

# THE SELECT FEW: IMMIGRANT INTERMEDIARIES AND IMMIGRANT POLITICAL INCORPORATION

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## **ABSTRACT**

In new immigrant destinations, relatively few individuals possess the bilingual, bicultural skills necessary to connect immigrants with other local residents. As a result, intermediaries – co-ethnic individuals that facilitate communication between immigrants and non-immigrants – take on disproportionate influence in local networks. Though it is not unusual to have select individuals play influential roles, democratic societies generally aim to arrange institutions so that these leaders are accountable to those they claim to represent. Ideally, an immigrant intermediary effectively connects immigrants with non-immigrants and is accountable to immigrants' interests. In this paper, I argue that the ways in which intermediaries emerge affect the extent to which they approximate this ideal. Careful attention to intermediary selection is warranted, since intermediaries shape the tenor of local inter-group relations, which in turn shapes on-going processes of immigrant political incorporation. Drawing on interviews and observation in four new immigrant destinations in the United States, I first describe why intermediaries are a common feature across these sites and offer examples of the roles they play. Next, I identify four categories of intermediaries distinguished by how they emerge, whether selected by local elites, selected by immigrants, self-selected, or elected. I then explain how these methods of selection influence political incorporation by shaping local inter-group relations.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In new immigrant destinations, places that until recently have not been home to foreign-born populations for at least a century, information about immigrant newcomers is constrained by linguistic and cultural barriers. Relatively few individuals possess the bilingual, bicultural skills necessary to connect immigrants with other local residents. By nature of their unique position in local networks, intermediaries, co-ethnic individuals that facilitate communication between immigrants and non-immigrants, take on disproportionate influence as local information sources. As with other sources of political information, the counsel an immigrant intermediary provides is inevitably biased by the intermediary's perspective. No single intermediary can accurately convey the range of diverse interests among local immigrants. While it is not unusual to have select individuals play influential roles in shaping local opinions, democratic societies generally aim to arrange institutions so that leaders are accountable to those they claim to represent. Ideally, an immigrant intermediary effectively connects with both Anglos and immigrants and provides information to Anglos that is acceptable to most immigrants.<sup>1</sup> In this paper, I argue that the ways in which intermediaries emerge affect the extent to which they approximate this ideal. Careful attention to intermediary selection is warranted, since intermediaries shape the tenor of local inter-group relations, which in turn shapes on-going processes of immigrant political incorporation.

Drawing on interviews and observation in four new immigrant destinations in the United States, I first describe why intermediaries are a common feature across these sites and offer examples of the roles they play. Next, I identify four categories of intermediaries distinguished by how they emerge, whether selected by Anglo elites, selected by immigrants, self-selected, or elected. I then explain how these methods of selection affect inter-group relations. While Anglo officials often overlook immigrant heterogeneity in identifying intermediaries, proactive attempts to incorporate intermediaries can nonetheless assist in developing cooperative relations with some portion of the

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term "Anglo" to refer to those individuals who are not members of the relevant immigrant ethnic group in each destination. Since the cities I study are composed almost entirely of non-Hispanic whites and one immigrant ethnic group, Anglo generally refers to non-immigrant, non-Hispanic whites, though it may include a handful non-immigrant African-Americans or others. Where these distinctions are relevant, I will be more specific. In most cases, however, the term "Anglo" is a useful, non-racial shorthand for non-immigrant, non-co-ethnics. For this reason, it is also commonly used by residents of new destinations.

immigrant population. Failure to incorporate intermediaries can create a vacuum in which self-selected intermediaries emerge and use adversarial approaches to gain recognition, setting an oppositional tone to inter-group relations. Ideally, by developing systems through which immigrants identify intermediaries for Anglo appointments, localities ensure that intermediaries are connected and accountable to the immigrants they represent. Before turning to my methods and findings, I first situate my investigation in the broader literature on how contextual and institutional mechanisms shape immigrant political incorporation.

## **POLITICAL SCIENCE AND IMMIGRANT INCORPORATION**

I draw the term “intermediary” from Robert Huckfeldt and Paul Allen Beck (1994), who argue that political outcomes can only be understood by examining the interaction of individual characteristics with “intermediation environments.” In their account, individuals receive political information through intermediary channels that include discussion networks, organizations, and media outlets. While a growing body of political science literature considers how contexts influence political outcomes (Huckfeldt & Sprague 1995, Huckfeldt, Johnson, & Sprague 2004, Gay 2004, Campbell 2006), these insights have yet to be fully applied to the study of immigrant political incorporation.

Existing studies focus primarily on how individual immigrant characteristics predict naturalization and electoral behavior (e.g. Ramakrishnan 2005). Another branch of the literature offers evidence on how immigrants fit into racial and ethnic politics in urban settings (e.g. Browning, Marshall & Tabb 2003). The first two strains in the immigrant political incorporation literature have contributed to our understanding of the factors that predict immigrant political participation and the phenomena associated with immigrant political activity. Lost in between the factors and phenomena, however, are the *processes* of immigrant political incorporation (Rogers 2006, Landolt 2008). A more complete explanation of political incorporation would account for how the characteristics of immigrants and the receiving society interact over time to shape how immigrants and their children become a part of the political system. Understanding contemporary immigrant incorporation requires an examination of how individual, contextual, and institutional factors shape on-going incorporation.

An emerging third category of immigrant political incorporation literature has taken up this task by looking beyond individual behavior and specific urban coalitions to examine the role of

institutions in channeling incorporation over time and across settings (Jones-Correa 2002, Anderson and Wintringham 2003, Bloemraad 2006, Wong 2006, Rogers 2006, Ramakrishnan & Bloemraad 2008). While such a focus is relatively new in the U.S. context, European scholars of immigrant incorporation have long used a “political opportunity structure” lens to analyze how institutional configurations shape the development and mobilization of immigrant organizations (Ireland 1994, Koopmans & Statham 2000). My approach to studying immigrant intermediary identification in new destinations builds on this approach.

In addition, it addresses the relative dearth of literature on U.S. local government responses to immigration (Ramakrishnan & Lewis 2005, Harwood & Myers 2002, Norris-Tirrell 2002). Many decisions about how immigrants fit into U.S. society are devolved to the local level. Local leaders cannot directly control whether immigrants settle in their communities, yet they largely bear the costs of serving immigrant populations (Smith and Edmontson 1997). Given sustained immigrant flows, dispersal to new destinations, and the failure of comprehensive immigration reform in 2006, states and localities are increasingly passing immigrant-related legislation, regulating matters such as identification documents for immigrants and the use of foreign languages in public life (Fix 2007, Morse *et al.* 2006, Hegen 2007, FIRM 2007a, FIRM 2007b). While a few scholars have started to examine this phenomenon (Hopkins 2007, Ramakrishnan & Wong 2008, Esbenshade 2007), few have considered how local responses shape subsequent immigrant political incorporation.

Moreover, while local immigrant-related ordinances are an important phenomenon to consider, the fact remains that only a small fraction of cities with immigrant populations have proposed such legislation (Esbenshade & Obzurt 2007). For this reason, it is important to look beyond ordinances to other less visible policies and practices that support and restrict immigrant political incorporation. Comparative analyses of the impact of local policy responses on political incorporation are far more common in Europe (Blommaert & Martiniello 1996, Rex & Samad 1996, Boussetta 1997, Garbaya 2005, Hooghe 2005). In fact, a growing literature on Western European integration policies explores the phenomenon of government-sponsored immigrant intermediaries.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, in Spanish Catalonia, since the late 1990s the regional government has endorsed a program of immigrant integration with a prominent role for “intercultural mediators,” typically immigrants hired by local government agencies or NGOs to provide immigrants with access to local services and to assist local governments in negotiating intercultural tensions (Agusti-Panareda 2006). In France and Italy, similar initiatives exist with immigrant intermediaries known as “femmes relais” or “linkworkers” (Agusti-Panareda 2006, Scales-Trent 1999).

