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AN EVALUATION OF CITY HALL DEPARTMENTAL COMPLAINTS IN KALAMAZOO, MICHIGAN, 1993 AND 1994

by

Monique R. Moore

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Sociology

Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
June 2004

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Monique R. Moore

AN EVALUATION OF CITY HALL DEPARTMENTAL COMPLAINTS IN KALAMAZOO, MICHGAN, 1993 AND 1994

Monique R. Moore, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2004

My research will evaluate the citizen complaints made to various departments in the Kalamazoo, Michigan's City Hall for the years of 1993 and 1994. The complaints were compiled on a monthly basis by the Citizen Action Center for the various departments. The number and types of complaints received and significant differences in the frequency and content of complaints or patterns of change from one year to the other were analyzed.

There was a consistent pattern in the content or types of complaints concerning the Public Works department from 1993 to 1994, but no consistent pattern for any of the other categories of complaints. While the finding is important to the Public Works department, it does not correspond with Wagenheim and Reurink's (1991) conclusion that once the citizens' service needs have been identified, city departments must develop revised service delivery systems to respond to those needs. This study suggests that there are areas where city governments need to work continually at improving their service. If customer service is improved upon, employees may be more eager to assist citizens with their complaints and grievances, therefore creating at least the perception of a more smoothly run government.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

At one time or another, most citizens have probably been dissatisfied with the services provided by city government. Quite often, these citizens have no formal method to voice their opinions on an issue. For those city governments that do have some type of citizen feedback mechanism, citizens often complain that they have been patronized and simply told that the matter will be settled. However, seldom does a government employee actually respond directly to the issue, and if one does, it is usually not addressed in a "timely manner". In addition, the citizen usually is not contacted or informed of the action taken and the outcome. For these reasons, it is necessary to develop procedures that acknowledge the specific concerns of citizens in reference to city government feedback mechanisms and their levels of effectiveness. The literature suggests that in order to offer high quality service, employees need to be involved in the organization of management and the city government itself (Komzek, 1990).

The argument is that employees should feel that they have been involved in decision-making and that their career opportunities and work environment are enhanced (Manion, 1993). It is further argued that this leads to the attention of quality results and customer satisfaction.

The literature also suggests that city government, as well as other public sector agencies, should approach their purpose and function as providing customer service (Wagenheim and Reurink, 1991). This concept would include a change in the organizational culture to make the delivery of customer service apply to all employees, regardless of their job responsibilities. This would also help alleviate some of those feelings of "us" against "them" exhibited by both citizens and city employees.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to carry out an evaluation of the citizen complaints made to various departments in the Kalamazoo, Michigan's City Hall for the years 1993 and 1994. The complaints were compiled on a monthly basis by the Citizen Action Center for the departments of Public Safety, Development Services, Public Works, Utilities, and Special Services. There was also a Miscellaneous Issues category for complaints which were either county related or those that did not fall under city jurisdiction. There were a total of 247 citizen complaints for 1993 and 250 citizen complaints for 1994.

This study was designed to offer the Administration of the City of Kalamazoo some insight into the citizen complaints they received. In addition to looking at the number of complaints, the types of complaints received were also investigated. The study looked for significant differences in the frequency and content of complaints or patterns of change from one year to the other.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

According to Svara (1993), an effective local government brings to community leadership a perspective that reflects the values and methods of the profession of local government management. Those values include fairness, impartiality, inclusiveness, and a commitment to the broad public interest. Other skills and attributes that managers, as well as other City employees, need in order to be effective in their positions include the ability to be consensus builders, translators/interpreters of community values, and problem solvers. It is also implied that emphasis needs to be placed on specific skills that are needed by the manager, to handle key aspects of community relations. These include conflict resolution, media relations, and leadership in diverse communities.

Manion (1993) suggests that City managers and their staffs may want to establish consensus programs to help communities reach agreement on controversial issues. These consensus programs can provide mediation services designed to solve private complaints such as neighborhood property-maintenance violations. They can also offer the services of professional facilitators who work with large groups to decide critical issues. On this same theme, Svara (1993) adds that neighborhood groups are among the most numerous and the most influential in local government affairs. Thus, the city managers may really want to focus on keeping these communities within the city happy and running smoothly. Many of the most intensely felt issues that arise are associated with the characteristics of neighborhoods: providing services that will make the neighborhood more attractive; protecting it from danger; and resisting changes that will have an adverse impact. Residents not only seek to protect the lifestyle of their neighborhood, but also, for homeowners, the value of their property investments.

Manion (1993) asserts that the best organizational systems depend on an informed, involved, and motivated workforce. Without the commitment of its employees, an organization lacks energy and creativity. Effective managers make sure that employees do not feel isolated from management, and that they feel they are part of the programs that actually affect their work. Even under adverse circumstances, such as budget shortfalls that require cutbacks in service, a strong organization will continue to be supported by its employees. But, this support requires commitment from management as well. For example, organizations that use layoffs or reductions in the labor force only as a last resort, and offer their employees severance packages and out-placement services will be seen as caring employers.

