located at the convergence of the Richardson Highway and the Alaska Highway at 64° North latitude and 145° West longitude. Fairbanks, the second largest city in Alaska, is located 95 miles to the northwest along the Richardson Highway. See Appendix A for a map of the state of Alaska with Delta Junction highlighted.

Borough Incorporation in Alaska

The process of borough incorporation in Alaska operates in stages. The first stage consists of approval of an incorporation petition and accompanying charter for the proposed borough by the Local Boundary Commission (LBC). Following LBC approval

of the petition and charter, the incorporation question is then put to a general vote by the residents who live in the proposed borough area (State of Alaska, Local Boundary Commission 2002). Should the voters approve borough incorporation, certain authorities and responsibilities then devolve from the state level to the newly formed borough. These authorities and responsibilities vary depending on the type of borough that is formed and the specific duties outlined in the borough charter.

Once a geographic area incorporates as a borough, the borough government is required to fund and manage certain services previously provided by the state. Specific services that the new borough is required to provide depend on the type of borough charter the populace has approved. The Alaska constitution specifies that incorporation is a voluntary political decision that can be encouraged by such incentives as increased political participation at the local and state levels, more accountable government and politicians, and more efficient public services. To strengthen these long-term rewards, the state constitution also offers a more immediate incentive that borough incorporation will be accompanied by a state land grant consisting of 10 percent of the “vacant, unappropriated, and unreserved” state land within the borough boundaries to be transferred from the state to the newly formed borough (Morehouse & Fischer 1971).

History of Borough Incorporation

Upon statehood, Alaskans believed that they could establish a state government and construct a state constitution that would serve community interests better than any existing public institutions, laws and policies. With those goals in mind, the delegates attending the Alaska Constitutional Convention created a constitution that was designed not only to serve Alaska’s primarily rural communities but also to accommodate the

future population growth in the state (Morehouse & Fischer 1971). The key institution in this newly established Alaskan government was, and remains, the borough.

However, the issue of borough incorporation in Alaska has been contentious since the former Alaskan Territory transitioned to statehood in 1959 (State of Alaska, Local Boundary Commission 2001). Since statehood, borough incorporation has faced opposition from numerous communities throughout Alaska, opposition that ultimately precipitated the Mandatory Borough Act in 1963. Criticism of the borough system has also originated within state government as evidenced by state documents calling for reform and revision of the incorporation process (State of Alaska, Local Boundary Commission 2001; Morehouse & Fischer 1971). This opposition and criticism are discussed below.

The delegates created a borough-centered state constitution so as “to provide for maximum local self-government with a minimum of local government units, and to prevent duplication of tax-levying jurisdictions. A liberal construction [was to] be given to the powers of local government units” (The Alaska Constitution 1956). The state thus promotes incorporation as a vehicle for Alaskan communities to adopt a local government system to suit their needs. Because the state constitution provides basic guidelines for different classes of boroughs, regions are allowed to select the most appropriate borough structure for their needs and to draft a charter further specifying services and authorities.

Borough Classifications

Currently, Alaska has 16 organized boroughs and one unorganized borough. There are five different classifications of organized boroughs in Alaska. In hierarchical

order from the most autonomous to the least autonomous they are as follows: unified home rule, non-unified home rule, first class, second class, and third class. In addition, one large unorganized borough exists that encompasses all area that is not included in the boundaries of an organized borough (Bockhorst 2000). The region of focus for this research is located within that one large unorganized borough.

The unified and non-unified home rule boroughs must provide public education as well as planning, platting and land use regulation services. Unified and non-unified home rule boroughs may also have authority over a number of additional services depending on the charter that has been adopted by the borough. Those services can include public transportation, maintenance of public non-state roads, water and air pollution control, animal regulation, hazardous substance control, and property and/or sales tax collection (Bockhorst 2001).

The unified home rule and non-unified home rule boroughs are distinguished by the presence or absence of an incorporated city; the unified home rule borough requires an incorporated city within borough boundaries, while the non-unified home rule borough does not. The first class, second class, and third class borough governments have successively less and less authority and responsibilities (Bockhorst 2001). Table 1 presents a description of some of the responsibilities and authorities for the different classes of boroughs in Alaska.

Table 1. Borough Classifications and Corresponding Authorities and Responsibilities.

<u>Power</u>	<u>Public Education</u>	<u>Planning, Platting and Land Use Regulation</u>	<u>Property Taxes</u>	<u>Sales Tax</u>
<u>Unified & Non-Unified Home Rule Boroughs</u>	Must provide area wide service	Must exercise powers areawide, but on own terms	Limited to 30 mils, voter approval required by some Charters	Rate may be limited by charter & voter approval may be required
<u>First Class Borough</u>	Same as Home Rule	Must exercise powers areawide in accordance with state statutes	Same as Home Rule, except no Charter	No limit exists, but voter approval required
<u>Second Class Borough</u>	Same as Home Rule	Same as First Class	Same as First Class	Same as First Class
<u>Third Class Borough</u>	Same as Home Rule	May exercise power only upon voter approval	Same as First Class	Same as First Class

Source: Adapted from Dan Bockhorst (2001)

Of the currently organized boroughs in Alaska, three are unified home rule boroughs, five are non-unified home rule boroughs, seven are second class boroughs and one is a third class borough (Bockhorst 2000). Interestingly, there are no first class boroughs. This lack of first-class boroughs may in part be due to the fact that first class boroughs may exercise any power not prohibited by law on a non-areawide basis (i.e., in the area of the borough outside incorporated cities) by enacting an ordinance. In contrast, a second class borough must gain voter approval for the authority to exercise many non-areawide powers (Bockhorst 2000: 5).

Essentially, home rule boroughs have the ability to create a charter that can be tailored to the specific desires of the local residents. Thus, residents have the ability to

decide upon approval of a charter that may or may not grant authority to the borough assembly regarding the authority to make non-areawide decisions. That authority is automatically given to first class boroughs and thus could be perceived as too great of an unchecked power. The proposed petition to incorporate the Deltana region is one seeking to incorporate as a unified home rule borough, the most liberal construction of local government.

Resistance to Borough Incorporation

Even with the incentives provided to the community through incorporation, only one area in Alaska had voluntarily incorporated as a borough by July 1963, four years after Alaska had acquired statehood. Thus, in the legislative session of 1963, the Alaska legislature passed the Mandatory Borough Act that required the incorporation of boroughs. Four “local option” boroughs were formed under threat of mandatory incorporation, while four other areas were mandatorily incorporated (Morehouse & Fischer 1971: 75).

The “local option” boroughs were Ketchikan, Sitka, Juneau, and Kodiak Island. The mandated borough incorporations occurred in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai Peninsula, and Matanuska-Susitna Valley (Table 2). The first seven areas to incorporate chose to incorporate as second class boroughs². The community decisions to become second class boroughs versus home rule or first class boroughs were likely based on the apparent belief that if there had to be local government, let its powers be limited (Morehouse & Fischer 1971).

² Voters in the city of Juneau first chose to incorporate as a first class city-borough, but later merged with the city of Douglas to form the current home rule municipality. The rationale behind initially incorporating as a first class city-borough may have been due to the fact that Juneau is the capital of the state and possessed the most capacity with regard to government expertise.

Table 2. Classification and Nature of Regional Incorporations Resulting from the Mandatory Borough Act

Class \ Mechanism	Mandated	“Local Option”
First Class Borough		Juneau
Second Class Borough	Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kenai Peninsula and Matanuska-Susitna Valley	Ketchikan, Sitka and Kodiak Island

Source: Morehouse & Fischer 1971

Although those communities that were mandated to become boroughs had contained public utilities and independent school districts, and thus met the requirements set by the legislature for incorporation (Morehouse & Fischer 1971), the sparseness of each area’s population and the apparent lack of desire for expanded or improved services may have led the communities to choose a more limited and restricted form of government. Another rationale for opting to become a second class borough versus a home rule or first class borough may have been a lack of cohesive borough-wide identity, which may have led residents to distrust a borough assembly with borough-wide authority. Thus, all the communities in Table 2 may have opted to become second class boroughs so that they could continue to rely on the voting population to make decisions regarding transportation and taxes.

With regard to Deltana and the current lack of a borough structure, attempts have been made for “local option” incorporation or annexation. None of the “local option” incorporation campaigns have ever progressed to a public vote, until the recent vote in fall of 2007. In 1973, Fairbanks North Star borough proposed that the Deltana region should be included in the newly formed borough. However, local resistance from Deltana residents citing the State Constitution, which asserts that all the communities within a borough must be culturally similar, claimed that this state level requirement was

not met and thus Deltana should not be allowed to be annexed by Fairbanks North Star borough. The State Legislation and Representatives from Fairbanks accepted that claim and the threat of annexation for the Deltana region was eliminated, even if only for a period (Bockhorst 2000).

CHAPTER TWO – STUDY SITE

The proposed area of borough incorporation includes the incorporated city of Delta Junction, Alaska, and its surrounding unincorporated area and corresponds to the pre-existing Delta/Greely Regional Education Attendance Area (REAA), covers approximately 5,892 square miles and includes a population of roughly 5,760 residents (City of Delta Junction 2007). The focus of my study, however, is the incorporated city, Delta Junction, because the current petition to incorporate the REAA as a borough originated there, and Delta Junction would most likely become the seat of the proposed borough (City of Delta Junction 2007). The social context of the current proposal to incorporate as a borough is presented in the demographic and economic description of Delta Junction that follows.