To my knowledge, however, no literature has explored the question of intermediary identification on the local level in the United States.<sup>3</sup>

In this paper, I respond to the need for comparative studies of immigrant political incorporation processes at the local level by focusing on the identification and role of immigrant intermediaries in four new immigrant destinations. In the next section, I explain why new immigrant destinations are an ideal place in which to study local processes of immigrant political incorporation and explain my choice of cases and methods.

## **CASE SELECTION AND METHODOLOGY**

New immigrant destinations, which before 1970 had not experienced substantial immigration since at least the early twentieth century, are particularly well suited to the study of immigrant political incorporation processes.<sup>4</sup> While most immigrants remain concentrated in metropolitan areas in certain states, since the late 1980s, immigrants have also dispersed to new areas of the country and to rural and suburban destinations (Singer 2004, Suro & Tafoya 2004, Marrow 2005, Waters & Jiminez 2005). A combination of factors, including federal legislation and economic conditions, combined to push new and existing immigrants away from traditional gateways and pull them toward new destinations.<sup>5</sup> Unlike traditional immigrant gateways, which possess a well-developed infrastructure of immigrant-serving institutions, new destinations often lack even the most basic infrastructure needed to communicate with newcomers (Waters & Jiminez 2005). By virtue of being “new,” these immigrant destinations must develop systems and policies for interacting with immigrants from the ground up.

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<sup>3</sup> Prema Kurien has looked at issues of intermediary legitimacy on the national level in the U.S., asking how certain national ethnic advocacy groups “come to be recognized as the authentic voices of an ethnic community by U.S. policymakers” (Kurien 2007, 760). The literatures on cultural competence and cultural brokers in public health, social work, and education also touch on issues related to immigrant intermediaries (Fandetti & Goldmeier 1988, Martinez-Cosio & Ianncone 2007).

<sup>4</sup> I define new immigrant destinations as places that began experiencing “new” immigration (as distinct from early twentieth century immigration) in 1970 or later. I use 1970 as a delineation point for a couple of reasons. First, it is roughly when the 1965 immigration reform took effect, ushering in the modern era of immigration. Second, if immigrants arrived locally in the 1970s, only in recent years have locally raised second-generation immigrants reached mature adulthood. Although some may consider this definition of “new immigrant destination” too broad, the variation in my cases in terms of when immigrants arrived (from the 1970s-2001) allows me to observe processes over time and to reflect on the role of the passage of time and its effects on incorporation processes.

<sup>5</sup> In 1986, Congress passed the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), which offered 2.3 million undocumented workers amnesty, enabling freedom of movement throughout the country. IRCA also enhanced security at the U.S. border, essentially militarizing high traffic crossings, particularly those in California. In addition to the heightened challenge of entering via California, the state was suffering from a protracted recession that reduced employment opportunities and increased anti-immigrant sentiment (Durand *et al.* 2005). Meanwhile, the Midwest and the South have experienced rates of economic growth over this period that outpaced the rest of the nation (Johnson *et al.* 1999, Duchon & Murphy 2001). Case studies suggest that the availability of jobs plays a major role in attracting migrants to new destinations, but that other issues are also important. Some refugees and immigrants report the attraction of raising their children in the more tranquil environment of smaller towns (Fennelly 2005, Zuniga & Hernandez-Leon 2001, Valentine 2005, Schaid & Grossman 2003, Williamson 2004).

Comparative studies of new immigrant destinations present the opportunity to generate theories of immigrant political incorporation for the twenty-first century. Yet while case studies of new immigrant destinations have proliferated, very few scholars have made comparisons across destinations. In part as a result, Waters & Jiminez (2005) write that most of the scholarship on new immigrant destinations continues to be, “divorced from broader theoretical debates on immigration and assimilation.” Recently, a few scholars have sought to correct this gap in the literature, making comparisons across new destinations (Jones-Correa 2006a, Jones-Correa 2006b, Marrow 2007, Deufel 2006, Anderson 2008). This paper follows their example, drawing on four comparative case studies.

Between 2003 and 2008, I conducted interviews and observation in four new immigrant destinations: Elgin, Illinois; Lewiston, Maine; Wausau, Wisconsin; and Yakima, Washington. The cities are similar in terms of their small to medium size, ranging from 37,000 to just over 100,000 residents in 2007. Prior to 1980, each city was home to mostly non-Hispanic whites, which made up between 87 and 99 percent of the local population. Since then, each city has experienced relatively rapid ethnic diversification, through the in-migration of refugees or Latino immigrants. As of 2007, the relevant incoming ethnic group in each city ranged from 7 to 44 percent of the local population.

Table 1 below compares the demographic change patterns across the four cities from 1970-2007. As it displays, Elgin and Yakima are home to rapidly expanding Latino populations, while Lewiston and Wausau are home to Somali and Hmong refugees, respectively. In Yakima, a city of 85,000 located in central Washington state, the Latino population has grown from less than five percent of the city’s population in 1980 to constitute 39 percent of city residents in 2007. Immigrants in Yakima are mostly former migrant farm workers from central Mexico who have settled since the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. In Elgin, a city of 104,000 located 45 minutes due west of Chicago, ethnic demographic trends are similar. Mexican immigrants were drawn to Elgin beginning in the late 1970s due to the availability of low-cost housing and proximity to jobs. In 2007, Latinos made up 44 percent of Elgin’s population. Elgin and Yakima are representative of many new immigrant destinations that have attracted Latinos in recent years, with Elgin representing the suburban side of the equation and Yakima representing the rural side.

Lewiston and Wausau, on the other hand, are new refugee destinations. Wausau, a city of 37,000 in north central Wisconsin, became a resettlement site for Hmong refugees beginning in the late 1970s. Since then, the Hmong population has grown through additional refugee resettlement as recent as 2005, as well as through “secondary migration,” the movement of refugees from their original resettlement sites to other locations they choose. Today, Asians comprise 10 percent of Wausau’s population. In Lewiston, a city of 38,000 located 45 minutes north of Portland, Maine, Somali secondary migrants

**Table 1. Ethnic Demographic Trends in Case Study Cities<sup>6</sup>**

	ELGIN, ILLINOIS			YAKIMA, WASHINGTON			LEWISTON, MAINE			WAUSAU, WISCONSIN		
<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>#</b>		<b>% Change</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Change</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>% Change</b>
1970	55,691	-		45,588	-		41,779	-		32,806	-	
1980	63,798	-	14.56%	49,826	-	9.30%	40,481	-	-3.11%	32,426	-	-1.16%
1990	77,010	-	20.71%	71,845	-	44.19%	39,757	-	-1.79%	37,060	-	14.29%
2000	93,895	-	21.93%	72,294	-	0.62%	35,690	-	-10.23%	38,404	-	3.63%
2007 (ACS)	103,607	-	10.34%	85,226	-	13.59%	37,807	-	5.93%	36,976	-	-3.72%
<b>WHITE</b>												
1970	51,472	92.42%		42,155	92.47%		39,585	94.75%		31,756	96.80%	
1980	56,084	87.91%	8.96%	44,718	89.75%	6.08%	40,222	99.36%	1.61%	31,943	98.51%	0.59%
1990	54,564	70.85%	-2.71%	42,967	59.81%	-3.92%	38,831	97.67%	-3.46%	34,481	93.04%	7.95%
2000	50,982	54.30%	-6.56%	43,325	59.93%	0.83%	33,896	94.97%	-12.71%	32,945	85.79%	-4.45%
2007 (ACS)	42,686	41.20%	-16.27%	47,649	55.40%	5.00%	30,996	81.98%	-8.56%	32,211	87.11%	-2.23%
<b>FOREIGN-BORN</b>												
1970	2,485	4.46%		1,818	3.99%		4,084	9.78%		495	1.51%	
1980	4,353	6.82%	75.17%	2,411	4.84%	32.62%	3,450	8.52%	-15.52%	523	1.61%	5.66%
1990	9,909	12.87%	298.75%	4,844	6.74%	166.45%	2,254	5.67%	-44.81%	1,920	5.18%	287.88%
2000	22,258	23.71%	124.62%	12,590	17.41%	159.91%	1,338	3.75%	-40.64%	3,209	8.36%	67.14%
2007 (ACS)	30,152	29.10%	35.47%	13,541	16.49%	7.55%	2,251	5.95%	68.24%	2,353	6.36%	-26.67%
<b>IMMIGRANT-GROUP</b>												
		<b>(Hispanic)</b>			<b>(Hispanic)</b>			<b>(Black)</b>			<b>(Asian)</b>	
1970	2,933	5.27%		1,348	2.96%		46	0.11%				
1980	6,529	10.23%	122.60%	2,296	4.61%	70.33%	116	0.29%	60.34%	49	0.15%	
1990	<b>14,201</b>	<b>18.44%</b>	<b>117.51%</b>	<b>8,700</b>	<b>12.11%</b>	<b>278.92%</b>	267	0.67%	56.55%	<b>2,210</b>	<b>5.96%</b>	<b>4410.20%</b>
2000	31,926	34.00%	124.82%	24,418	33.78%	180.67%	383	1.07%	43.45%	4,181	10.89%	89.19%
2007 (ACS)	45,587	44.00%	42.79%	32,302	38.90%	30.82%	<b>2,382</b>	<b>6.30%</b>	<b>521.93%</b>	3,624	9.80%	-13.32%