Komzek (1990) states that "managers need to be alert to commitment as a basis for employees to be psychologically tied to their employers; it also has long-term consequences for the retention of high quality employees" (pp. 93). Managers use many different approaches to get employees involved in the organization. Quality circles, labor-management committees, employee work teams, and ad hoc task forces are all commonly used in the work force (Pollitt, 1990). Their purpose is to seek "win-win" environments---those in which management feels that productivity has been increased and service quality has improved, and at the same time, employees' feel that they have been involved in decision-making and that their work environments and career opportunities have been enhanced (Manion, 1993).

According to Manion (1993), the quality improvement concepts of total quality management (TQM), became very popular in private enterprise during the 1980's. Manion (1993) also states that TQM was used increasingly in the public sector in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The approach combines productivity and work-improvement evaluations with employee-oriented organizational development techniques and strategic planning to focus attention on quality results and customer service and satisfaction. Walton (1986) and Manion (1993) argue that TQM represents an evolutionary stage in management theory, bringing together various other approaches and concepts that have been successful in the public sector over the last thirty years.

According to Pollitt (1990), in the United Kingdom, a similar customer-oriented program has been in effect since the mid 1980's in local governments. Known as "public-service orientation," or PSO, the program stresses customer service, citizen participation, and public accountability. According to Wagenheim and Reurink (1991), the TQM element that has gained the greatest acceptance among public sector agencies is the concept of customer service. This concept focuses on a change in the organizational culture to include customer service as an integral part of the job responsibilities of all employees. Customers are perceived as clients both inside and outside the organization. For local governments, this would include citizens who interact with the city or county either as recipients of services or those involved in business transactions. This also applies within the organization to other city employees involved in interdepartmental activities.

Wagenheim and Reurink (1991) have identified the basic elements of a customer service program for the public sector. The first step is to document clients' service needs. From this point of view, the needs that are often most critical are: information and communication; responsiveness; problem resolution; on-time, reliable and consistent service delivery; competence of personnel; accuracy; and courteous and friendly service. Following the identification of these service needs, managers must develop or revise service delivery systems to respond to those needs. Thus, Wagenheim and Reurink (1991) argue that establishing better management processes also leads to other organizational benefits by eliminating wasteful and unnecessary regulations and procedures.

Manion (1993) feels that complete acceptance of the program by the rank-and-file workers is critical to the success of TQM and customer service. Manion (1993) also states that some unions see TQM as a threat; they may think that it is another approach to increasing "productivity," ultimately aimed at altering working conditions or reducing jobs. According to Manion (1993), another union fear is that TQM promotes multi-skilled workers. This tends to disrupt the existing labor negotiation groups that are often composed of employees within narrow job classifications. Sensenbrenner (1991) noted that unions were initially lukewarm about installing TQM for the above mentioned reasons. Nevertheless, some initially wary union leaders and members turned out to be some of the strongest backers. Sensenbrenner (1991) stated that the turnaround can be credited to a change in management behavior from "telling" the employees what to do, to "asking" the employees for their advice on the potential for service improvements.

The concept of TQM has greatly improved citizen feedback mechanisms. According to Yin (1976), one of the problems with certain public mechanisms (such as voting, contacting one's legislative representative, and pursuing cases in the courts) is that they tend to work slowly. Furthermore, many citizens cannot use these mechanisms without special resources. In fact, it was these shortcomings that led to the development of new mechanisms for citizen feedback. Yin (1975) stated that some of the new mechanisms that were developed were Neighborhood Meetings, Grievance Procedures, Neighborhood Facilities, and Neighborhood Organizations. Neighborhood Meetings are certainly an easy and inexpensive way of increasing feedback, discussion, and personal contacts among city officials and citizens. Such meetings are most frequently used to ascertain citizens' responses to the plans for building new facilities or modifying existing facilities. However, as a feedback mechanism, such meetings usually do not give residents a feeling of much power. Often residents do not have sufficient time to prepare for a meeting, and they may not have the resources to put forth their case effectively. The most that is usually achieved is an exchange of views. There seems to be little, if any, real control over services on the part of residents (Yin, 1976).

According to Yin (1976), agency-based grievance procedures are slightly more expensive for city governments, but they do provide more opportunities for feedback and control to the citizens. For these reasons, grievance procedures are probably the most prevalent mode of citizen feedback. They usually involve a single telephone number that a resident can call, or a single place that a resident can visit if he or she has a problem (Yin, 1976). Related to the agency-based procedures are city-wide grievance procedures. These are intended to supplement rather than displace each local agency's complaint procedure. Indeed, city-wide grievance procedures are specifically intended to deal with those problems where a resident does not know where to turn for help.