Demographic Description

In 2005, the population of the City of Delta Junction was 897 (U.S. Bureau of Census 2007). This represented a 6.7% increase from 2000 (U.S. Bureau of Census 2007). The population of Delta Junction is primarily White (75.1%), and African American (12.3%), with the remaining 12.6% of the population consisting of Asian, Pacific Islander and Other. Only 0.9% of the total population is Native Alaskan (U.S. Bureau of Census 2007). Although the Deltana region has increased in population, the rate of increase is consistent with population growth rates in other rural regions of Alaska. However, rates of population growth in the urban centers far outpace the growth rates in the rural areas of the state (U.S. Bureau of Census 2007).

Four culturally distinct communities comprise the unincorporated area surrounding Delta Junction (City of Delta Junction 2007). Healy Lake is a village of

Native Alaskans consisting of 34 individuals and is only accessible via boat, plane, or ice roads in the winter. A religious-based community of roughly 200 individuals, the community of Whitestone, also has limited access depending on the season. The community of Big Delta is an extension of Delta Junction and is situated along the Richardson Highway. The relatively large military base, Fort Greely, consists of approximately 2,000 individuals (State of Alaska, Local Boundary Commission 2007).

The Deltana region lies at the junction of the Richardson Highway and the Alaska Highway, thus making it to a 'transport hub'. This junction allows for year-round road access to and from the area. In addition, the Alaska Railroad Corporation is planning to extend the rail line from Eielson Air Force base outside Fairbanks to a termination point in Delta Junction (Alaska Railroad Corporation 2007). This rail expansion would support general transport, military operations and tourism and strengthen the economic base of the Deltana region.

Economic Description

Federal, state and local governments provide most of the employment opportunities for the Deltana region. In 2002, 42% of all wages and salaries derived from the public sector, with the Deltana School District serving as the second largest employer for the area (Erskine 2002). Another large segment of employment derives from the highway and transportation system jobs in the area, either in the form of providing highway maintenance services or services and products for travelers. For example, the local Pump Station 9 for the Trans-Alaska Pipeline employs 36 individuals. Alyeska Pipeline Service Company, which is responsible for running the station, is considered a transportation company (Erskine 2002).

In addition, the Deltana region is considered one of Alaska's two farming regions, and it is second in state agricultural production only to the Matanuska-Susitna Valley. The farming infrastructure for the region consists of a dairy processing plant, a slaughter house, a meat-packing plant, a farmer co-operative, a veterinary clinic, a USDA government support office, and the University of Alaska Fairbanks Delta Research Site and Cooperative Extension Service office (Erskine 2002:11). This infrastructure generates important revenue for the area. In 2001, farm production generated more than \$7.5 million dollars, the highest it had been in 12 years. Livestock contributed about 18% of that production. The two primary crops in the region are hay and barley (Erskine 2002:10).

More recently, a mineral operation, Pogo Gold Mine, has been developed in the region. Pogo Gold Mine is located roughly 40 miles north of Delta Junction, and is expected to employ between 200 and 300 individuals over its anticipated 11 year lifespan. In an attempt to promote relocation to the area, Pogo Gold Mine offers a four day on-four day off work schedule.

Recently, the Delta School District along with University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tanana Chiefs Conference and Alaska Miners Association has created the Delta Mine Training Center. The Center will train the local workforce for potential mine employment as well as entice experienced miners elsewhere in the state to Pogo Gold Mine jobs near Delta Junction (Erskine 2002). However, this positive economic profile should not overshadow the fact that unemployment and poverty rates have historically spiked in the Deltana region (Yukon-Koyukuk School District 2006).

Recent high rates of unemployment and poverty likely have resulted from a realignment of the Fort Greely military base and the subsequent job losses. This realignment greatly reduced the resident military base population from 1,289 in 1990 to 22 individuals in 2001 (Erskine 2002:3). In 2002, the Missile Defense Command took control of the base and the number of residents rose to roughly 2000 (State of Alaska, Local Boundary Commission 2007: 22; Erskine 2002). Although these job losses were temporary, they indicate the historical dependence of the unstable local Deltana economy on national political and economic trends.

CHAPTER THREE – LITERATURE REVIEW

Community change results from a changing economy and accompanying demographic shifts. With economic and demographic changes, a community may respond in different ways. Incorporation may be one such response because it may provide a more resilient means for a community to adjust to change. In Delta Junction, the proposal to incorporate the Deltana region as a borough originated from the formal leaders within the existing city government. Subsequently, informal community leaders began to express their opposition to incorporation.

In this chapter, I review the issue of rural restructuring and devolution with specific reference to Alaska and the Deltana region. I then discuss the issue of incorporation in the context of rural restructuring. I conclude with a review of the influence and representativeness of community leaders and their role in community controversies.

Rural Restructuring

Rural restructuring is a broad term that generally refers to social shifts in rural regions. These shifts may include changes in demography and the economy as well as new developments in technology that subsequently impact rural life (Brown & Swanson 2005; Flora & Flora 2004; Falk, Schulman & Tickamyer 2003). The frequent use of the term “rural restructuring” reflects the broad and almost all encompassing application of the concept to describe rural social change. Hoggart and Paniagua (2001) have critically analyzed the concept and proposed that although the term may refer to broad changes in the rural context, the definition should be more clearly specified lest the term be over-used and lose its meaning all together. Hence, they conclude that the shifts in rural well-

being as a result of “rural restructuring” should be experienced across multiple levels of rural life and not occur merely as naturally progressing development. This requirement of restructuring to be occurring across multiple aspects of rural life is a principle component of the claim that “rural restructuring” is actually occurring within rural regions of Alaska, and more specifically the Deltana region.

The social shifts thought to be characteristic of rural restructuring should reflect an actual transformation of the way in which life is experienced in the rural environment (Hoggart & Paniagua 2001). In Alaska, potential demonstrations of rural restructuring would include such dramatic changes as a rapidly aging rural population in more remote, less amenity-rich regions, economic shifts away from primary industry³, and rapid advances in the rural communication (e.g. technology such as cell phones and Internet access).

Rural Restructuring in Alaska

Unlike the rest of Alaska, the population of the Deltana region declined through the 1990s primarily because of the downsizing and realignment of the local military installation, Fort Greely as noted previously. The median age, 23.4 years, of the residents at Fort Greely is significantly younger than that in other communities in the area. In contrast, Delta Junction’s median age is 36 years, and the Deltana region’s median age is 38.8. Both median ages are older compared to the overall median age of the state of 32.4 years (Erskine 2002).

The development of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline in the 1970s greatly increased the connectivity of many rural, remote Alaskan communities to the rest of the United States

³ With the exception of mineral and energy development.

and the world. The pipeline was also the first major development project to span the entire state and provide outside employment opportunities to residents of previously subsistence-based villages and towns. During the 1969 to 1977 construction period of the Trans-Alaska Pipeline, 70,000 employees were hired (Alyeska Pipeline Service Company 2007). Many of these employees originated from the rural communities located parallel to the path of the pipeline because they provided the most accessible pool of labor in the more remote regions of the state.

The pipeline employment opportunities greatly impacted the demographic composition of many rural communities. Able-bodied men migrated with the progressing construction of the pipeline and left the elderly, young and female populations behind. In addition, the pipeline provided the first exposure that many rural communities had to some of the then cutting-edge technologies in personal transport, communication systems, and basic materials used by the developers for pipeline construction.

Another significant change in Alaskan rural life occurred in the shift from family-based health care to institutional health care provision. Institutional health care in rural areas of Alaska has been difficult due to the lack of existing transportation and communication infrastructure as well as extremely small and dispersed populations. A shortage of available doctors to serve all the necessary areas compounds the problem. These two factors have negatively impacted the quantity and quality of individual and community health care in rural areas of the state. One of the means by which Alaska is trying to overcome those shortfalls has been to prioritize the expansion of telecommunication infrastructure so as to provide “telehealth” for the smaller, more remote areas (State of Alaska, Health & Human Services 2007).

In addition to changes in health care, education in rural Alaska is also changing with the Internet. Distance learning was previously based on correspondence via mail, or relocation to a boarding school. However, access to the Internet has led to more than a 340% increase in participation in distance education courses for K-12 students across the state. In addition, most post-secondary distance-learning courses are offered by rural campuses across the state (University of Alaska Education Technology Team and Distance Education Steering Board 2006). This expanded distance learning infrastructure and access has allowed many residents who previously could not acquire even a high school education to now earn a college diploma.

Rural Restructuring in Delta Junction

The changes in life in rural Alaska are reflected in some of the changes that have occurred in Delta Junction. Delta Junction lies along the Trans-Alaska Pipeline and thus experienced an increase in population during the construction period. However, since completion of the pipeline, Delta Junction has not experienced strong in-migration and has instead witnessed its existing population grow increasing older. In addition, an expanding military base and new mining operation are greatly increasing employment opportunities, but these new jobs are extremely dependent on national military policy and the commodities market, respectively. Hence, expanding employment in these two sectors may not contribute to the long term stability of the local Delta Junction economy.

Technological developments have impacted the Delta Junction area in ways similar to other parts of Alaska. These include increased access to the Internet and distance education. The proliferation of on-line educational resources has improved educational attainment in the area. The Raven Correspondence School, which has an

office in Delta Junction, serves approximately 80 K-12 students (Yukon-Koyukuk School District 2006:7), while the University of Alaska reported that in 2005, 198 students from the Deltana region were enrolled in distance learning courses (University of Alaska Education Technology Team and Distance Education Steering Board 2006:19). In addition, many other private schools offer on-line correspondence courses for all levels of education that are available to anyone with access to the Internet, including residents in Delta Junction.