Source: U.S. Census 1970-2000, American Community Survey 2007

<sup>6</sup> Table 1 provides the most recent data available based on the American Community Survey (ACS), supplemented by 2000 U.S. Census data, which provides more ethnicity-specific, place-based detail. The ACS estimates local population figures based on sampling techniques. While all census data has limitations when counting hard-to-reach populations like immigrants, the ACS may be particularly susceptible to bias in new immigrant destinations. For instance, its estimates of growth in the Black population in Lewiston fail to capture the full extent of the Somali in-migration. Likewise, the ACS reports a decline in Wausau's Asian population since 2000, which is unlikely given the resettlement of an additional 463 Hmong refugees in 2004-2005.

began arriving in 2001. Lewiston’s Somalis, who now comprise roughly 6 percent of the local population, are largely refugees who had been settled elsewhere in the United States and chose to move to Lewiston due to the city’s housing availability and relative tranquility compared to urban resettlement sites. Since 2001, Lewiston has become a refugee resettlement site for other African refugees, particularly Somali Bantus.

In-depth analysis of these cases enables consideration of the relative impact of various immigrant and contextual characteristics on local political incorporation processes. In this paper, I focus on how differences in immigrant characteristics and local context across the cases shape immigrant political incorporation through the mechanism of intermediary selection.

**Interview Methodology**

Since 2003, I have conducted 286 interviews with community leaders and average residents from among the immigrant and non-immigrant populations in the four cities. Overall, I spent 2.5 weeks each over two research trips to Elgin and Wausau and more than a month each over four visits to Yakima and five to Lewiston. In Yakima and Elgin, my informants are almost evenly divided between Latinos and non-Latinos (see Table 2). In Wausau, 29 percent of my informants were first- or second-generation immigrants. In Lewiston, where immigration is more recent and fewer immigrants can participate in English-language interviews, my sample consists of seven Somalis and many more established non-immigrant residents.

**Table 2. Informants by Race/Ethnicity**

	<b>Elgin</b>	<b>Yakima</b>	<b>Lewiston</b>	<b>Wausau</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
<b>White, non-Hispanic</b>	27	49	57	34	167
<b>Hispanic</b>	39	48	0	1	88
<b>Asian</b>	3	1	2	13	19
<b>African descent</b>	3	2	7	0	12
<b>Percent non-White</b>	63%	51%	14%	29%	42%
<b>TOTALS</b>	72	100	66	48	286

To select informants, I conducted both purposive and snowball sampling. In each site, I drew on contacts in local academic institutions and community foundations to develop as diverse as possible a range of primary contacts, so that my informants reached beyond a limited network.<sup>7</sup> At the close of

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<sup>7</sup> Community foundations provide a particularly useful entrée to a community in that they are often work across sectors, interacting with donors in the private sector and grantees in the public and non-profit sector. I benefited from the contacts that the Saguaro Seminar for Civic Engagement in America had made in conducting the year 2000 Social

each interview, I asked informants for the names of several other community leaders or residents who could help me to learn more about my questions. In addition to this snowball sample, I conducted purposive sampling by ensuring that I spoke with at least the following individuals across the sites: the Mayor, a law enforcement officer, a public school leader, a hospital administrator, a social service provider, and representatives of the chamber of commerce, major local civic institutions, and immigrant or minority rights organizations. In addition, I worked with native Spanish-speakers in 2004 and 2008 to conduct Spanish-language interviews in Elgin and Yakima.<sup>8</sup>

Ranging from 20 minutes to more than two hours, interviews were semi-structured, building from a short list of questions to draw on informants' particular experiences. I promised informants that I would disguise their identity in citing their words and ideas. Where the informant agreed, I recorded interviews and also took notes. When time allowed, I observed community events, such as a gang prevention meeting in Elgin, a Sister City meeting in Yakima, an adult education class in Lewiston, and a farmers' market in Wausau. Upon my return from the field, I verified facts using local newspapers and other documents such as city council minutes and grant proposals. In addition, I conducted on-going "digital observation" by reading local websites and blogs and joining local organizations' e-mail lists and on-line social networking groups. I coded interviews using Atlas.ti, in order to extract themes about the need for immigrant intermediaries, how they are selected, and how their presence influences local incorporation processes. I now turn to presenting this evidence.

## **THE ROLE OF IMMIGRANT INTERMEDIARIES**

In new immigrant destinations, the everyday necessity of communicating with people who do not share a common language often drives the search for immigrant intermediaries. In order for local governments to function, officials must convey information about services and expectations. Likewise, officials require information from immigrants to shape the provision of services. Bilateral information sharing is necessary for placing children at the correct grade level in school, determining eligibility for benefits, enforcing traffic rules, and keeping the streets safe from criminals. In addition to these

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Capital Community Survey, which was stratified by geographic area and funded by a coalition of national and local community foundations. In Lewiston, the Maine Community Foundation and its academic partners from Lewiston-Auburn College provided an initial list of contacts. In Elgin, the Evanston Community Foundation directed me to the Grand Victoria Foundation, which provided an initial list of contacts. In Wausau, the Community Foundation of North Central Wisconsin provided initial contacts. In Yakima, academics at the University of Washington provided initial contacts in the Yakima non-profit sector who in turn directed me to others.

<sup>8</sup> In these interviews, we aimed to speak with average Latino residents, rather than community leaders. For this reason, we approached potential informants in markets and Laundromats and conducted a shorter interview. In 2004, I worked with Professor Maria Chavez of Seattle University to conduct interviews in Yakima. In January 2008, my translators were from Bridges Language, Training, & Staffing in Elgin and Alba Enterprises in Yakima.

practical considerations, in places with larger or longer-term immigrant populations, concerns about legitimacy often bring intermediaries to the fore. Including intermediaries may be a means to convey the local government agenda to immigrants, gain substantive input from immigrants, and/or cultivate an appearance of welcoming diversity. Where immigrants are a substantial proportion of the population, local institutions may seek intermediaries in order to remain relevant as ethnic demographics shift. Although immigrant intermediaries initially emerge in order to facilitate communication with newcomers, over time intermediaries often adopt the role of informal representatives of the local immigrant ethnic group.<sup>9</sup>

In this section, I introduce the most well-known immigrant intermediaries in each of the four cities. Using qualitative data analysis software, I tracked mentions in interviews of individuals identified by Anglo and immigrant group community leaders as intermediaries. The individuals I profile here were mentioned by the greatest number of Anglo and immigrant group community leaders in their respective cities. These four intermediaries represent the range of roles that intermediaries play in new destinations, from enabling daily communication to serving as formal and informal representatives.