Many city governments have also attempted to improve relations by locating multi-purpose neighborhood facilities within walking distance of the residents. Along with servicing as local centers for services and recreation, these facilities become places for receiving citizens' complaints. They sometimes even serve as places where residents can pay their local taxes or utility bills. Functions normally carried out in a downtown city hall can be decentralized in this way to neighborhood facilities. In operationalizing this mechanism, a city does not necessarily have to start from "scratch". In many instances, there already are existing neighborhood facilities. Many libraries, firehouses and other municipal buildings can serve as community centers. Most residents are within walking distance of any number of these buildings.

Yin (1974) states that in the case of an information and referral service or a grievance procedure, the existing staff could be trained, under certain conditions, to perform those activities, so that a city would not even have to start with a totally new staff.

Yin (1976) also states that Neighborhood Organizations are yet another kind of feedback mechanism. These organizations have frequently, but not always, stemmed from the Federal Community Action and Model Cities efforts and involve groups formed either by election or appointment (Yin, 1976). The organization may have considerable resources at its disposal, and it may attempt to improve the services in the neighborhood or respond to residents' problems. If one considers neighborhood organizations in their most powerful form, it is possible to consider neighborhoods as a form of government entity. There are however, two important qualifications. First, a genuine neighborhood government must be constitutionally based--i.e., there must be some provision for it in the city charter or the state constitution. Second, the neighborhood government must have some kind of taxing authority (Yin, 1976).

Yin (1976) feels that there are at least three important lessons to be learned about citizen feedback mechanisms. First, effective feedback and participation both require that citizens have the same level of centralized or decentralized organization as the relevant municipal services. Neighborhood based meetings and organizations can create all sorts of pressure on city hall or on local agencies, but if the local agencies are centralized, it may be difficult for city government to respond directly to a specific neighborhood's problem.

Second, if a feedback mechanism does not lead to a perceptible response, the mechanism may fall into disuse or fail from lack of credibility. Furthermore, if a grievance procedure consistently fails to produce results, even the official who is supposed to handle the complaints will be frustrated. Thus, such feedback mechanisms should be considered virtually useless.

Third, no single mechanism works best in every situation. Different mechanisms become differentially advantageous, depending upon the nature of the problem, a city's prior history of citizen participation, and the specific agency involved. The most successful efforts may indeed stem from multiple efforts in which a variety of feedback mechanisms, including surveys and polls, are used (Yin, 1975).

According to Gellhorn (1966), municipal information services may be used most by those who realize they need information about municipal matters and who, by good fortune, know that it is obtainable. Thus, information services are meaningless to those who have not yet identified their problems as ones which city government may be responsible. Gellhorn (1966) stated that the Japanese have developed a more generally helpful model than the conventional city information bureaus in America. In many Japanese municipalities, a "citizens counseling room" is prominently located and its existence is constantly publicized. Persons perplexed about any phase of governmental functioning are welcomed. They need not put the correct label on their particular problem, for the staff of the "counseling room" will help them decide who they should see, whether the problem is national, prefectural, or municipal in nature. In fact, the problem need not even have governmental implications, since "worries advice" is readily obtainable.

According to Gellhorn (1966), the British, too, have gone further than American communities in providing services that enlighten citizens about government. Perhaps equally important, such services also inform the government about citizens' difficulties and doubts. According to Zucker (1964), the National Council of Social Service, a federation of welfare agencies in Britain, created a network of Citizens Advice Bureaus----also known as CABs. Zucker stated that their purpose was to explain the workings of public authorities to the citizenry. In this way, as citizens come to understand public authority, they come to regard it as something not alien and hostile, but something which they may come to understand.

The CABs were also created to help protect citizens against public authority when, through mistake or stupidity, the latter is acting incorrectly. Additionally, to many citizens in distress, CABs were able to make the city appear to contain some element of reason and compassion. The CABs are able to do this better because they are neither the dispensers of material assistance nor the makers and administrators of the law.

Gellhorn (1966) stated that more than two-thirds of the CAB offices in Britain were staffed by volunteer workers. They explained regulations and laws, referred callers to the proper officials, arranged for further assistance where needed, advised about available procedures for challenging adverse official decisions, and obtained additional information that was not already at hand.

According to Zucker (1964) and Wald (1965), the CABs brought timely knowledge of new administrative rulings, laws, and local services to every bureau. Repeated questions suggested the need for informational pamphlets, which were then prepared for general distribution. Although not confined to problems having a governmental cast, the CABs did undoubtedly serve as an important communications link between citizens and the public agencies whose activities might concern them.

The actual process of how to complain was the information most eagerly sought by some citizens (Gellhorn, 1967). However, distinctions must be made among types of citizen complaints. The first type is a citizen's complaint to the city about someone else, upon whom s/he wants the city to act. The second type is a complaint that the city's power has been improperly used. The third type is a complaint that the city is an inefficient supplier of service. Fourth is a complaint that the city is moving too slowly to overcome the inadequacies of its programs. Gellhorn (1966) states that the difficulties in the actual procedure for filing a complaint may itself generate a new grievance. The fourth category, complaints that the city's facilities or resources are inadequate, is political in nature. It is involved in deciding whether or not to build new schools, employ more policemen, raise the level of home relief payments, multiply the frequency and brilliance of street-lights, or construct additional housing to relieve overcrowding. Thus it is not a problem of public administration.