Devolution in Alaska

An accompanying trend in rural restructuring is the devolving of public services to the local level. In Alaska, incorporation into a borough is the sole institutional means of devolving responsibility and authority from the central level of state government to the local level. Borough incorporation is thus a form of devolution, the process by which the central national government transfers some degree of responsibility for the control, development, and support of public policy first to the states and subsequently to local jurisdictions (Sharp & Parisi 2005: 353).

As a form of devolution, borough incorporation may enhance civic participation, make politicians more accountable, and lead to the creation of public policies that reflect locally determined priorities and provide more efficient public services (Ongaro 2006; Flora & Flora 2004). However, borough incorporation may also convey the less desirable “side effects” of devolution, which include limiting public participation, reducing local capacity, and increasing inequalities (Ongaro 2006; Bradshaw 2005; Brown & Swanson ed. 2005).

In communities where the level of civic participation is strong, decision-making, management and planning at the local level can thrive (Ongaro 2006; Neil & Tykkylainen 1998). However, communities that do not possess the levels of civic engagement necessary to ensure efficient and equitable provision of services may not be able to withstand devolution successfully (Boone 2003). Thus, devolution often does not provide the adequate leadership capacity necessary to effectively respond to the forces of rural restructuring (Calthorpe & Fulton 2001: 43).

Theoretical Foundations

In a democracy, political decisions rely on agreement of voting citizens. Hence, political decisions require the support of both elected representatives and nongovernmental and nonprofit leaders as well (Connelly & Knuth 2002; Kamieniecki 1978). Leaders thus have a greater influence on the development, or lack thereof, in a community (Downey 2006). Previous studies that have examined the extent to which leaders can predict public opinion have focused primarily on elected officials, and thus possibly have not accurately portrayed the depth of perception of an issue by all community leaders (Kamieniecki 1978). My goal in including informal community leaders in this study was to expand our understanding of the opinions and actions of non-elected community leadership.

Various theoretical frameworks explain how leaders' decisions are based on values and motivations. The growth machine framework posits an exchange theory view that leaders promote growth and development because they are actually acting in their own self interest of personal gain over that of the interest of the community (Warner & Molotch 1995; Molotch 1976). Hence, individual leaders act with the intention of

improving their individual economic well-being, or the well-being of their cohort, over that of the community at-large (Troutman 2004; Vogel & Swanson 1989).

In contrast to the growth machine perspective, a traditional structural functional perspective suggests that leaders focus on and promote economic development and growth within a community due to their unique position in the community. The role of leaders is often to oversee, manage and fund projects and services for the public good and leads them to consider community economic opportunity a top priority (Richards & Brod 2004; Spies, Murdock, Krannich, Wulfhorst, Wrigley, Leistriz, Sell & Thompson 1998; Woods 1998; Murdock, Hamm, Colberg & Leistriz 1991). These individuals also likely have greater access to information from outside industries and agencies, thus giving them a more ‘outside’ perspective of a potential development than that of non-leaders (Spies et al. 1998; Flynn, Slovic, & Mertz 1994). In addition, this access to outside industries and agencies affects the degree to which their personal ideologies are informed by those ‘outside’ perspectives (Douglas 2005).

The analysis for this thesis relies on specific definitions of “self-interests” and “community-interests”. “Self-interests” are interests defined as presenting direct benefits or protection to the individual. These individual benefits and protection may indirectly affect other individuals or even the larger community, the focus or intent of those interests are individual. Self-interests do not necessarily imply negative effects for other individuals or the community, but may result in negative indirect effects. Conversely, “community-interests” are defined as presenting direct benefits for the community at-large. However, possible indirect influences on individuals may occur, and can be experienced in either a positive or negative manner.

Though leaders may not be homogenous (Connelly & Knuth 2002; Berlin 1997), these two theoretical frameworks suggest the central question of my study: Are community leaders acting in their own best interest or are they acting in the best interest of the community in opposing or supporting borough incorporation?

CHAPTER FOUR - METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study is to explore how perceptions of borough incorporation held by community leaders in Delta Junction, Alaska, reflected the degree to which these leaders express their own self-interest or the public good, especially in the context of rural restructuring and devolution. I chose to do qualitative semi-structured interviews of community leaders in Delta Junction because this methodology allowed me explore this question by letting the flow of the conversation and the interviewee guide the progression of the interview (Bailey 2007). In addition, semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore the experiential nature of the leaders' perceptions of incorporation (Creswell 2007). This exploratory qualitative methodology allowed me to address the "what" and "why" of leaders' perceptions of proposed borough incorporation and how these perceptions relate to the larger issues of rural restructuring.

I also conducted archival research prior to and throughout my interview process to identify the relevant issues regarding incorporation to guide my interview questions. I conducted secondary data analysis of archived local newspaper publications to help create and structure my interview guide. The supplementary secondary data that I reviewed situated my understanding of the issue of incorporation in the public dialogue.

Preliminary Secondary Data Collection

Multiple sources of data were collected for this research. Secondary data from federal sources, such as the U.S. Bureau of Census and the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, were analyzed to describe the population of the study site. Following the secondary data analysis from federal sources, archival data were collected from the local newspaper, *The Delta Wind*, for the period from December, 2006, through May, 2007.

Interview questions and follow-up probes were developed from articles that related to the local incorporation issue.

In-Depth Interviews

Sampling

I identified eight community leaders, four formal and four informal. Following the literature (Richards & Brod 2004; Spies et al 1998), I conceptualized formal community leaders as publicly elected or appointed government officials or elected representatives of a local organization involved in the public dialogue regarding incorporation. Informal community opinion leaders were conceptualized as individuals that did not hold a representative position within the community, but were still actively engaged in the public dialogue regarding incorporation.

Initially, I conducted purposive sampling to select the formal community leaders to participate in semi-structured in-depth interviews (Babbie 1998; Bryman 2004). Through purposive sampling, I identified four formal leaders. These included the Mayor, the City Administrator, one City Council member, and a member of the Charter Commission.

I then used snowball sampling to identify informal leaders by asking the formal leaders for additional participant recommendations following the completion of each in-depth interview, as well as asking for recommendations from the gatekeepers that I had within the community (Babbie 1998; Bryman 2004). I thus identified four informal leaders as community opinion leaders with regard to the issue of incorporation to interview. All four of these individuals were involved with an organization or group that

was actively engaged in the public debate regarding borough incorporation, but they were not publicly elected representatives.

Description of Sample

The final sample consisted of eight formal and informal leaders that were actively involved in the public dialogue regarding proposed borough incorporation. This group consisted of six males and two females. They ranged in age from their early 40s to their late 60s. Their length of residence in the Deltana region varied from eight to approximately 60 years.

The Interview Process

I conducted interviews to gain an in-depth understanding of each participant's perspective on the issue of the proposed borough incorporation. After providing a short description of my research, I asked participants if he or she would consent to a confidential interview. Each individual asked to participate consented. See Appendix B for the research description and informed consent form. Upon consent, a meeting place and time were established. Interviews were conducted face-to-face at either the participant's homes, the community center or in a private booth at the local café. Prior to conducting the interview, I guaranteed each participant confidentiality. Following consent, each interview was audio recorded.

Because the in-depth interviews were semi-structured, the wording and ordering of questions as well as follow-up probes were flexible so that each participant could discuss issues that he/she believed were important while I was still able to address my research questions (Berg 2004). See Appendix C for the interview guide. The interviews

ranged from 30 minutes to 120 minutes in length. Interviews transpired until the interviewee expressed the belief that there was no new information to be shared.

Data Analysis

Upon completion of verbatim interview transcription, each interview transcription text was imported into the qualitative software program NVivo. Each participant was given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. I used NVivo to store, organize, and search the data in each transcript. I then began the process of analyzing the content of the interviews by first listening to each interview again to isolate potential themes that participants consistently referred to or emphasized in their answers. From these themes, I created memos to begin the process of analysis.

The second step in my analysis was to conduct open coding (Bailey 2007). This step allowed me to name and create corresponding categories of themes and to begin organizing large sections of my data so that I relied solely on the data itself to create themes (Strauss & Corbin 1990). In doing so, I continually referred back to the initial memos that I wrote, each time further exploring or challenging an initial impression that I had.

The next step in my analysis was to conduct focused coding (Bailey 2007). Focused coding allowed me to fully explore the possible theoretical foundations and greater implications and connections of my initial open codes as well as to explore any different dimensions of the original open codes. In this step, I made the larger theoretical connections between my data and that of themes suggested by the literature review. In addition, a grounded theory approach (Charmaz 2006) was applied to develop any

theoretical frameworks that were currently not represented in the existing literature and that could develop out of my research.

After conducting focused coding, I identified 10 themes that described how the leaders in my sample justified their support or opposition to the proposed incorporation. These themes, including their more specific dimensions, present a complex, multifaceted description of leaders' views on incorporation. To address my research question, I created a typology in which I pragmatically compressed the variations among the 10 themes and between the eight individuals whom I interviewed to create categories (Elman 2005). These categories were based on how each interviewee expressed one dimension or one theme over that of another, and how each interviewee answered the direct question I asked regarding whether he or she supported or opposed incorporation. Based on the eight interviews that I conducted, I categorized four individuals as 'proponents' and four individuals as 'opponents'.