Events in Lewiston clearly demonstrate the essential nature of intermediaries for communication. Two complementary quests combined to bring roughly three thousand Somalis to Lewiston, Maine, beginning in February 2001. After several years in troubled urban refugee resettlement sites, Somali elders were searching for a new home. At the same time, Catholic Charities, the refugee resettlement contractor in Portland, Maine, sought relief from a housing crunch and looked to Lewiston, 45 minutes north, for relief. When Somalis first arrived in Lewiston, many visited City Hall in search of housing and to enroll in public benefits. Yet the city initially had no capacity to communicate with non-English speakers. Anglo local government employees describe this time as one of intense “panic” or “freaking out.” A similar scenario unfolded in the Lewiston public schools as large numbers of Somali children began enrolling in the late summer of 2001. In response, the schools hired a Somali intermediary, who I will call Labaan, to accompany new children to school and aid in the registration process.<sup>10</sup>

Within a week of Labaan’s arrival in Lewiston, a Somali acquaintance who worked for the local government took him to the school superintendent’s office. The superintendent offered Labaan a job on the spot. Given his fluent English and his professional experience, Anglo community leaders immediately elevated Labaan to an intermediary position. Amidst urgent needs and linguistic and cultural barriers, the only people who could vouch for Labaan’s competence as an intermediary were the

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<sup>9</sup> An immigrant intermediary need not be foreign-born him or herself and may be concerned with issues related to the local immigrant ethnic group as a whole, rather than just to first-generation immigrants.

<sup>10</sup> I refer to my informants by pseudonyms that share the first letter of the city in which they reside (i.e. Labaan in Lewiston).

handful of other bilingual, bicultural Somalis that Lewiston officials had already identified. In this case, Labaan proved to be well-respected by Somalis, considered by some to be a traditional community elder. In addition to quotidian communication demands, Labaan brought Anglo officials and Somali elders together to address challenges around Muslim students' prayer schedule, the observance of Ramadan, and an exception to the high school's "no hat" policy that allows Somali girls to wear the *hijab*. The fortuitous selection of this particular Somali intermediary assured that the schools had competent assistance with day-to-day communication challenges, as well as a ready interface with traditional Somali leadership in order to resolve larger problems. The hiring of Labaan represents a response by Anglo community leaders to communication challenges presented by a new immigrant population.

In Elgin, where immigrants are a more established presence, concerns about legitimacy and the desire to remain relevant amidst shifting demographics also motivated Anglo elites to seek out immigrant intermediaries. In the spring of 1999, Elgin's Anglo politicians appointed the city's first Latino councilman to a vacant seat. Councilman Estrada's appointment was a response to Latinos' growing presence in the city and related political and administrative challenges. In the mid- to late-1990s, Elgin leaders were under considerable pressure to address housing overcrowding, a problem attributed to the Latino population. Moreover, city councilors had just faced their first serious Latino challenger in the April 1999 election. When a seat on the council became open, local politicians worked through back channels to advertise that they hoped to appoint a Latino (Bailey 1999). Of the eight residents who applied for the vacancy, five were Latino (Hantschel 1999). Councilman Estrada, who arrived in the continental U.S. from Puerto Rico only in 1992, drew Anglo leaders' attention as president of Elgin's Bilingual Parent Advisory Council. Following his appointment 1999, he won re-election twice and played a key role in local immigrant political incorporation through voter registration drives, the establishment of the Elgin Latino Political Action Team (ELPAT), and efforts to secure Hispanic appointments to local boards and commissions.<sup>11</sup>

Labaan in Lewiston and Councilman Estrada in Elgin represent the two main reasons why Anglo elites seek out immigrant intermediaries: to enable communication and to enhance the perceived legitimacy of local institutions amidst changing ethnic demographics. Not all immigrant intermediaries are Anglo-selected, however. In Wausau, a man I will call Wong is the leader of an immigrant-serving organization. Rather than gaining his position through an appointment by Anglo elites, Wong attained his position thanks to immigrant peers on his board of directors. In the late 1970s, Wausau's churches sponsored the resettlement of the area's first Hmong refugees. Over the years, the Hmong population continued to grow through additional refugee resettlement and secondary migration. Wong and his

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<sup>11</sup> Councilman Estrada lost his seat in the April 2009 election.

family arrived in Wausau from Ohio in the mid-1980s. Like Labaan, local leaders quickly recognized Wong for his English fluency and professional skills. He began as a staff member at the immigrant organization and soon rose to serve as the lead officer. Under Wong's leadership, the organization has become a crucial service provider for the Hmong, as well as an essential intermediary between the Hmong and Anglos in Wausau. Anglo elites call on Wong for tasks as varied as distributing food aid to negotiating inter-group conflicts at a local park. In this way, Wong and his organization fulfill both the daily communication and broader representation demands placed on intermediaries in new destinations. While Wong was elevated to leadership by other immigrants, Anglo elites in Wausau played a key role in developing and sponsoring his organization in ways that I will discuss further below.

In Yakima, local processes of intermediary identification were initially far different. The Yakima Valley is among the nation's largest producers of fruit, especially apples. To sustain this industry, Yakima has required large numbers of seasonal workers, many of whom come from Mexico. Up until the mid-1980s, most workers returned home in the off-season. Since then, a growing number of Latino farm workers have remained in Yakima and brought family members to join them. Despite the fact that Latinos have been a presence in Yakima for more than twenty years, elite response to the growth of the immigrant population has differed sharply from that in Lewiston, Elgin, and Wausau. For many years, local leadership in Yakima continued to relate to Latino immigrants as a transitional presence, rather than a permanent and growing constituency. In part as a result, self-selected immigrant intermediaries stepped forward to advocate on behalf of immigrants.

Yolanda, for instance, arrived in Yakima in 1989 as a state government employee. She reports that she was fired soon after, in part because, "They didn't like the fact that I was assertive. I was not a shy farm worker." Yolanda chose to stay in Yakima and establish several organizations providing services to Latino businesses. In the absence of any Anglo action to incorporate intermediaries, Yolanda and a handful of other activists served as gadflies attempting to advance the interests of local Latinos. On my first visit to Yakima in 2003, Anglo informants often spoke about "divisive", "aggressive" Hispanic leaders. All the same, if any intermediaries were invited to serve on boards and participate in local affairs, these were the Latinos with whom Anglos were familiar. Over time, Anglos' resistance to inclusion and the intermediaries' adversarial response exacerbated tensions between Latinos and Anglos, as well as among Latinos. More recently, a complete turnover in local government leadership and a growing Latino professional class have contributed to a marked increase in Anglo-appointed intermediaries. Even so, the legacy of the earlier resistance to incorporation and the older intermediaries' confrontational tactics continue to complicate incorporation processes in Yakima.

Labaan, Councilman Estrada, Wong, and Yolanda are representative of the range of roles that intermediaries play in new destinations, from enabling daily communication to serving as formal and informal representatives. They also represent the four main selection methods of immigrant

intermediaries. While Labaan and Councilman Estrada were Anglo-appointed, Wong was selected by immigrants, and Yolanda was self-selected. Since his appointment, Councilman Estrada has won re-election, thus serving as an elected intermediary. As I will demonstrate in the following section, the means through which intermediaries emerge locally differ across the four cities in ways that impact local processes of immigrant political incorporation.

### **THE IDENTIFICATION OF IMMIGRANT INTERMEDIARIES**

Particularly in new immigrant destinations, relatively few immigrants or co-ethnics possess both the desire and the bilingual, bicultural skills necessary to serve as effective intermediaries. Interviews in the four cities yielded mentions of relatively few immigrant intermediaries, ranging from 26 in Wausau to 41 in Yakima. Not more than seven intermediaries in any destination warranted mentioned by at least two Anglo and two immigrant group community leaders (see Table 3).<sup>12</sup>

**Table 3. Immigrant Intermediaries Identified by Community Leaders (CL)**

	<b><u>Percent of Anglo CLs Mentioning 1+ Intermediaries</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of Immigrant CLs Mentioning 1+ Intermediaries</u></b>	<b><u>Intermediaries Mentioned 2+ Times by Immigrant &amp; Anglo CLs</u></b>
<b><u>Elgin</u></b>	46%	95%	4
<b><u>Yakima</u></b>	37 %	82%	7
<b><u>Lewiston</u></b>	63%	60%	1
<b><u>Wausau</u></b>	58%	58%	2

Because limited numbers of intermediaries link Anglo elites with immigrants, intermediaries who do emerge take on disproportionate influence in local civic networks. In social network theory, an individual (the intermediary) is able to increase her influence when she mediates interaction between two disconnected groups. Her advantage disappears when the disconnected groups link with one another independently (Burt 1992). Given linguistic and cultural barriers, immigrant and non-immigrant groups in new destinations usually cannot link without the assistance of intermediaries. For this reason, intermediaries play a decisive role in shaping interaction between immigrants and the receiver society. Intermediaries are the lens through which native-born elites understand immigrant needs, as well as the lens through which immigrants learn about receiver society institutions.