The other two types of complaints, those about the way power is used and those about the way services are rendered, may sometimes merge, but are usually distinct. Merger tends to occur when first, inadequate service is ascribed to a cause other than inefficiency or, second, when the citizen's complaint is rudely received or altogether ignored. After all, while a citizen's report of a service problem does not necessarily deserve an affirmative response, it does deserve courteous attention. If the citizen believes this has not been given, his/her complaint becomes one against official action or attitude rather than against the initial failure of the desired service.

Telfer (1953) reports that many cities tried to establish a central office in which complaints could be lodged which was to facilitate the citizens' communications with the city. It was also to make possible a systematic "follow up" that assures suitable action on the complaint and, in due course, a report to the complainant. Finally, the central office's tabulations of activity could reveal to the city's chief administrator any patterns of complaints that suggest where a bit of supervisory polish should be applied.

Evaluation

Evaluations may be undertaken for a variety of reasons. One of those is to test innovative approaches designed to deal with human and community problems (Chelimsky, 1978). Evaluation research is the systematic application of social research methods to the assessment of social intervention programs. It draws upon the techniques and concepts of several disciplines and is useful at every stage in the conceptualization, design, planning, and implementation of programs. According to Rossi and Freeman (1989), not only do evaluations differ according to stages of program development, but the uses to which they are put also vary.

Rossi and Freeman (1989) also state that while the evaluation of innovative programs represents an important activity, by far the greater proportions of evaluations are directed at the assessment of already established programs. However, the evaluation efforts related to established programs are less visible than those connected with new programs. Part of the evaluation of established programs is associated with the managerial concerns of maintaining and improving program effectiveness and efficiency, and often there is less broad interest in the findings.

Evaluating established programs requires an understanding of the social and political situation that existed when and where they were initiated. It also involves an attempt to trace the ways in which the programs have been modified from their emergence to the time of the evaluation. This is especially true for social programs, since they are generally historically conditioned responses to social concerns. Most have sprung from traditional, long-standing ameliorative efforts, and often there is considerable opposition from some of the stakeholders to any questioning of their fundamental assumptions or the ways they have been put into place (Rossi and Freeman, 1989).

According to Rutman (1980), considerable judgment is required on the part of the evaluation specialist. Nevertheless, various descriptions of evaluation methods have attempted to codify procedures so that assessments can be reproducible. One set of general steps that can be taken includes; preparing a program description; interviewing program personnel, scouting the program; developing an evaluative program model; identifying evaluation users; and achieving agreement to proceed (Rutman, 1980).

Rossi and Freeman (1989) also state that evaluability assessments make use of what are generically referred to as qualitative research procedures. In many ways, evaluation specialists operate like field researchers in a conventional qualitative study. That is, they seek to describe and understand the program in terms of the "social reality" as represented by the program personnel and stakeholders interviewed. Almost always, the investigator begins with a conception of the program that is available from documents and "hearsay" information. However, he or she continually tries to see the program through the eyes of the stakeholders, the program staff, and the targets (i.e., customers or clients). The intent is to end up with an accurate and multi-perspective description of the program as it exists. In this way, one can develop an understanding of the differences between how a program is formally pictured and how it actually is conducted. One can also begin to explain the differences between the ways it is perceived and valued by the various parties involved. Certain statistical data are almost invariably obtained, including for example, an accurate report on numbers and types of staff and targets served. However, as is the case with the data collection process in field work, evaluation analysts often find it necessary to let each discovery lead them along whatever pathways are required in order to maximize opportunities for comprehending the program.

Wholey (1979) felt that it should be stressed that many formal evaluations either are not completed or are superficial in their findings. They are also of limited utility to program sponsors and staff. The reason for this is because there is often too limited an understanding of the ways programs are actually conducted and perceived.

Rossi and Freeman (1989) stated that often, service record systems are too complex to be used properly for monitoring purposes, a problem noted earlier in connection with records on target populations. Project record systems are designed primarily to serve the administrative and management needs of program staff. For this reason, forms are often not filled in completely or the parts that project staff views as irrelevant to their purposes are completed haphazardly. Moreover, adding monitoring components for evaluation may prove overly burdensome to program personnel and thus limit staff cooperation. This, in turn, can render the resulting data incomplete and unreliable for monitoring purposes. On the other hand, service record information is inexpensive and efficient to obtain and to analyze. Clearly, its use depends on adequate training of program staff to maximize reliability, on motivating the staff to complete records properly and in a timely fashion, and on quality-control checks to ensure that staff follows through.