These themes were then ordered in prevalence by counting the number of participants who mentioned them. I then prioritized the order of the themes from most to least prevalent to construct the general typology of "proponents" versus "opponents" of borough incorporation. The results of this analysis are presented in Chapter Five.

Researcher Credibility

The position that I, as a researcher, presented to community members and interviewees was that of the 'learner'. I presented myself as such for multiple reasons. This presentation of self acknowledged my understanding of the issue of incorporation for this community as one which was very locally based. As an outside researcher, I could not presume to understand all the meanings that community leaders attribute to

incorporation. With this understanding, I prepared myself by reviewing both the academic and local literature on incorporation so as to assure my interviewees that despite not fully understanding their specific experience of incorporation, I was well versed on the topic.

In choosing Delta Junction, as my research site, I obtained relatively easy access to community members. I had advantageous access to community leaders in Delta Junction and the immediately surrounding area as compared to any of the other three communities in the proposed borough area because I was not only born, but also raised in Delta Junction until I was 10 years old. I also have extended family members that still reside there. Many of these individuals functioned as gatekeepers as well as informants for me. I have also recently been made aware that I have land in the area that my mother bought years ago and has been set aside for me when I would like it.

I believe that my upbringing within the community, the time that I have spent away from the community as well as the property that I personally own within the area all contributed to my gaining access to authentic information from community leaders. My upbringing provided me with gatekeepers as well as the social understanding necessary to gain entry into the community. I believe my time spent away from the community provided a sense of safety and anonymity to my interviewees. And finally, the fact that I own property in the area helped me to establish rapport with community leaders, because I would face similar consequences to the decision to incorporate, as they would, with regard to any tax structures created.

CHAPTER FIVE - RESULTS

Of the eight leaders that I interviewed, four generally supported borough incorporation, and four generally opposed incorporation. Interviewees were asked a number of general questions about their perceptions of the incorporation, which led to the creation of a follow-up probe regarding whether they could classify themselves as a proponent for the incorporation or an opponent to the incorporation (See Appendix D for interview guide). Interviewee responses from the questions led to my creating a typology consisting of two categories, proponent and opponent. Throughout each interview, each interviewee discussed different themes or different dimensions of themes that provided foundation and context for their support or opposition to borough incorporation.

Proponents of the incorporation were Mr. Smith, Mrs. Gray, Mr. White and Mr. Zuck. Three of the four proponents are employed in the public sector, while one is employed in the private sector. Opponents to the incorporation were Mrs. Jones, Mr. Pilot, Mr. Story and Mr. Richard. All four of the opponents derived their employment from the private sector. To reiterate, all interviewees have been assigned pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality in describing the results.

I identified 10 themes expressed in the interviews. Six themes were expressed by all eight interviewees regardless of their position on incorporation. Three themes were expressed by some of the interviewees, and one theme was expressed by only one interviewee (see Table 3). In this chapter, I summarize how the 10 themes and their dimensions characterize the opinions of my interviewees in terms of their support for, or opposition to, borough incorporation. The results are organized in the decreasing

prevalence with which interviewees expressed each theme in my interview with each of them.

Table 3. Prevalence of the themes expressed by the interviewees as Proponent or Opponent⁴.

	Opponents	Proponents	Total Frequency
Representation	4	4	8
Public Services	4	4	8
Taxation	4	4	8
Assessment of Government	4	4	8
External Forces	4	4	8
Community Identity	4	4	8
Freedom	4	3	7
Community Division	3	3	6
Local Economic Situation	1	3	4
Capacity	0	1	1

Representation

The theme of ‘representation’ was expressed by all eight interviewees in either supporting or opposing borough incorporation. Each of the eight interviewees expressed this theme at least once to explain or justify his or her opinion on incorporation. In doing so, they mentioned three different dimensions of representation. These were the increased financial resources resulting from increased representation, the opportunity to vote, and the opportunity to hold political office.

Increased Financial Resources Gained through Increased Representation

All four interviewees that supported borough incorporation discussed the increased resources that would result from the expanded represented population

⁴ “Prevalence” refers to whether a theme was expressed at least once during the course of the interview with each interviewee.

and the more equitable distribution of revenue generation to include all the residents benefiting from the services.

Proponents of borough incorporation noted the existing problem of paying for services for close to 5000 people with the resources provided by only those 1100 residing within the city limits. For example, Mr. Smith noted that the increased resources gained through increased representation would be significant:

This is why I am such a strong supporter of the borough. We provide borough-wide service, but we do so based only on the population within city limits. Thus the resources available to us are not as great as they would if we were representing everyone.

Opportunity to Vote

Of the eight interviewees, five mentioned the dimension of the ‘opportunity to vote’ when discussing the theme of representation. By ‘opportunity to vote’, interviewees were referring to the inclusion of the unincorporated area citizens in the right to vote on local issues that would have previously been determined by only the vote of the residents within the city limits. Three proponents of the incorporation discussed the opportunity to vote that would be gained by residents outside the city limits were the area to incorporate. For example, Mr. Smith, a proponent, stated that, “...everyone then would have an equal say in what happens.”

Two opponents also mentioned the dimension of ‘opportunity to vote’ in discussing the theme of representation. Mr. Richard saw the opportunity to vote gained through incorporation as “an additional chore or burden” for individuals. Mr. Richard further expressed that by gaining an opportunity to vote, residents would also have the responsibility to become involved to ensure that “... freedoms and rights are protected”.

However, another opponent, Mr. Story, conceded that the opportunity to vote would not be a burden, but rather “make us all on the same playing field.”

Opportunity to hold Office

Increased representation through the proposed borough incorporation would require an increased level of citizen participation by voting and/or running for a political office. However, neither voting nor running for office has previously been asked of those Deltana residents who live outside Delta Junction. Three interviewees, two proponents and one opponent, discussed the opportunity to hold political office in discussing representation.

The proponents emphasized the increased representative power that citizens would gain through incorporation. For example, Mr. Zuck explained how part of his support was based on the political power that a majority of the residents in the Deltana community would gain by voting or holding office:

I think the main reason for the borough is two fold from my point of view. The majority of people have no technical say in what the city does, and the majority of people have no ability to ever get elected to the city council. So they have no vote and they have no seat on the city council, to some people that is important.

In contrast, the opponent, Mr. Richard saw the ‘opportunity’ to hold a political office as a burden. “[Individuals] would suddenly have the responsibility of getting on this borough [assembly] and getting involved because we would suddenly be affected by everything that it did. It would just be taking on another chore in our lives, and an unnecessary one.”

Public Services

The theme of public services was mentioned by all eight interviewees. By ‘public services’, interviewees referred to those community services (i.e., public education, road maintenance and the public library services) that the new borough would provide. Public education was discussed by three proponents and four opponents of the proposed incorporation. Road maintenance was discussed by three proponents and two opponents, and library services were discussed by two proponents and no opponents.

Public Education

The issue of public education was discussed by seven of the eight interviewees, three proponents and four opponents. These seven individuals expressed concerns about adequate education funding and/or the community control of the local schools. The three proponents of the borough noted that the funding for the local schools should be generated from within the region to ensure more local control over education related issues. For example, Mr. Smith stated that, “The biggest benefit, and people don’t want to recognize it, would be [Deltana] would finally get control of our schools.”

However, when the four opponents to the incorporation discussed public education funding, they suggested that the education funding that would be provided by the proposed borough would not be sufficient to cover current costs or would be over-extending regional tax payers. For example, Mrs. Jones claimed that:

...[I]f the school thinks they are going to get more money just because we are in a borough, that isn’t necessarily so, it don’t have to be so. Four mils is all that the state mandates for a school...now, if a person thinks that the school is going to be happy with four mils, they are mistaken.

Road Maintenance

The dimension of road maintenance within the theme of public services was expressed by five interviewees, three proponents for the incorporation and two opponents to the incorporation. By 'road maintenance' interviewees were referring to the graveling, grating and plowing of regional public roads, excluding state highways, and the funds necessary for those services.

The proponents for the incorporation discussed the potential of the proposed borough government to provide expanded and improved road maintenance, and how that increase in potential road service provision might motivate citizens to support the borough. For instance, Mr. Smith believed that:

I mean if I were out there and lived on a terrible road, and hoped to get some help, I'd probably say 'vote for the borough and I'm going to serve on the council and we're going to expand road service'.

The two opponents to the borough acknowledged this potential for expanded and improved road maintenance, but both interviewees expressed some reservations about the logistical reality of actual service. Mr. Richard and Mrs. Jones both expressed concerns over the drastic increase in the service area and the ability of the borough to provide services. Mr. Richard claimed that the proposed borough would be "... 10 or 20 times the [current] area" and Mrs. Jones expressed concern regarding the ability of a borough government to service that large of an area, and claimed that for people to "get their muddy road fixed" that there would have to be an additional service district tax assessed on individuals.

Library Services

Library services were mentioned by two proponents and no opponents. In discussing library services, interviewees referred to the funding necessary to maintain the current hours of operation and staffing for the public library.

Mr. Smith and Mr. Zuck both discussed the financial necessity of borough incorporation to support the currently unsustainable operation of the public library. For example, Mr. Zuck noted:

The library is now open seven days a week. It didn't used to be...So if we want the library open seven days a week, we need more income; it's unsustainable. So what we've got here and what we are providing now is unsustainable. And I don't see that the local people inside the city limits are willing to subsidize the whole area by taxing themselves.