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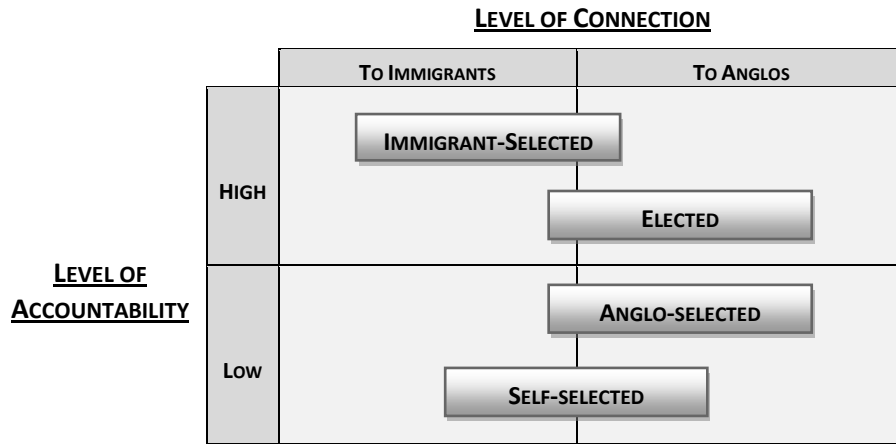
<sup>12</sup> The low number of mutually recognized intermediaries in Lewiston is likely due to the small number of Somalis I interviewed and not to systematic differences in Lewiston’s intermediary network structure. I intend to correct this discrepancy with follow-up interviews in Lewiston.

Anglo elites rely on immigrant intermediaries for much the same reason they rely on other sources of political information, such as preferred newspapers and advocacy organizations. Accessing information about politics and interpreting it is costly in terms of time and mental energy (Huckfeldt & Beck 1994). Amidst cultural and linguistic barriers, gathering information about immigrants is particularly challenging. Thus, Anglo elites rely on a handful of intermediaries who are willing and able to provide their perspective. In places that lack experience with cultural diversity, immigrant intermediaries not only provide intentional information about immigrants and their needs, but also inform Anglo elites about how immigrants will behave politically through their tone and actions. Since most Anglo elites in new destinations lack experience with cultural diversity and interact with relatively few immigrants, the behavior of immigrant intermediaries disproportionately shapes elites views on local immigrants.

Despite their local influence, intermediaries may not be authentic representatives of immigrant communities. Differences between immigrant intermediaries and those they serve are almost inevitable, given that possessing bilingual, bicultural skills are hallmarks of relatively privileged socioeconomic status and/or more time and experience in the United States (Dovi 2007, 51). Moreover, since immigrants do not always choose their own representatives, they usually cannot rely on institutions with formal accountability mechanisms to ensure that desirable representation emerges (*ibid.*, 8). In effect, intermediaries often serve as unelected representatives of non-voting constituents.

Ideally, intermediaries have the capacity to connect to Anglo and immigrant communities and are accountable to immigrants in their representation. Anglo-selected, immigrant-selected, self-selected, and elected intermediaries differ in terms of their capacity to connect and their accountability to immigrants. In terms of connection to immigrants and Anglos, skillful intermediaries communicate well with each group and understand their respective needs. In describing a skillful intermediary in Wausau, an Anglo leader pointed to the fine line that an ideal intermediary must walk between connecting with Anglos and immigrants: “He’s slightly bicultural, but not overly bicultural. So he’s trusted by the Hmong community, and he’s bicultural enough that he’s easy for Anglos to befriend.” Ideal intermediaries represent immigrants to Anglos while remaining *of* the immigrant community. Intermediaries that lack authentic knowledge of immigrant communities are, in effect, a bridge to nowhere. Anglo elites rely on them for information which the disconnected intermediaries cannot credibly provide. In addition to connection with Anglos and immigrants, an ideal intermediary is accountable to immigrants, such that they have recourse if they feel the intermediary does not effectively represent them. The four types of intermediaries can be arrayed along these dimensions as in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Connection and Accountability of Intermediary Types**



Immigrant-selected intermediaries are located in the upper left hand corner of the diagram, representing high levels of understanding of immigrants’ needs, as well as high levels of accountability to their wishes. Their placement on the diagram crosses over the line to “connection to Anglos” because these intermediaries may have a talent for connecting with Anglos, though their selection method does not ensure this. Elected intermediaries, on the other hand, must have rapport with Anglos, who make up the majority of the electorate in new destinations, but may also have the capability to connect with immigrants. Likewise, Anglo-selected intermediaries are chosen for their fit with Anglo institutions and individuals, but they may also be connected to immigrant communities. The larger point is that when intermediaries are elected by the general populace or appointed by Anglos, these groups do not have the skills to determine whether the intermediary has a genuine understanding of or connection to the immigrant community. Finally, a self-selected intermediary need not be deeply connected to or capable of communicating with immigrants or Anglos in order to make claims. Lacking cultural and linguistic cues, Anglos may not perceive whether self-selected leaders hold sway among immigrants.

In terms of accountability, elected officials answer to the electorate as a whole. While immigrants may initially make up a small fraction of the electorate, they at least have some access to a process that holds elected intermediaries accountable. The same is not true for Anglo-selected or self-selected intermediaries. These types of intermediaries are arrayed at the bottom of Figure 1 to signify that immigrants have little recourse if these individuals misrepresent their interests.

Below, I describe the profile of intermediaries across the four cities. I analyzed the characteristics of all intermediaries mentioned by more than one informant, but focus particularly on the individuals in each city that were recognized as intermediaries by both Anglos and immigrant group leaders, as signified by mentions from at least two Anglo and two immigrant group community

leaders.<sup>13,14</sup> If the above figure accurately captures the level of connection and accountability of different types of intermediaries, we should find that Anglo-selected intermediaries have high levels of connection to Anglos, but not necessarily high levels of connection to immigrants. By the same token, we should find that immigrant selection and election promote intermediary accountability, while Anglo-selection and self-selection do not necessarily do so. I first classify the intermediaries in each city based on their primary selection method. I focus in particular on Anglo-selected, self-selected, and immigrant-selected intermediaries since none of the key intermediaries rose to prominence initially by being elected.<sup>15</sup> I then discuss the consequences of each selection method for local political incorporation processes.

### **Intermediary Selection Method and Sector**

In terms of selection method, intermediaries from the four cities differ substantially. In Elgin, three of the four most prominent intermediaries were appointed to their roles by Anglo elites. In Yakima, on the other hand, four are primarily self-selected and three are Anglo-appointed. Of those selected by Anglos in Yakima, all were appointed since the year 2000. Self-selected intermediaries, on the other hand, have been active in Yakima for much longer, reaching back to the 1970-1980s. Whereas Elgin's intermediaries are primarily Anglo-selected and Yakima's intermediaries are largely self-selected, Lewiston's intermediaries are split evenly between these categories with four appointed by Anglos and four self-selected. In Wausau, one prominent intermediary was appointed by Anglo government officials, while the other was selected by immigrants to run an NGO.

Table 4 depicts the number of intermediaries in each city that correspond to each selection method. I now turn to discussing the consequences of each selection method for local political incorporation processes.