Summary

According to Svara (1993), skills and attributes that city employees need in order to be effective, include the ability to be consensus builders, translators/interpreters of community values, and problem solvers. Other skills that are needed to handle key aspects of community relations include conflict resolution, media relations, and leadership in diverse communities. Wagenheim and Reurink (1993) have identified some basic elements for the public sector in respect to customer service programs. One of the most critical steps is to document customers' service needs. Other critical needs are information and communication, responsiveness, and problem resolution. Revised service delivery systems must also be developed to respond to those needs.

Along with time, things change; and citizens need some sort of feedback mechanism to let the city know their concerns. The literature suggests that there are at least three important lessons about citizen feedback mechanisms. First, effective feedback requires that citizens have the same level of centralized or decentralized organization as the relevant municipal service. Second, feedback mechanisms must lead to perceptible responses, otherwise the mechanism may fall into disuse. Third, no single mechanism works best in all situations. Different mechanisms become differentially advantageous, depending upon the nature of the specific problem.

Research Questions

The literature also suggests that conflict is inevitable. City governments need to face this reality and accept the fact that conflict can never be totally eliminated. Moreover, the nature of the conflict is always changing, which contributes to the fact that it can not be eliminated. City governments should examine conflicts they are encountering and use them as indicators of potential areas of improvement. Moreover, they should create a system or approach that would assist them in addressing the forever changing conflicts of city government. With hopes of improving on the conflicts that Kalamazoo's City Government is encountering, answers to the following questions were sought:

- Are there consistent patterns of content or types of complaints concerning the various City departments during 1993 and 1994?
- Were there significant changes in the number of complaints concerning the various City departments during 1993 and 1994?
- Were there significant changes in the number or timing of complaints concerning the various City departments from 1993 to 1994?
- Were there significant changes in the average number of words per complaint concerning the various City departments from 1993 to 1994?

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The City of Kalamazoo and its Citizen Action Center

The Citizen Action Center was created as a mechanism for residents of the city to provide feedback regarding city services and concerns, and a place where citizens could make inquiries and lodge complaints. Consequently, it was the obvious source of information for an evaluation of the complaints regarding various departments within city government.

Oral background and history of the Citizen Action Center (CAC) was gained through personal communications with the City Manager, one of the City Commissioners, and the CAC Coordinator. They were each asked eight questions to gain this information:

1. What were some of the main reasons for starting the CAC?
2. Who was involved in the decision to start the CAC?
3. How was the CAC organized or set up?
4. Who were some of the major contributors in putting the CAC into action?
5. What were the expectations of the CAC?
6. Do you know if there are any models similar to this one in other city governments?
7. Do you think the CAC met the expectations and the goals

that it set out to?

8. Are there any specific incidents or occurrences of miscommunication that prompted the need for the CAC?

According to those interviewed, one of the main reasons for starting the CAC was that the citizens felt they were voicing their opinions but not being heard. The conclusion was that the City needed to learn how to respond to citizens' inquiries better than they had previously been handled. They felt that the City should provide better services to the community and to the citizens of the community. A Citizen Action Center program existed in near-by Grand Rapids and seemed to be successful. Kalamazoo borrowed some of the ideas and organizational concepts from the Grand Rapids model, but developed their own concept and what they hoped to achieve through its creation.

The CAC was set-up at an oval shaped desk against the wall in the center of the lobby on the first floor of the City Hall building. A former administrative secretary became the first CAC Coordinator. This individual was responsible for coordinating the CAC activities as well as responding to the citizens' concerns. Among other things, these activities and concerns included the Corporate Olympics, Citizen Volunteer Programs, the Volunteer Appreciation Banquet, citizen complaints and inquiries, along with literature and information on community services, resources, and activities.

Some of the major figures in putting the CAC into action were former City Manager Jim Holgerson, former Assistant City Manager Marc Ott, and former Assistant to the City Manager Doreen Scardarassy. The roles and input of all of these individuals were separate and different, and yet all made important contributions to this study. The expectations and goals of the CAC were to serve the people by providing assistance to the citizens who needed it, through professionally staffed individuals. This sometimes entailed responding to citizen inquiries and directing them to the correct office or person within the organization. The goals were to provide an enhancement service so that people did not get so frustrated when dealing with City Hall. There was a general consensus among city hall administration that these goals were being met. Before the CAC, the Commissioners were often contacted directly by irate citizens because they felt they could not get any service or response to their concerns. With the CAC, the premise was that there would be fewer direct contracts between citizens and either city officials or other city employees.

Dataset

The data for this study were the citizen complaint forms for 1993 and 1994. Those two years were chosen for this study because that is when the collection of the data took on a more systematic approach.

Over the course of two years, 1993 and 1994, citizens' complaints and concerns, and some limited demographic information were recorded and then directed to the proper departments. "Actual" complaints refer to those complaints actually written or typed on paper by the CAC Coordinator or other city personnel. "Reported" complaints refer to those complaints and number of complaints verbally reported by the CAC Coordinator. The complaints were received on a walk-in, call-in or mail basis. In most cases, they were then recorded. The format of the recording varied dramatically. Sometimes it was on typed or handwritten complaint forms. The complaint forms were collected and stored at the Citizen Action Center desk in the lobby of City Hall. This study includes the entire population of those residents of Kalamazoo who reported their complaints directly to the CAC in City Hall.