Taxation

The theme of taxation was also mentioned by all eight interviewees, the four proponents and the four opponents. In discussing the theme of taxation, interviewees referred to the tax structure that would accompany the borough incorporation. The tax structure refers to the structure through which taxes would be assessed under the proposed incorporation. The proposed structure of taxation was a 10% fuel tax, a 3% electricity tax and a Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) agreement with Pogo Mine that would provide six dollars for every seven needed to fund the borough. Four proponents and four opponents discussed the tax structure.

The four proponents discussed what they believed to be as Mr. Zuck noted, the "genius of the borough proposal...a Payment in Lieu of Taxes agreement with Pogo Mine." Proponents acknowledged that individual property taxes were unwanted by the vast majority of residents, and thus the proposed borough incorporation charter created a

structure that did not rely on property taxes but rather relied on the economic success of the nearby mine. In addition to the PILT agreement, proponents claimed that the proposed fuel and electricity taxes were reasonable for the area. Mr. Smith drew a state-wide comparison to justify his support for the proposed tax structure:

We think it's tough here, how would you like to be in a place where the DC fuel to heat your house is \$5 a gallon. It's tough out there. Those places will never organize; the state will always have to be in there running their schools. That brings me full circle to Delta Junction. If you look at places in the state that are unorganized that could afford to be organized, there are hardly any left. This is it, this place is wealthy; it can afford to do some things on its own.

The four opponents that discussed the tax structure questioned the legal authority of the city of Delta Junction and the charter commission to negotiate a PILT agreement with the Pogo Mine and saw the proposed borough budget as inadequate and unsustainable. In addition, opponents claimed that property taxes were unavoidable because the nearby mining operation would eventually decline and a loss of PILT revenue was inevitable. Thus, although all the interviewees acknowledged an aversion to property taxes, the opponents claimed that the proposed borough incorporation was one step closer to ensuring a property tax assessment. For example, Mrs. Jones expressed the fear of eventually losing her home if she had to pay a property tax by stating that, "I would have to hopefully sell some property or get rid of it and let somebody else pay taxes on it."

Assessment of Government

The theme of the 'assessment of government' was expressed by all eight interviewees. In discussing the 'assessment of government', interviewees mentioned two dimensions of the assessment of a government. These included a beneficial dimension of

the assessment of government and a detrimental dimension of the assessment of government.

Beneficial Assessment of Government

The dimension of a beneficial assessment of government was discussed by all four proponents of the incorporation. In discussing their assessment of government, proponents mentioned their belief in the function and necessity of a government structure to address the needs of citizens of a community. For example, Mr. Zuck suggested that, “The idea behind local government is you get a group of people together and you say, ‘what are things that we can do that the private sector won’t do to make life better?’”

Detrimental Assessment of Government

In stark contrast to the beneficial assessment of government, interviewees mentioned a detrimental assessment of government that referred to negative impacts or behaviors associated with the presence of a government structure. This dimension was discussed by three proponents and four opponents.

The three proponents of the incorporation that discussed negative behaviors associated with government structures limited their references to the state and national levels of government. For example, Mr. Smith noted that, “There are a whole lot of folks who live in interior Alaska who think that all governments are corrupt and then they see some of the things that they want on the state level and it reinforces those beliefs.” However, these three proponents claimed that the local and regional levels of government provided the political means to hold the state and national level government accountable. For example, Mr. Zuck stated that at the regional level government, “The assembly is

supposed to be a board of protection for the people. It's supposed to be the elected people who decide what the community wants, listening to their constituents.”

The four opponents to the incorporation argued that governments are ever-expanding institutions that impede on and limit the lives of individuals. Mr. Richard was the most emphatic of the opponents in stating that a regional government would, “...have the potential of turning into an endlessly growing larger and larger and larger government that would get more and more and more intrusive.” Two opponents also expressed concern over the exposure of local politicians to corrupt state level political actors who misrepresent themselves or bribe officials. Mr. Richard claimed these individuals would do “whatever it takes” such as “lobbyist through corruption [and] grafts.”

External Forces

The theme of ‘external forces’ was expressed by all eight interviewees. They expressed this theme of external forces by referring to three dimensions. The first dimension was perceived external pressure from the state and neighboring Fairbanks North Star borough governments on Deltana residents to financially contribute to the funding of local public services through incorporation. The second dimension was the fear of external control over local issues, and the third dimension was the threat to community and individual decision-making or “agency”.

External Pressure to Contribute

The dimension of ‘external pressure to contribute’ was discussed by all eight interviewees. When referring to the external pressure to contribute, interviewees discussed the pressure exerted on the region by state or neighboring regional level actors

to contribute through some form of taxation to funding the local public schools that are currently funded solely by the state of Alaska.

The four proponents discussed the pressure from the state to locally generate revenue for the funding of local schools and noted previous failed attempts to incorporate the region. For example, Mr. White stated:

I think what precipitated this is every time the [state] budget gets tight, then [the legislators] look for ways to cut school funding. It's not that many dollars, but the state would come out a bit better, a little ahead. That's what their argument always is 'well they don't want to contribute anything to their local schools'.

Similarly, Mr. Zuck noted that there are "people in the legislature who see this as a prosperous area and think that we should be paying for our schools,...That we are cutting the fat hog, and we are in my estimation."

The four opponents to the incorporation acknowledged state and regional pressure to contribute to local schools through incorporation and taxes, but either they did not see such pressure as a viable threat or they presented alternative means of generating funds for local schools. Mrs. Jones discussed the recent statements made by different state level actors that apparently alleviated some of the fear that residents had initially felt regarding a state mandated incorporation by noting, "I think it was [Governor] Murkowski that came up, before he went out of office, and said there would be no forced boroughs, so that won't happen. And [Governor] Palin has said the same thing. That is not going to happen, that is not the fear."

An opponent, Mr. Richard attempted to address the issue of locally funding the schools by advocating a 'head-tax' for the REAA assessed by the state. Mr. Richard stated that:

...we are willing to pay a little, and the way I believe on the head tax is if we have to pay more for our schools, which is the only thing that they have been able to tell us that we don't pay our share on, if that's true, the head tax administered to everyone in the area would be a fair way of doing it and it would be more cost effective because it would directly compensate for the shortfall that is alleged to be here. And it would incur no more restrictions, regulations, ordinances, rules, anything in the community.

Threat of External Control

The dimension of the 'threat of external control' was discussed by four interviewees, two proponents and two opponents, in describing the possibility that decisions regarding local services would be determined by external actors or agencies. Proponents expressed support for incorporation as a means of preventing external agents at the state or neighboring regional level from imposing regulations or restrictions on the Deltana region. For example, Mr. White said that he had come to support incorporation after he had evaluated the possible options and claimed that he believed that local formation of a borough would be the "lesser of all evils". He discussed the pressure from the neighboring North Star borough and quoted a statement made to him by two individuals in the legislature who claimed that, "if Delta doesn't form their own borough, we will introduce a bill that forms a borough for you January next year."

In contrast, borough opponents expressed how incorporation was an acceptance of a structure that promotes external control by providing legitimate means for external agents to influence or direct local or personal decisions. Mr. Richard expressed agreement with Mr. Whites' assessment of the "lesser of two evils" but he still opposed borough incorporation and claimed that:

It is kind of like the organized boroughs use the boundary commission, they influence it to force boroughs onto the unorganized community

against their will...it is not a just system, because our state is supposed to be founded on the constitutional principle of the will of the people.

Threats to Agency

The dimension of 'threats to agency' was discussed by seven interviewees, four proponents and three opponents. The description of what constituted a threat to agency differed between the two groups. Proponents claimed 'threats to agency' existed in the form of neighboring regional or state level actors limiting community control.

Opponents argued that 'threats to agency' existed in the form of limitations placed on individual freedoms by the proposed borough structure.

The four proponents discussed how incorporation would ensure community control over local schools as well as the level and quality of other public services, such as road maintenance or the public library. Mr. Zuck stated, "So instead of going to Juneau begging and not getting anywhere, if the voters say we want a new school, we can do this. It's a marvelous way of looking at things, it's a vote of the people."

In contrast, the three opponents discussed the proposed borough as an externally created structure designed to maximize community control at the expense of individual freedom. Mr. Pilot expressed concerns about proposed borough power by stating that, "I mean once the borough is formed they can do just about anything that they want, even though they say you have to have a vote of the people."

Community Identity

The theme of 'community identity' was discussed by all eight interviewees. In discussing 'community identity', interviewees often referred to the self-reliant and independent nature of residents and thus the community. In addition, one interviewee

mentioned the changing 'feel' of the community because of the influx of new residents. Three proponents and four opponents discussed the theme of 'community identity'.

When the proponents discussed community identity, it was often in reference to the "independent and feisty" nature of the residents and how that was a consideration when drafting the incorporation proposal. Mr. Zuck stated that:

I have never been anywhere in my life where I have seen what I call respectable people use the argument that if you have property tax you never own you property, the government can always take it away, therefore you are nothing but a serf or a slave, and that is a very common feeling in the interior of Alaska.

In addition, Mrs. Gray, a proponent, expressed an awareness of a changed 'feel' of the community due to an increase in new residents as a result of the Fort Greely realignment by stating, "So now there is that sense when you go into the store you don't know everyone, which bothers a lot of long time Deltans" and that, "...the whole feel of the place has changed, but that happens."

The four opponents acknowledged the harsh environment of the region, but they claimed that the self-reliant and independent nature of the residents was evidence that a borough government structure was unnecessary because residents took care of themselves and each other. For example, Mr. Richard said that:

It's not a gravy train; there are very little opportunities here, unless you make them yourself. There is no gravy train here, but your freedom is the gravy train; the freedom you have to make it or not make it and not be unnecessarily burdened with ordinances, regulations, rules and controls that I believe are overdone.