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<sup>13</sup> In the case of Lewiston, due to the small sample of Somalis interviewed only one intermediary crossed the threshold of two mentions from both Anglo and immigrant informants. As a result, in the analysis that follows prominent intermediaries in Lewiston are defined as those who received at least four total mentions by informants.

<sup>14</sup> The four cities differed in terms of the extent to which Anglos and immigrants could name intermediaries, the degree to which they agreed on the most prominent intermediaries and the degree to which overall attention clustered on a small group of immigrant intermediaries. For this reason, the numbers of prominent intermediaries analyzed differ across the cities, with eight prominent intermediaries in Lewiston, seven in Yakima, four in Elgin, and two in Wausau.

<sup>15</sup> These four selection types need not be mutually exclusive. For instance, a Latina in Elgin self-selected into participation in a Latino organization and was then selected by fellow Latinos to head the organization. In parallel, she was appointed to various boards by Anglos and then won elective office. In the classifications that follow, I focus on the selection method that initially placed the intermediary in a prominent local role.

**Table 4. Immigrant Intermediaries by City and Selection Method**

	<b>Anglo-Selected</b>	<b>Self-Selected</b>	<b>Immigrant-Selected</b>	<b>Totals</b>
<b>Elgin</b>	3	0	1	4
<b>Yakima</b>	3	4	0	7
<b>Lewiston</b>	1	0	1	2
<b>Wausau</b>	4	4	0	8
<b>Totals</b>	11	8	2	21

**Anglo-Selected Intermediaries**

Figure 1 suggests that Anglo-selected immigrants will have the ability to connect with Anglos, but perhaps less ability to connect with immigrants and less accountability to them. Indeed, across the four cities, I find that Anglo inattention to heterogeneity among immigrants can result in Anglo-selected intermediaries that lack an authentic connection to the majority of local immigrants. Even so, the example of Anglo-selected intermediaries in Elgin, as well as some Anglo-selected intermediaries in other cities, demonstrates that proactive Anglo inclusion of intermediaries can have important benefits for local immigrant political incorporation in terms of building immigrant civic networks and developing systems to address issues related to growing ethnic diversity.

Since the mid-1990s, Elgin has employed Hispanic outreach liaisons that work with the local police, City Hall, and, more recently, the local school district. Two Latina leaders in Elgin credit their civic participation to Anglo-appointed intermediaries, who identified their interest and connected them with opportunities. One of them explains:

I met [the city’s Hispanic outreach coordinator and the Hispanic city councilman] and I asked ‘em, “Hey, how do I get involved more?” They were excited, ‘cause there was younger people that wanted to get involved, but they needed more. And they gave me different ideas. [The Hispanic outreach coordinator] brought me to participate in [a local Latino festival] in 2005. ... And then the following year I ended up chairing the whole thing.

For both of these women, the presence of a readily accessible Hispanic outreach worker who was dedicated to connecting Latinos to opportunities, enabled their easy entrée into local participation.<sup>16</sup>

Incorporating Latino intermediaries also creates systems the community can rely on when issues arise. When problems occur in Elgin, Hispanic and Anglo civic leaders know how to work together. When the school district begins the process for hiring a new superintendent, the district’s Hispanic liaison reaches out to Latino civic leaders as a matter of course, as well as seeking the input of an established bilingual parent advisory council. Likewise, Hispanic leaders know that if they have

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<sup>16</sup> This Hispanic outreach worker resigned in late 2007 in response to the city’s move to devote more of his time to an unrelated commission. The city has hired a replacement, but the individual is a low-level employee in the special events department.

concerns, the Mayor and the Chief of Police would be happy to sit down with them. Following a spate of gang shootings in the summer of 2007, Councilman Estrada took the initiative to organize a gang prevention task force and appointed a local Latino judge to chair the committee. A Latina civic leader describes how the collaboration came about:

[The Latino judge] called a meeting and you had people from the different Latino organizations, but you also had [Anglo] people from the other neighborhood groups that were concerned about what's going on. And the [Anglo] police chief came along with a couple of their gang leaders and members of the team to talk to us and address questions on what do we need to do. And then from that they created a task force. So if there were serious issues that come up, we can reach out to all those people that we network with. The nice thing I think about is, yeah, we're Latino, but we still communicate with a lot a' different people.

When incidents occur involving the Hispanic population in Elgin, Anglo-appointed intermediaries can connect immigrants and non-immigrants to get things done, as well as mobilizing others. As these examples demonstrate, including intermediaries in local affairs has the potential to enhance immigrant participation and develop systems through which immigrants and Anglos can cooperatively address local issues.

Even so, the mere fact of including intermediaries by no means guarantees such results. Interaction and information flows between immigrants and Anglo elites are compromised when Anglo leaders fail to attend to immigrant heterogeneity in identifying intermediaries. In Elgin, for instance, only one of four prominent Anglo-appointed intermediaries is of Mexican descent despite the fact that 85 percent of Elgin's Latinos are Mexican. The other three prominent intermediaries are of Puerto Rican descent, though Puerto Ricans comprise only 4 percent of Elgin's Latinos. Elgin's Anglo elites feel that they are choosing the most qualified Latino candidates, but lack an appreciation of the significance of national origin among Latinos. For instance, when the City Council appointed Puerto Rican Councilman Estrada in 1999, they chose him over a Mexican-American woman who had run and lost in the previous local election by a margin of only 500 votes. While Anglo elected officials may proactively incorporate Latinos in some cases, they select those Latinos that suit their interests, often without attention to dynamics among members of the local immigrant ethnic group. A first-generation Mexican-American professional described the tension that these appointments create:

There is some resentment out there because a lot of people feel that Mexicans/Mexican-Americans are the overwhelming majority of Hispanics. The [Puerto Rican] councilman there was originally picked for a vacancy; he wasn't elected. ... The [Puerto Rican] person who works for the city as a liaison was picked by the city. So the city, had it been a little more sensitive or thoughtful about what they were doing and wanted someone who was really representative of the population they're serving, might have taken that into account. The same with the head of the bilingual program, which is made up overwhelmingly of Mexican/Mexican-American kids, is a Puerto Rican lady, and culturally and linguistically there are some significant differences.

In addition to the city councilman, Hispanic outreach coordinator, and bilingual program head, a Puerto Rican leads the local Latino political advocacy group, and, until relatively recently, a Puerto Rican led

Centro de Informacion, Elgin's multi-service immigrant non-profit agency. In May 2008, Anglo elites continued this trend when Elgin's school district hired a superintendent of Puerto Rican descent.

Inattention to Latino heterogeneity in terms of national origin leads to both intra- and inter-group mistrust. At public events, Mexican-Americans say that Anglo politicians spend more time with Puerto Ricans. A first-generation Mexican immigrant explains, "When you ask [the politicians] to participate in a Mexican activity, they really don't mingle with us. If it's a Puerto Rican group, they are more inclined to participate." An Anglo woman who works closely with Latino newcomers believes that tensions between Mexicans and Puerto Ricans stem in part from inadvertent Anglo favoritism toward Puerto Ricans. She explains:

[Anglo leaders] still don't do a real good job with not putting all Hispanics in one big pot. Because there's a definite minority Puerto Rican community that have a lot a power. And the Anglo community doesn't understand that stuff. So 'cause they don't have to mess with immigration with Puerto Ricans, ... we have people being hired for positions that culturally are very different from the people perhaps they're working with.

While inattention to heterogeneity often generates problems, in some cases a pan-ethnic spirit emerges to embrace Latino leaders. Although the appointment of Councilman Estrada stirred initial controversy among local Mexicans/Mexican-Americans, a decade later many Anglo and Latino leaders comment that he seems to rise above intra-Hispanic divisions. Part of his acceptance may be attributable to his relatively recent arrival in the continental United States and his firsthand familiarity with new immigrants' challenges. When he arrived from Puerto Rico in 1992, Councilman Estrada's English was rudimentary and he had to attain additional education and work his way up from his first job as a bank teller. Given his recent immigrant experience, he may have more in common with the bulk of recent Mexican immigrants in Elgin than initially meets the eye. The case of Councilman Estrada demonstrates the inherent, multi-dimensional heterogeneity among immigrant ethnic groups in terms of immigrant generation, socioeconomic status, and national origin. Since Anglos usually fail to attend to intra-immigrant group heterogeneity, Anglo-selected intermediaries may or may not be effective representatives of local immigrants.