City Hall Departments

There are five major departments in the Kalamazoo City Hall: Public Safety, Development Services, Public Works, Utilities and Special Services. The functions of the five departments are briefly described as below. In addition, there is a residual Miscellaneous category for all other complaints.

Public Safety Department - delivers police, fire, medical first responder and Community Public Safety services.

Development Services Department - improves the safety, sanitation and overall quality of life in reference to City codes for new construction, rehabilitation and rental housing, zoning, signs, historic districts and other environmental and nuisance sections.

Public Works Department - improves the quality of life through street improvements, park enhancements and solid waste leadership and maintenance.

Utilities Department - provides continuous water supply and wastewater disposal services to the public within the City and within contract municipalities outside the City at a reasonable cost.

Special Services Department - the combination of the City Manager, Economic Development & Planning, City Clerk, Finance, Internal Auditor and Human Resources departments that administer city services.

Miscellaneous Issues - issues reported that fall outside of City jurisdiction. This is the only category that is not actually a city department (i.e., Auto Park and County issues).

An authorization letter from the CAC Coordinator was sought so that the researcher could proceed with the study. The researcher indicated to the CAC Coordinator that a copy of the results would be made available to their organization. The researcher also sought and received approval from the University's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (see appendix). When the authorization was obtained, copies were made of the complaints. To ensure anonymity of the citizens' complaints, all names and demographic information were omitted.

Organization of Dataset

The complaints were first separated by year, 1993 and 1994. They were then organized by month, followed by department. In anticipation of later analysis, the number of words per complaint was also counted and recorded.

In addition to providing access to the complaint forms, the CAC Coordinator provided two listings, one for 1993 and one for 1994, showing her personal account of the number of complaints by department, per month. This accounting, which she developed, constitutes the "reported" complaints (since they were reported to the City administration). The researcher independently analyzed each handwritten complaint, tallied them, and also prepared two listings, one for 1993 and another for 1994, which make up the "actual" complaints. The average number of words per complaint was also tallied by month for each department and put into tabular form, again for 1993 and 1994.

Content Analysis

According to Weber (1990), content analysis classifies textual material, reducing it to more relevant, manageable bits of data. Warwick and Osherson (1973) stated that for sociologists, content analysis has often been used in describing cultural elements of societies. Such descriptions, in turn, are used for comparative analysis. Sanders (1974) stated that content analysis has also been found to be extremely useful in analyzing social change. Culture is reflected in the beliefs, sentiments, and moral themes of a society and these cultural elements are reflected in various social writings. By comparing the different writings of a society over a period of time, the researcher is able to see changes in social behavior (Sanders, 1974).

One of the early efforts was Berelson's (1952) definition of content analysis; "a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (pp 28). More recently, Weber (1990) defines content analysis as "a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from text" (pp 62). Weber also states that the best content-analytic studies use both qualitative and quantitative operations on texts.

According to Weber (1990), the central problems of content analysis originate mainly in the data-reduction process by which the many words of text are classified into a relatively small number of content categories. One set of problems concerns the consistency or reliability of text classification. In content analysis, reliability problems usually grow out of the ambiguity of word meanings, category definitions, or other coding rules. Weber (1990) refers to the term validity as potentially confusing because it has been used in a variety of ways in the methods literature. A distinction more specific to content analysis is between the validity of the classification scheme or the variables derived from it, and the validity of the interpretation relating content variables to their causes or consequences.

Weber (1990) stated that many studies require investigators to design and implement coding schemes. Whether the coding is to be done by humans or by computer, the process of creating and applying a coding scheme consists of several basic steps. If investigators have identified the substantive questions to be investigated, relevant theories, previous research, and the texts to be classified, they next proceed with the steps that would be relevant to their study. However, it is possible that forms of text not in the sample used for testing may present novel combinations of words that were not anticipated or encountered earlier. These may be misclassified.

According to Weber (1990), content analysis procedures create quantitative indicators that assess the degree of attention or concern devoted to units such as themes, categories, or issues. The investigator then interprets and explains the results using relevant theories. In content analysis, measurement consists of counting the occurrences of meaning units such as specific words, phrases, content categories, and themes (Weber, 1990). Two standard measurement practices are: 1) using the percentage or proportion to control for document length, and 2) counting each occurrence of a word or other meaning unit equally.