In addition, Mrs. Jones and Mr. Pilot both spoke about how they maintained their own roads and if a resident wanted more services provided, then he or she should move to an incorporated region that already provided them.

Freedom

The theme of ‘freedom’ was discussed by three proponents and four opponents. In discussing ‘freedom’, proponents referred to traditional American ideals about the responsibility that accompanies personal freedoms and rights. In contrast, opponents referred to the preservation of personal freedoms and rights as a traditional American ideal.

The three proponents claimed that the personal freedoms and rights exercised by the regional citizens were done so at the expense of community control over the local schools. For example, Mr. Smith stated:

You know where I'm coming from, and everyone in Alaska comes from somewhere else. Where I'm coming from is, local control of your school, local support of your schools and it is your duty and responsibility to provide that. That starts with the old Act of Massachusetts and it has come across country with us where ever we went. Why does it stop in Alaska? I really feel it stops here a lot because people come here to get away. And what are we getting away from? Some of them are criminals, some of them are getting away from what they see as too much government, and some of them may be right.

The four opponents expressed the belief that in limiting government now they ensured the preservation of freedoms for the future. Mr. Pilot described the region as “the last bastion of real America, where as person can do what they want, when they want, as they want, without any limitations.” And Mr. Richard claimed that, “This is the way America used to be, freedoms, and people either made it they didn’t. And most of us hope to keep it this way.”

Community Division

The theme of ‘community division’ was discussed by three proponents and three opponents. In discussing the theme of ‘community division’, interviewees referred to a

division within the community between residents in Delta Junction and residents in the outlying areas and the associated level of involvement by those groups in ensuring that each particular community's interests were served.

Three proponents stated that there was a division in the community between the residents of Delta Junction and residents of the outlying areas, and they often noted how that distinction reflected how involved residents were in the larger community. Mr. Smith stated that, "We have a whole lot of [outlying] folks who don't contribute much to their community. They are some of the loudest opponents to having this government." Similarly, Mr. Smith claimed that more involvement in the schools would result in more involvement in the community by saying, "I always felt that we would have more community interest in our schools, more involvement in running for office if [all residents] had a direct financial stake in what [the school] did over there."

Three opponents also claimed that there was a division in the community between Delta Junction residents and residents living outside the city limits. And like the proponents, opponents claimed the foundation of that division was based on the level or type of involvement in the community. However, the opponents claimed that community involvement was dictated by city residents and residents of the outlying region were not permitted to be as active as city residents. Mr. Story stated that, "the people in the outer areas really don't have a decision on what goes on...some of the city members pay attention and try to accommodate everyone, but some of them say 'I don't care, you're not in the city'." Thus, opponents did not perceive that the interests of the residents in the outlying region were addressed to the same degree as the interests of the residents of the city of Delta Junction.

Local Economic Situation

The theme of the 'local economic situation' was discussed by four interviewees, three proponents and one opponent. In expressing the 'local economic situation', interviewees referred to the presence or absence of a diversified local economy.

Three proponents claimed that the local economy was more diversified than it had previously been and that the current economic diversity provided stability and was sufficient to supply the funds necessary to operate the proposed borough. Mrs. Gray argued that the region had a:

...more diverse economy than we [had] 40 years ago, so that we don't have the one thing that could make or break our economy...I think we are a little more solid now...We're a different, more mature community. It's time we moved into the mode of taking responsibility and having more say in how our community is run.

Another proponent, Mr. Zuck, conceded that, "any place is going to have ups and downs, but I see the economy here more diversified now than it ever was."

In contrast, one opponent stated that the local economy was neither diversified nor stable. Mrs. Jones expressed concern over the rising price in fuel and the impact that was having on the local tourism economy. She went on to state, "My take on all this is we don't and won't have the [economy] to support a borough that huge..."

Capacity

The theme of capacity was discussed by one proponent. In discussing 'capacity', he argued that local citizens had the ability to recognize when the interests of the community at large were not being considered and would intervene. Mr. Zuck claimed that, "It's not rocket science to run a small government. Americans are intelligent people and you've got to be practical. There's a lot of intelligent, practical people around

here...That is why there has got to be people out there who will say ‘you are fooling the public, you are not telling the truth’”, and he expressed the belief that residents of the Deltana region could and would voice concern over unmet needs to the borough government.

Summary of Results in Relation to ‘Proponents’ and ‘Opponents’

Proponents

To justify support of the proposed borough, most proponents discussed nine of the ten themes, and one even discussed all 10 themes. In discussing the theme of ‘representation’ proponents expressed support for borough incorporation because of: the associated increase in financial resources that would accompany the increase in representation, the opportunity for all regional residents to vote, and the opportunity for all regional residents to run for political office. In discussing the theme of public services, proponents expressed a strong desire to gain legal and financial control of the local schools, and to a lesser extent, to improve or expand road maintenance and maintain the current operation of the public library.

When discussing the theme of taxation, proponents emphasized the significant revenue that could be generated through the PILT agreement with Pogo Mine, but only if a borough structure existed. Proponents also assessed government in beneficial terms because of its ability to ‘make life better’. While they acknowledged the existence of corruption, they expressed optimism that local and regional level governments could provide the opportunity for citizens to limit or control that corruption. Proponents discussed the theme of external pressure as a significant “push” to incorporate. They claimed that pressure had been exerted on the region from both the neighboring

Fairbanks North Star borough as well as from state legislators to extract taxes from the Pogo Mine and/or contribute to the funding of local schools.

Proponents expressed the theme of community identity in acknowledging how the “independent and feisty” character of the residents and the community had been an argument used by the opposition to block incorporation. One proponent did express the belief that the residents of the community were changing, which could impact the identity of the community. Proponents also mentioned the division between city residents and those residing outside the city limits and how that division affected the level of community participation and would be mitigated through incorporation. The theme of freedom was discussed by proponents as freedom with the accompanying responsibilities for the collective well-being of the community, specifically with regard to the local schools.

The theme of the local economic situation was expressed by some proponents who argued that the region now had sufficient and stable economic diversity which could support the borough structure. Finally, capacity was discussed by one proponent who claimed that local residents possessed the ability to demand accountability of local politicians for the interests of the community.

Opponents

In contrast to proponents, the four opponents generally discussed fewer of the 10 themes. Two opponents discussed nine of the 10 themes, while two opponents discussed seven or eight of the 10 themes. Opponents said that they were currently satisfied with the unincorporated representative system of government already in place and perceived the opportunity to vote or run for office at the local level as a “burden or chore.”

Opponents also saw the provision of public services as adequate and believed individuals that thought the schools would be better off being funded locally than funded by the state were mistaken. In addition, opponents saw road maintenance as more of an individual or neighborhood responsibility and seemed content to have it that way.

In discussing taxation, opponents expressed concern over the adequacy and sustainability of the proposed budget for the borough, as well as whether the city had the legal authority to draft a PILT agreement with Pogo Mine to provide six out of every seven dollars necessary for funding the borough. In addition, proponents expressed concern that property taxes would be inevitable once incorporation occurred and both proponents and opponents claimed that the majority of Deltana resident had an aversion to a property tax.

Opponents assessed government as detrimental by citing a long history of state level corruption as well as the malevolent nature of the overall institution. However, they also claimed that statements made at the state level by current and previous Governors that the community would not face annexation or mandated incorporation mitigated the threat and associated fear of external control. Instead, opponents perceived the proposed borough structure as allowing external forces to gain legitimate control over local or personal decisions.

Opponents argued that the community's identity based on self-reliance and independence demonstrated the lack of a need for a regional government structure to provide services. They expressed the theme of freedom in opposing the incorporation by claiming that limiting government now would ensure them freedom in the future. Opponents described community division as the current dynamic wherein the Delta

Junction city government dictates the type and level of involvement of residents living outside the city limits when city decisions are made, regardless of the impact the decision may have on the entire regional community. Opponents claimed that this dynamic led to the lack of inclusion of all regional residents in the incorporation process of the proposed borough. Opponents also claimed the local economic situation was unstable and lacked the necessary diversity to support the geographic size of the proposed borough.

Conclusion

Overall, 10 themes were found to characterize interviewees' support or opposition to the proposed incorporation. The themes of representation, public services, taxation, assessment of government, and external forces all related to how interviewees positively or negatively viewed local government and its ability to provide (or not provide) for citizens' needs and whether borough incorporation was necessary for area residents. All eight of the interviewees referred to the unique rural Alaskan cultural identity and how that identity provided cultural context in understanding local opposition to incorporation. To a lesser degree, interviewees emphasized the value of freedom, the impact of community division, the local economy of the community, and the capacity of residents to ensure community needs are met by government. In Chapter Six, I interpret these key findings in the context of rural restructuring and devolution in the Deltana region and an interpretative framework for understanding leaders' positions.

CHAPTER SIX- INTERPRETATIONS & CONCLUSIONS

The research question that guided this exploratory study was how community leaders perceived borough incorporation, and whether these perceptions reflect a community response to the process of rural restructuring and devolution that the Deltana region arguably has been experiencing in recent years. Specifically, my research question, as framed in the context of my literature review was the degree to which community leaders supported or opposed the proposed borough incorporation due to self-interests or community interests. This study builds on the limited previous literature that addresses differences between community leaders with regard to community development (Richards & Brod 2004) and the need to include informal, non-elected leaders in the definition of ‘community leader’ (Connelly & Knuth 2002; Kamieniecki 1978).