In Lewiston, the schools department was fortunate in hiring Labaan who connected effectively with both Anglos and Somalis. Another city department was less fortunate in their intermediary hiring. The very first hire the city made was Latif, a young Somali intermediary who served as a case worker and advocate for Somali newcomers. While Latif had relevant experience, spoke good English, and befriended Anglo colleagues, traditional Somali elders saw him as "young and flashy." Thus, while he was able to connect effectively with Anglos, his youth and less conservative demeanor made him unacceptable to many Somalis. The Somali community's concerns about Latif were particularly pressing, since he was in a position to supply or deny public benefits. At first, given the limited number of Somalis who could communicate with city officials, Anglo city employees were unaware of the

problems. About a year after Latif was hired, however, the city was receiving regular complaints that he showed bias in his decisions. Initially, none of the allegations could be substantiated, but tensions continued to rise over Latif's role. Ultimately the Somali community's concerns proved real when Latif resigned in the spring of 2004 after a charge of soliciting sex from a social services client (LaFlamme 2004).

The experience of hiring Somali intermediaries in Lewiston demonstrates how the urgency of communication needs in new destinations can prompt rapid and uninformed intermediary identification by Anglo officials. New destinations leaders with little experience with ethnic diversity may not be equipped to recognize heterogeneity within newcomer groups. In fact, the need to consider differing interests and relations among immigrants, does not immediately occur to some Anglo leaders. For instance, an Anglo NGO representative in Lewiston reported:

What I've gotten to know about the Somali community is they're really no different than anybody else around here. You have your sub-groups that argue amongst themselves just like any other sub-groups around here. But people tend, because they're foreigners, I guess, to think of them as a lump sum.

Thus, while proactive Anglo-selection of intermediaries can have important benefits, it can also lead to problems when Anglos choose intermediaries with whom they are most comfortable, without regard to intra-immigrant group heterogeneity.

### **Self-Selected Intermediaries**

On the other hand, as the experience of Yakima demonstrates, relying on self-selected intermediaries has its own pitfalls. Table 4 illustrates that many of Yakima's most prominent intermediaries (four of seven) emerged early on as self-selected activists. Self-selected intermediaries do not necessarily have the capacity to connect to Anglos or immigrants, nor are they accountable to immigrants by virtue of their position. Indeed, Yakima's self-selected intermediaries alienated both Anglos and other Latinos. Given Anglo resistance to responding to the growth of the local Latino population, self-selected intermediaries used adversarial approaches to attract attention to their cause. Although Yakima has now shifted to more proactive Anglo incorporation of intermediaries, the legacy of earlier resistance to incorporation and the older intermediaries' confrontational tactics continue to complicate local incorporation.

On my first visit to Yakima in 2003, three informants from entirely different walks of life independently used the word "denial" in describing local responses to the growth of the Latino population. An observant newcomer at a local NGO said, "I think this is a community in denial. ... The community continues to be controlled by a small group of people and it's very difficult for a new person

to affect change, or participate in a change process.” The Anglo leader of an immigrant-serving agency had a similar impression:

Whenever you talk about the Mexicans, there was pretty much a stereotypical response. You know, “they’re causing our drug problems, they’re sucking up all the money off of welfare rolls.” ... There was a lot a’ denial in the community about the fact that they were here.

A Latino clergyman agreed, saying “A lot a’ [Anglo] people is in denial of the realities of the demographics and they kinda want to cluster together and try to pretend that this is not happening. ... It is just a lot of fear, a lot a’ misunderstanding, a lot of misinformation.” Finally, a Latino education administrator highlighted this denial of change and warned that:

In ten or fifteen years this community, if the current trend continues, the majority of the population will be Hispanic and one of two things will happen. It will be like it was in South Africa with a small white population who will be governing over a Hispanic population, or they’ll hand the keys over in a haphazard way and you won’t have the kind of governance continuity that you need to have. This community has not yet woken up to that fact.

Anglo leaders’ denial of demographic change and inaction was reflected in the intermediaries who stepped forward in protest. An Anglo businesswoman described the self-selected intermediaries as follows:

There is a [Hispanic] activist on my board who makes very good points and I like her and would welcome any opportunity to work with her. But I know a lot of people don’t. She is way too much of a militant. It’s the combination of the fact that she is an activist and she is a woman. But there is another [Hispanic] gentleman that is very aggressive and for that I don’t think he is making any headway. In fact, if anything I think it’s setting him back.

An Anglo businessman was even less optimistic. Asked about Latino intermediaries, he responded: “That’s one of the problems. We don’t know someone I would point out as a leader. I can’t really think of anybody. There are some who have achieved some notoriety because they are militant in the farm-workers movement, but I’m stuck on [naming other leaders].”

The confrontational tactics of the older, self-selected intermediaries were in part a response to resistance from Anglo elites to incorporating immigrants. Nonetheless, the self-selected intermediaries have been blamed for the resultant antagonism and accused of not having immigrants’ best interests at heart. First generation Mexican immigrants, younger Mexican-American leaders, and Anglos almost invariably describe the self-selected intermediaries as “having their own agenda.” A Mexican immigrant in his late forties described the conflict in this way (differentiating himself, a Mexican immigrant, from Mexican-Americans):

Mexican-Americans sometimes think different than we think as a migrant people, so to make those connections are not easy. And some people who have been here years and years and years have a lot of hard feelings or hurt feelings about the white people and racism back in the 60s. You know, that famous Chicano movement. ... They don’t trust. So it’s hard. Sometimes I feel myself in between these [Anglo] people who are really trying to help us, or do I need to listen to this [Mexican-American] person who is telling me, don’t trust [this Anglo], he is going to hurt you.

Regardless of the legitimacy of the self-selected intermediaries' claims, their oppositional tactics initially reinforced local resistance to change and continue to hinder local political incorporation processes today.

A visit to Yakima in January 2008 revealed a greatly changed attitude towards incorporating the local Latino immigrant population. Nascent local government efforts to reach out to Latinos began in 2000 with the recruitment of qualified Latino intermediaries for leadership positions. In 2000, the School Board hired its first Hispanic superintendent; in 2002 the School Board appointed a Latina to a vacant seat; and in 2003 Yakima hired its first Hispanic police chief. By 2008, greater acceptance of change and proactive incorporation were evident. An economic development professional explained that alarm about the growing Hispanic population is now "in the closet," as Anglos are increasingly accepting the demographic change as "the future of Yakima." According to this leader and others, Hispanic residents are no longer just a "necessary evil," but a component of Yakima's future that needs to be addressed and incorporated. Taking a page from Elgin's playbook, in January 2009, Yakima's City Council appointed its first Latina member to a vacant seat, despite competition from qualified and politically connected Anglos.

Even with these improvements in local relations, the legacy of Anglo resistance to immigrants and of oppositional, self-selected intermediaries continues to affect efforts at collaboration. Although earlier self-selected intermediaries are widely disrespected, they substantially influence local behavior in that Anglos and Hispanics are afraid of them, given their "public and nasty" tactics. In some cases, Anglos worry about including Hispanics in community discussions because they fear that the activists will participate in confrontational, rather than constructive ways. Others suspect that some Latinos refuse to serve on local boards because by cooperating with Anglos they may be disparaged by the vocal Hispanic activists. Newer Latino leaders, who have formed an alternative Hispanic leadership group, keep a deliberately low profile in order to avoid associating with the activists. The result of this fear is that, even now, few Anglos know about this alternative Hispanic leadership group.

Relying on self-selected intermediaries in new destinations has clear pitfalls. Without Anglo efforts to include intermediaries, self-selected intermediaries may use adversarial techniques to gain attention that harm the future of local inter-group relations. As the previous section demonstrated, however, Anglo-selected intermediaries are not always effective representatives of local immigrants. An ideal solution to these challenges is for Anglos to find ways to appoint immigrant-selected intermediaries. The experience of Wausau offers one such example.