According to Krippendorff (1980), there are three types of reliability that are pertinent to content analysis: stability, reproducibility, and accuracy. Stability refers to the extent to which the results of content classification are invariant over time. Stability can be determined when the same content is coded more than once by the same coder. Inconsistencies in coding, therefore, constitute instability or unreliability. These inconsistencies may stem from a variety of factors, including ambiguities in the coding rules, ambiguities in the text, cognitive changes within the coder, or simple errors, such as recording the wrong numeric code for a category. Because only one person is coding, stability is the weakest form of reliability. Reproducibility, sometimes called intercoder reliability, refers to the extent to which content classification produces the same results when the same text is coded by more than one coder. Conflicting coding usually result from cognitive differences among the coders, ambiguous coding instructions, or from random recording errors. High reproducibility is a minimum standard for content analysis. This is because stability measures the consistency of the individual coder's private understandings, whereas reproducibility measures the consistency of shared understandings held by two or more coders (Krippendorff, 1980).

Krippendorff (1980) also refers to accuracy as the extent to which the classification of text corresponds to some standard or norm. This is the strongest form of reliability and the most difficult to achieve. It has sometimes been used to test the performance of human coders where a standard coding for some text has already been established. Except for training purposes, standard coding is infrequently employed. Consequently, researchers seldom use accuracy in reliability assessment.

Weber (1990) states that a much more difficult set of problems concern the validity of the categories that result from content classification. A variable used in a content analysis is valid to the extent that it measures the concept that the investigator intends it to measure. As happens with reliability, validity problems also grow out of the ambiguity of word meanings and category or variable definitions.

In this particular study, the researcher was the only coder. The CAC Coordinator actually created the textual materials. Moreover, using her own cognitive base, she constructed the word meanings which appear in the complaints, and which can make the results ambiguous. Reproducibility may not be accomplished because there was no standard or norm that the CAC Coordinator used in classifying the text or that the researcher used in coding it.

Limitations

This study is limited to those citizens who filed complaints through the Citizen Action Center, concerning city Departments of Kalamazoo, Michigan. This study is also limited to five departments that operate largely out of Kalamazoo's City Hall: Public Safety, Development Services, Public Works, Utilities, and Special Services. Miscellaneous issues were also included as a residual category.

There are other limitations to the data. One is that those citizens who had complaints but did not formally file them were not included in this study. The number of such complaints cannot be known, but could be substantial. Another limitation is that, the complaints included in the data set were only those received through the Citizens

Action Center. Complaints filed directly with the departments or through other channels are not included in this study. Unfortunately, there is no way of acquiring an accurate count of these complaints. The departments don't use the same complaint form, if in fact they use one at all. Again, however, the impact of such complaints could be substantial, depending on their nature and numbers.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Content Results

The researcher examined all the complaints collected. The frequencies of the different types of complaints within each city government department were tallied as were the word counts. A content analysis was done and those with persistent patterns were pointed out.

Public Safety

In 1993, the complaints received by the City, concerning Public Safety during the 1st quarter (January – March), showed no consistent pattern in the types of complaints reported. In the 2nd quarter (April – June), the most persistent complaints were those about alleged negative comments and threats made by police officers to citizens. The major complaint patterns established in the 3rd quarter (July – September) were abandoned cars with no license tags that were left on various properties, and a need for more police officers to handle drug dealers. High crime areas seemed to comprise the most outstanding complaints in the 4th quarter (October – December).

In the first three quarters of 1994, there appeared to be no consistent pattern to the complaints reported about Public Safety. The most persistent complaint reported in the 4th quarter was junk cars being illegally stored. Over the course of the two years observed, there was no single consistent pattern of content or types of complaints reported for Public Safety.

Development Services

In 1993, Development Services received quite a few complaints on houses that needed to be inspected during the 1st quarter. A change came about in the 2nd quarter in which the majority of the complaints dealt with kids hanging out at boarded-up vacant houses. In the 3rd quarter, there seemed to be two main themes in reference to complaints: furniture and trash left on properties, and a need for houses to be inspected. There was no consistent pattern of complaints reported in the 4th quarter for Development Services.

In 1994, leaving excessive trash out by the curb was the most common complaint reported for the 1st quarter. In the 2nd and 3rd quarters, there did not appear to be any consistent pattern. Several groups of complaints were reported in the 4th quarter. The one occurring most often was that of trash being left in yards and on the street. Next in order of occurrence were citizens' complaints of being treated rudely over the phone by Buildings employees, followed by inspectors entering properties without permission, and a need for sufficient housing for handicapped individuals.

Overall, there was no pattern established for the types of complaints reported for Development Services over the two-year period. The complaints varied from one year to the next.

Public Works

In 1993, the complaints received by the City concerning Public Works during the 1st quarter covered a wide array and are listed in descending order: insufficient snow and ice removal, trash needing to be picked up, blown street lights needing replacement, and citizens receiving verbal abuse from Public Works employees. The two most frequently reported types of complaints during the 2nd quarter were trash and furniture being left on properties and insufficient snow and ice removal (the CAC Coordinator also listed these two complaints under Development Services). In the 3rd quarter, garbage needing to be picked up and potholes in the streets and alleys were most common. The most prevalent complaint during the 4th quarter was that many street lights were burned out.