I have provided a description of the themes that were expressed by community leaders in explaining their support or opposition to borough incorporation in the Deltana region. The typology that I created categorized leaders as either ‘proponents’ or ‘opponents’. In this chapter, I interpret the degree to which interviewees’ support or opposition to borough incorporation reflects self interests or community interests and conclude with an interpretative framework that further develops an understanding of leaders’ positions on the proposed borough incorporation in Delta Junction, Alaska.

Interpretations

Proponents

Proponents generally expressed themes and dimensions conveying a concern for, and interest in, the community at large. However, a few themes and dimensions

suggested that proponents also considered their personal interests in supporting the proposed borough incorporation.

Community Interests, Collective Identity

Proponents spoke about how borough incorporation would provide all citizens of the region with the opportunity to vote and/or run for office and allow everyone equal say in the activities of the local government. Proponents also expressed community interests in noting how they valued local control over funding. Some spoke about how borough incorporation would provide an opportunity for the Deltana community as a whole to make decisions regarding the level of school funding and the allocation of that funding.

Proponents also discussed the potential revenue that could be generated from the Pogo Mine, supporting the structural functionalist perspective that leaders focus on economic development and place economic opportunity as a top priority (Richards & Brod 2004). By taking advantage of the potential revenue from the Pogo Mine, all Deltana regional residents would be relieved of having to fund a significant portion of the borough budget. Proponents also claimed that the proposed borough incorporation could assuage the division between the residents of the city of Delta Junction and the surrounding unincorporated area and mitigate the current polarization in the regional community. All of these benefits relate to community interests.

Proponents offered a positive outlook on the proposed borough incorporation in discussing how the current local economy was diverse and stable enough to support the proposed borough. They perceived the economic well-being of the region as supporting the political well-being of the region as well. They saw the economy as 'mature' enough to support the borough structure, and hence they discussed an accompanying level of

‘community maturity’. This theoretical connection between the economic maturity and the community maturity supports placing proponents within the traditional structural functionalist framework.

Potential Self-Interest

Some community interests expressed by proponents could also be interpreted as potential self-interest. For example, proponents claimed that the role of government was to make life better. This claim assumes that the community at large would benefit from borough incorporation. However, if the newly formed borough is controlled by assembly members that had previously functioned as city council members, the borough would only serve to perpetuate the existing division within the community and the self interests of these leaders as suggested by the Growth Matching theory (Warner & Molotch 1995; Molotch 1976).

Proponents argued that incorporation would protect the region against external forces. However, incorporation would also increase the power of the local politicians at the state level by increasing not only their geographic realm of influence in the new Deltana borough, but also elevate the status that they have in the hierarchy of the overall government by elevating them as elected representatives from city level officials to regional borough level officials, thus shoring up these individuals’ status as community elites. Opponents proposed that this change could arguably lead to pursuing self interests through abuses of position and corruption.

Proponents also argued that the increased financial resources available to the new local borough through incorporation could allow for better service provision and a more responsive local government. However, access to these increased resources could also

permit formal community leaders to pursue self interest by engaging in local corruption or inappropriate use of discretionary funds. Opponents expressed a belief that as government expands, so too does the opportunity to be corrupted.

In summary, interviews with proponents explicitly reflect a structural functionalist perspective regarding the role of leaders to assure community interests, which are seen as economic interests (Richards & Brod 2004). However, interviews with leaders also implicitly indicate self interests and the Growth Machine perspective that leaders seek to protect their own interests and capitalize on growth for personal political or economic gains (Warner & Molotch 1995).

Opponents

In contrast to proponents, interviews with opponents generally reflected themes and dimensions of themes that often related to self interest. However, opponents also considered the interests of the community at large. Much the existing theoretical literature regarding community leaders focuses on explanations for support of development, offering little insight into explanations for opposition to development. The general orientation of self-interests or community-interests as motivating forces can be helpful, but may not fully reveal the basis behind an individuals' position on borough incorporation.

Self-Interest, Individualism

Most of the themes expressed by opponents either related to the impacts that incorporation would or could have on individual residents, or the general lack of individuals' need for a borough structure. Presumably their focus on individual needs reflected their own self-interests as residents as well as leaders. For instance, opponents

expressed satisfaction with the current system of representation and claimed that the Deltana region did not require borough representation because residents could directly contact a state legislator to express concern over an issue.

Opponents also perceived incorporation as a threat to personal freedom. For example, borough service provision was seen as undermining the self-reliant and independent identity of residents and such services could and should be provided by residents, not by a government agency. Hence, opponents perceived their own self interests as being served by retaining their identity, which is based on performing acts such as self provision.

In addition, the state funded public schools were seen as being sufficient thus far and though locally funded schools would mean local control, it would be at the literal expense of individual residents; self interests were served by not paying taxes. An extension of that belief was a concern regarding the source of funds. Opponents saw the proposed borough as inevitably leading to unavoidable property tax on them as individuals.

Opponents to the incorporation also expressed that the economy of the Deltana region lacks diversity. In addition, the industries that are present in the region are highly unstable. Thus, opponents claimed that when those few ‘boom-bust’ industries began to decline, as they historically have fluctuated, individual residents would be responsible to compensate for the economic shortfall in the budget.

A number of opponents also conveyed the belief that any government organization represented a malevolent institution that stripped the rights of individuals in the name of the collective welfare. Hence, the borough, one embodiment of a

governmental organization, was opposed by individuals based on this irreconcilable belief regarding government and the position held by opponents that personal freedoms are non-negotiable. Thus by opposing incorporation, opponents' sought to satisfy their self-interests, not by improving their economic or political position within the community, but instead, protect their personal rights and freedoms.

Community Interests

However, opponents also expressed community interests by expressing the desire to minimize the division within the community at large and to protect the identity of the community. In addition, opponents were concerned about retaining the identity of the community at large, and viewed the proposed borough as a threat to the identity.

Incorporation as a Response to Rural Restructuring and Devolution in Alaska

Given the impacts of rural restructuring and devolution in the state of Alaska and specifically in the Deltana region, these findings reflect a culturally and historically-based context for understanding opinions of leaders in supporting or opposing the proposed incorporation. As argued in Chapter Three, the state of Alaska has been experiencing rural restructuring in recent decades with the associated impacts of increased mineral and petroleum extraction since the Trans-Alaska Pipeline began, as well as increased expansion of tourism and the telecommunication infrastructure. In the Deltana region, rural restructuring has involved expansions in extractive industries, tourism/service sector, educational attainment, and a regional population that is on average younger than elsewhere in rural Alaska..

Restructuring and Devolution as Context for ‘Future Oriented’ versus ‘Historically Grounded’ Framework

These regional restructuring changes could be interpreted very differently by different community leaders. The findings of this study indicate that proponents are primarily oriented toward the future economic and political potential resulting from the shifts in economy, education and demographic composition of the region. Devolution, taking the form of incorporation, is perceived as an opportune means of capitalizing on that restructuring.

Conversely, opponents argue that the restructuring of the local economy and demographics of the region, indicate that neither the economy, nor the community, is stable enough to support an incorporated borough. In addition, devolution, when viewed within the historic pattern of mandated incorporation, offers little appeal to leaders. Hence, leaders’ perceptions of rural restructuring and their opinions of devolution in the form of incorporation are viewed as either opportunities for the future or challenges to the past can be understood in terms of their individual value systems.

Future Oriented Proponents

Given previous findings that formal leaders’ positions in a community produce a greater focus on the economic well-being of the community (Richards & Brod 2004; Spies et al. 1998) and the increased access that leaders have to information (Richards & Brod 2004; Flynn et al. 1994), proponents may see the impacts of regional restructuring as presenting economic opportunities that an incorporated borough would be able to access or develop. Thus, proponents arguably focused on the potential future community development opportunities for the Deltana region.

For example, proponents discussed equal representation for all regional citizens. This desire to increase the representativeness of the government structure could be due to their recognizing that the demographics of the region were changing, as discussed earlier. This younger population could not only vote, but also hold political office over a long period of time. Younger voters could also arguably provide an injection of enthusiasm into the local political system.

The increase in prevalence and duration of distance learning educational attainment by local residents could also indicate that education is increasing in importance for regional citizens. This shift could lead proponents to assume that the community needed to increase support and responsibility for the local schools. Proponents may also perceive local control over the schools as a means of encouraging residents to attend school locally, versus attaining on-line education. With local control decisions regarding extra-curricular activities, school equipment, supplies and some curriculum choices could be made at the local level, providing an education that was catered more to the local residents. In addition, local control of the schools would allow the Deltana community to make decisions regarding future development of facilities and optional programs.

Proponents saw the potential revenue that the nearby Pogo Mine offered as a promising source of income for the borough structure. Given the priority that leaders have for the fiscal responsibility of a community (Richards & Brod 2004; Murdock et al. 1991; Spies et al. 1998), the willingness of the owners of Pogo Mine to enter into a PILT agreement with Delta Junction may be perceived by proponents as an auspicious economic opportunity that warranted political action, taken in the form of borough

incorporation. In addition to the auspicious economic opportunity that Pogo Mine presents, incorporation is seen as potentially unifying the regional residents that had been divided for some time. Incorporation would unify everyone into one overarching 'borough community'.