## **Immigrant-Selected Intermediaries**

Though Wausau has not been immune to the struggles of other new immigrant destinations, over time the city has developed a highly functional system to manage local inter-group relations. Relatively soon after the Hmong arrived in Wausau, local leaders and philanthropists worked with them to establish an organization that provides services to refugees and acts as an intermediary between the Hmong and the community at large. In this section, I argue that Wausau has been uniquely successful in identifying and employing intermediaries because it created a mechanism through which immigrant-selected leaders can collaborate and communicate with Anglo community leaders. Since intermediary identification is challenging and Anglos lack complete information about immigrant culture, establishing a parallel process through which immigrants can select leaders that then communicate with Anglo elites, ensures that intermediaries are both connected and accountable to immigrant communities.

In the early 1980s, Wisconsin's state Office of Refugee Resettlement encouraged localities to distribute resettlement funds through local refugee organizations. Following the example of other Hmong population centers in Wisconsin, Wausau's Hmong leaders were already engaged in establishing a mutual aid association. State policy, the Hmong initiative, and Anglo leaders' interests coalesced in the development of the Wausau-Area Hmong Mutual Aid Association (WAHMA). In assisting with WAHMA, a handful of Anglo leaders in Wausau was impressively perceptive about recognizing the heterogeneity within the Hmong community. An Anglo attorney who I will call Walter found that the younger, English-speaking refugees knew little about Hmong culture since they had been raised in refugee camps. Walter explains how he navigated this scenario:

My approach on this was I never wanted to rely on a person who could just speak English because I didn't think that necessarily meant that they knew a lot about the culture. So when we were tryin' to do stuff, my plan was to always talk to people at different ages, different lengths of time in the camp, and I would just ask people, who would you talk to about this issue, who might have an idea how folks would think about it?

In contrast to many Anglos in new destinations, Walter and a handful of others in Wausau recognized the folly of relying on only a select few intermediaries.

Rather than elevating a particular leader that suited Anglos to run the organization, Walter and others worked with the Hmong to write by-laws that established a board of directors composed of one clan member from each of the fourteen Hmong clans present in the city. Developing this system of leadership identification generated a process that had legitimacy in the eyes of both Anglo elites and Hmong traditional leaders. From the perspective of Anglo elites, here was a registered NGO that could formally accept grants and serve as a go-to when issues concerning the Hmong arose. Gaining the endorsement of Hmong traditional leaders was a longer process, but the fact that WAHMA had a clear interface with the clan structure helped.

Such an approach need not be limited to cultures with recognized traditional elders. In Yakima, an organization called the Hispanic Professional Group aimed to develop a Hispanic leadership alternative to the self-selected activists. Over time, the group has supported Hispanic candidates for elected office and helped Anglo civic organizations to identify Hispanic board members. Like WAHMA, it represents the promising possibility of identifying a pool of immigrant-supported leaders to serve as Anglo-appointed intermediaries. While these examples in Wausau and Yakima offer a promising alternative to the pitfalls of Anglo-selected or self-selected intermediaries, events in Lewiston suggest that developing strong immigrant organizations with the legitimacy to appoint intermediaries takes time.

In addition to four Anglo-appointed intermediaries, Lewiston has four prominent self-selected intermediaries, representatives of nascent immigrant organizations. In an article entitled “Jockeying for Power,” the local newspaper revealed that about a dozen local Somali organizations compete for recognition from the city and the respect and resources such recognition would bring (Chmelecki 2003). Somali conservatives would like to consolidate leadership in line with traditional clan and religious structures, in which elders would have the final say. More liberal Somalis would prefer that the Anglo city leaders *not* officially recognize the traditional structures, treating Somalis more as an ethnic group composed of individuals, with some common interests. Anglo city leaders, meanwhile, just want to know who they should communicate with and who they can trust. Anglos in Lewiston lack the cultural literacy to recognize what makes a legitimate Somali leader and cannot rely on the advice of Somalis since they do not want to raise the profile of one faction over another. City leaders hope that eventually Somali organizations will go through a winnowing process and organizations that earn credibility will survive.

Evidence from these four immigrant destinations suggests that while Anglo elites are often unaware of or inattentive to immigrant group heterogeneity, proactive Anglo incorporation of intermediaries nonetheless has the potential to promote the development of immigrant civic networks and cooperative inter-group relations. Relying on self-selected intermediaries, on the other hand, has the potential to result in oppositional relations both within and between groups. Ideally, over time Anglo officials and immigrant group leaders find a way to identify and elevate immigrant-selected intermediaries, who are most likely to be connected and accountable to immigrants.

## CONCLUSION

As examples from Elgin, Yakima, Lewiston and Wausau demonstrate, several factors call for careful attention to intermediary selection. In new destinations, linguistic and cultural barriers structure the availability of intermediaries, thereby constraining opportunities for gathering alternate information. For this reason, intermediaries are disproportionately influential in local networks as rare links between immigrants and Anglo decisions-makers. Because they are usually informal representatives, few institutional mechanisms exist to ensure accountability. Additionally, the task of speaking for immigrants is complicated by the reality of intra-group heterogeneity. Immigrant intermediaries have the potential to encourage political incorporation by fostering collaboration and engagement. This potential is compromised when intermediaries must adopt confrontational tactics to attract the attention of local leaders. For all of these reasons, local government officials in new immigrant destinations cannot afford to take the task of identifying immigrant intermediaries lightly.

Differences in intermediary selection across the cities provide insight into how local officials can effectively respond to immigrant populations. Elgin and Lewiston's more proactive approach to identifying immigrant intermediaries, with designated outreach employees in several city agencies, has some benefits in terms of ensuring that newcomers receive benefits and entrée to local institutions. In Elgin, it has also assisted in encouraging Latino participation and developing productive collaboration between Latinos and Anglo decision-makers. On the other hand, relying on Anglo-selected intermediaries has crucial pitfalls, especially when Anglos fail to recognize intra-immigrant group heterogeneity. Hiring Puerto Ricans to represent Mexicans has resulted in intra-ethnic tension in Elgin. In Lewiston, the rapid hiring of English-speaking Somalis without attention to the intermediaries' connection to other Somalis, at times resulted in resentment from Somalis toward the city. Anglo leaders in new destinations face a real dilemma in that they rely on intermediaries to negotiate cultural differences, yet often know too little about immigrant cultures to understand whether intermediaries are authentic representatives of their ethnic communities.

While relying on Anglo-selected intermediaries has its downsides, failing to incorporate any intermediaries has perhaps even more serious consequences for local incorporation processes. In Yakima, local leaders chose a reactive approach, expecting Latinos to organize themselves. As a result, self-appointed Latino activists filled the void of Latino representation with an oppositional, rather than collaborative approach. A rising Latino professional class in Yakima is gradually stepping into intermediary roles, but the long-term standoff between Latino activists and Anglo decision-makers has left indelible scars on both intra- and inter-ethnic relations in the city. As these examples suggest, Anglo intermediary identification in new destinations is a complicated, though desirable, step in supporting on-going immigrant political incorporation.

Ideally, however, intermediary selection can ensure both the capacity to connect with Anglos and immigrants and accountability to immigrants by merging the approaches of immigrant-selection and Anglo-selection. One way to accomplish this task is through a parallel leadership identification processes that links immigrant-selected intermediaries with Anglo elites. The Wausau-area Hmong Mutual Association offers one such example, where recognized immigrant representatives (clan leaders) choose an immigrant intermediary who also has the approval of Anglos. Such an approach need not be limited to traditional immigrant cultures with recognized elders. In Yakima, the Hispanic Professional Group's approach to vetting qualified Latino intermediaries available to serve on local boards is potentially promising. The examples from these four cities indicate that proactive effort on the part of Anglos can contribute to immigrant political incorporation in new destinations. In particular, broadening the base of immigrant leadership by hiring immigrants and appointing them to voluntary positions lessens the likelihood that one individual or faction can exercise undue influence on incorporation processes.

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