The relative younger population in the area, development of the Pogo Mine, the expansion of Fort Greely, the potential expansion of the railroad and accompanying tourism, and the increase in educational attainment support proponents' perceptions of a diverse and diversifying local economy. A borough government could potentially provide local control over current and future development in the region. Thus, proponents may perceive the proposed borough incorporation structure as shifting the role of local government from purely a service provider to that of a community advocate (Woods 1998). This shift in the role of local government would also support one proponent's claim that the community is more 'mature', and thus the role of government can mature as well.

All of these justifications for support of the proposed incorporation are oriented towards political, economic and educational potential that a borough would be able to access or develop for the region. Hence, proponents generally reflected an orientation toward the future and the potential that the borough held for the region and the local government. In contrast to the future orientation of proponents, opponents generally reflected a historical orientation.

Historically Grounded Opponents

Opponents do not perceive the regional expansion of the extractive and service/tourism industries as providing stability for the local economy. They also do not

perceive the local increase in educational attainment as improving the ability of the region to retain a local workforce, but instead emphasized the rural 'brain drain' that many rural communities face. Unlike proponents, opponents perceived the increased educational attainment by local residents as a means by which residents could improve their employment opportunities outside the Deltana region, thus legitimizing their concern over rural 'brain drain'. And finally, they see the significant increase in the regional population due to Fort Greely personnel as transient and the Fort Greely population as not connected to the community.

Opponents to the incorporation discussed the lack of sustainable economic options in the region. They perceive the nearby Pogo Mine as not lasting beyond 20 years and emphasized that Fort Greely has had a history of realignment and closures. These two historically unstable revenue generators coupled with the promotion and development of the perceived weak tourism/service sector were given as reasons for opponents' fears about the likely need to assess a property tax for the continued economic support of the borough

In addition to opponents' perceptions of a lack of proposed benefits of the borough, opponents' social constructions of their Alaskan identity were directly threatened by the proposed borough incorporation. Opponents defined themselves in terms of being self-reliant and independent, characteristics that would be threatened by an institutionalized borough that provided for citizens. Thus, they saw residents who had expressed a desire to have those services provided for them by the new borough as not historically or culturally grounded in the self-reliant and independent values of the Deltana region.

Opponents defined themselves and the region in historically and culturally distinct terms. Hence, their identity, which was based on their ability to provide for themselves and their families and aid their neighbor, would be directly threatened by incorporating into a borough. Thus, opponents were concerned about individual interests, and justified borough opposition in terms of historical and cultural factors rather than future opportunities.

Limitations of the Study

The first limitation of this study was that I only explored the perceptions of borough incorporation held by community leaders. Although the perceptions of community leaders play an important role in the public dialogue, previous research has shown that community leaders do not always reflect residents' perceptions regarding community development (Richards & Brod 2004; Connelly & Knuth 2002). Hence, leader opinions on the proposed borough incorporation do not necessarily reflect those of Deltana residents. Although the Deltana region has a population of only 5760, another limitation of this study was the small number of participants interviewed. Only eight community members were interviewed. Despite purposive and snowball sampling, this group may not include all 'community leaders' and thus limit the generalizability of the results and conclusions.

Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore the opinions regarding the proposed borough incorporation of formal and informal community leaders in Delta Junction, Alaska and whether those opinions reflect the findings of previous research that leaders are motivated by either self-interests or community interests. The findings of my

research indicate that leaders, both proponents and opponents, express both self- and community-interests either explicitly or implicitly in their opinions on borough incorporation. What more clearly distinguishes proponents from opponents is arguably their value orientations as either 'future focused' or 'historically grounded'. The 'future focused' or 'historically grounded' framework supplements the existing framework of 'self-interest' or 'community-interest' that is commonly attributed to describe motivations of leaders.

The Future

The vote of whether to incorporate the region as a first class borough was put to the citizens of the Deltana region in August of 2007, after I conducted my interviews. The proposed borough was summarily rejected. Roughly 50% of the voters turned out to vote, and 90% of them rejected the proposed borough incorporation (City of Delta Junction 2007). The vote definitively reflects the community perception of borough incorporation as undesirable at this time. Given the external pressure placed on the region, the historical precedent of incorporation campaigns, and the promoted benefits of borough incorporation, this issue may arise again in the future.

The results from the public vote reflects residents' support of or alignment with, the sentiments expressed by 'opponents'. In addition, the results of this public vote support the literature that leaders are not homogenous, and may not necessarily reflect citizens' opinions regarding community development.

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Appendix A. Map of state of Alaska with Delta Junction highlighted.



Source: City of Delta Junction website (<http://www.ci.delta-junction.ak.us/community/maps.htm>)

Appendix B- Introduction to Research and Informed Consent Form

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I am a masters student at The University of Montana in Missoula, Montana. I am presently working on research for my thesis. I am studying the perceived impacts of incorporation by community leaders in the greater Delta Junction area. I am further interested in how those perceived impacts affect community leaders' decisions to support or oppose incorporation.

This interview should last about one hour and will be taped. If you feel uncomfortable with any questions, you may skip over them. Or if you feel uncomfortable with the interview itself, you may stop at any time without consequence.

Your identity will be kept anonymous and everything you say will be kept confidential. After the interview I will transcribe our words, disguising any identifiable characteristics. Upon completion of my thesis, I will erase all contents of the tape and all of my notes.

It is unlikely that you will experience any injury due to this interview, but if you do, you may be entitled to compensation for your injuries. There are more specific details about this in the informed consent form.

Thank you again for your willingness to participate in this research. Your involvement will help me to establish the issues of concern for rural Alaskan community leaders regarding incorporation and hopefully aid community leaders of similarly situated communities.

Do you have any questions about this interview or about my research? If not, then please read and sign the informed consent form. Because this form has your name on it, it will be kept in a locked secure box away from all other data and materials related to this research.

Title: Local Government Incorporation and Rural Restructuring: A Case Study of the Proposed Deltana Borough in Alaska

Investigator: Michelle Johnson
Department of Sociology
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59801 U.S.A.
Phone: 406-721-3687
Email: michelle.johnson@umontana.edu

Special instructions to the potential subject: This consent form may contain words that are new to you or you are unfamiliar with. If any of the words are unclear to you, please ask me to explain them to you.

PURPOSE: (This statement will be read to the participants and questions regarding the research will be addressed.) You are being asked to participate in a research project investigating the anticipated social and economic impacts of incorporation of this area. You have been selected because you have been identified as a community leader. You have been identified as a leader because of your political position, business position or because community members have recognized you as such. The purpose of this study is to better understand how leaders perceive the potential impacts of incorporation.

PROCEDURE: The study will include a taped interview of approximately one hour in length.

RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: If any of the questions asked make you feel upset, sad or uncomfortable, you may choose to stop answering the question, skip a question, or end the interview at any time.

BENEFITS: Your participation in this research will improve community understanding of the perceived impacts of incorporation. The findings of this research may be passed onto other communities in Alaska that presently are unincorporated but may also consider incorporation.

CONFIDENTIALITY: The data collected in this interview/study will be kept confidential; only the researcher and trained research assistant will have access to the data. All identities of participants will be kept confidential, and only the researcher will have access. For any reports produced, any identifying characteristics will be changed to protect the participants' identities. The data will be stored in a locked and secure place. Your signed consent form will be stored similarly, but separately from the data. The audiotape of the interview will be transcribed without any information that could identify you. The tape will then be erased.

COMPENSATION FOR INJURY: Although injury is unlikely to occur as a result of this interview, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms:

“In the event that you are injured as a result of this research, you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the

Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's claims representative or University Legal Counsel."

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION/WITHDRAWAL: Your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw at any time without consequence. You may decline to answer any question without consequence.

QUESTIONS: If you have any future questions about the research, please contact me at 1-406-721-3687, michelle.johnson@umontana.edu, or at the address listed above. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chair of the Institutional Review Board through the University of Montana Research Office at 1-406-243-6670.

SUBJECT'S STATEMENT OF CONSENT: I have read the description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will also be answered by the researcher. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study and understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.

PRINTED NAME OF SUBJECT _____

SUBJECT'S SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

STATEMENT OF CONSENT FOR AUDIO TAPING

SUBJECT'S STATEMENT OF CONSENT: I voluntarily agree to allow the interview to be audio recorded.

SUBJECT'S SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

Appendix C- Interview Guide

Questionnaire

Title: Local Government Incorporation and Rural Restructuring: A Study of the Proposed Deltana Borough in Alaska

Investigator: Michelle Johnson
Department of Sociology
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59801 U.S.A.
Phone: 406-721-3687
Email: michelle.johnson@umontana.edu

Researcher will explain and introduce topic of interview:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As previously explained, I am a graduate student at The University of Montana and am studying the anticipated impacts of incorporation. I am going to ask you a series of questions related to your understanding of the impacts of incorporation and how that has led to your opinion to either support or oppose the proposed incorporation of the Deltana Area. I would appreciate as much honesty and information as you would be willing to give me.

1. To begin, how would you describe your role within the community?
Probe: Why do you think you were identified as a community leader?
Probe: Who within the community do you represent?
2. What do you perceive to be the *economic* impacts of the proposed incorporation?
Probe: How would this transition economically impact you personally?
Probe: How do you believe this transition would impact the community as a whole?
3. What do you perceive to be the *social* impacts of the proposed incorporation?
Probe: What changes, if any, do you expect in the local government due to the proposed incorporation?
Probe: How do you expect the services that have previously been provided by the state to change due to the proposed incorporation?
Probe: Do you believe the level and quality of services will remain the same?
4. Finally, what factors influenced you in either supporting or opposing the proposed incorporation?
Probe: How do you believe those issues are perceived by the rest of the community?