There were three recurring complaints in the 1st quarter of Public Works in 1994. In order of occurrence were the complaints of insufficient snow and ice removal, trash accumulations at curbside and alley ways, and city trucks not following driving rules and regulations. The only persistent complaint in the 2nd quarter was the lack of lighting at certain intersections. During the 3rd quarter, the complaints consisted of street and gutter flooding because the drains were too high since the city did curb cuts, tree roots that make sidewalks buckle up and jam the drains, fallen dead trees blocking sidewalks and alley ways and a company contracted through the city throwing trash in the neighbor's yard. The 4th and final quarter had numerous complaints of tree limbs and twigs properly tied but not picked up.

Over the two-year span, the only established pattern of type of complaints reported, occurred in the 1st quarter. The recurring complaints were insufficient snow and ice removal and excessive trash accumulations at curbsides.

Utilities

The complaints received by the City concerning Utilities in the 1st and 4th quarters showed no consistent pattern in the types of complaints reported in 1993. Water services' being shut off was the most common complaint in the 2nd quarter. The complaint of street lights needing replacement occurred the most in the 3rd quarter.

In 1994, the complaints received by the City concerning Utilities during the 1st, 3rd and 4th quarters showed no consistent pattern in the types of complaints reported. Leaving large water pipes on lawns after construction was the most often reported complaint in the 2nd quarter. Overall, there were no consistent patterns over the two years in terms of the types of complaints reported.

Special Services

In 1993, there were no complaints received at all by the City concerning Special Services during the 1st quarter. During the other three quarters, there were no conclusive or consistent patterns to the complaints reported about Special Services. In all four quarters of 1994, Special Services appeared to have no consistent patterns of reported complaints. Over the two years, there were not really enough complaints received for Special Services to indicate a pattern in the types of complaints reported.

Miscellaneous

In 1993, the complaints received concerning Miscellaneous issues during the 1st and 4th quarters showed no consistent pattern in the types of complaints reported.

In the 2nd quarter, the complaint most often reported was cars that were illegally parked and blocking traffic. The two most frequently reported complaints for the 3rd quarter were wrongfully receiving tickets for parking violations and Cable costs being too high. In all four quarters of 1994, Miscellaneous issues appeared to have no consistent patterns of reported complaints. There were no consistent patterns established for any quarter during the two years of complaints regarding Miscellaneous issues.

Frequency Results

The analysis for these data is presented in four major sections. The first section examines the number of complaints from 1993 to 1994. The second section looks at the average number of words per complaint. The third section displays any differences in "reported" and "actual" complaints for 1993. The fourth section displays any differences in "reported" and "actual" complaints for 1994. In each instance the results from each section are tested using the Student t-Test.

Number of Complaints from 1993 to 1994

A statistical test was done on each of the City departments in this study to determine if any changes in the number of complaints received were statistically significant. Data analysis utilizing the Student t-Test (See Table 1) revealed that there was a statistically significant change in the number of complaints concerning the Public Safety department from 1993 to 1994. The large number of complaints reported in August of 1994 represents a slight skew in the data.

Table 1

t-Test Results Regarding the Change in Number of
Public Safety Complaints for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	3.92	2.6287	1.9019*	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	2.75	6.0227		

*Significance at the .05 level

Overall, there appeared to be no consistent pattern to the number of complaints reported about Development Services within the two years observed. The numbers of complaints were in fact, quite sporadic for the entire two years. Table 2 presents the t-Test findings regarding the Development Services Department. No statistically significant changes occurred in the number of complaints concerning the Development Services department from 1993 to 1994. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was .8044 at the .05 alpha level. The large number of complaints reported in October of 1994 may account for the slight skew in the data.

Table 2

t-Test Results Regarding the Change in Number of
Development Services Complaints
for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	4.58	5.9015	.8044	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	3.75	8.0227		

For the two years studied, there appeared to be no consistent pattern to the number of complaints reported about Public Works. Again, the number of complaints was sporadic as a whole. The numbers were even more sporadic than those for the Development Services Department. Reported in Table 3 are the t-Test results in reference to the Public Works Department. With a critical value of 1.7958 and a t-Score of .1796 there was no statistically significant change in the number of complaints concerning the Public Works department from 1993 to 1994.

There did appear to be considerable change in the number of complaints reported about Utilities over the two years. It was likely due to the 3rd quarter. This quarter appeared to have the most concentrated number of complaints reported.

Table 3

t-Test Results Regarding the Change in Number of Public Works Complaints for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	5.25	12.9318	.1796	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	5.08	8.9924		

Table 4 presents the t-Test results for the Utilities Department. The test indicates that there was a statistically significant change in the number of complaints concerning the Utilities department from 1993 to 1994. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was -1.9389 at the .05 alpha level.

In almost all four quarters, there appeared to be some differences in the number of complaints reported about Special Services from one year to the next.

However, there was little consistency in the changes except for the 3rd quarter when there was a clear increase in the number of complaints reported.

Table 4

t-Test Results Regarding the Change in Number of Utilities Complaints for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	1.67	2.6060	-1.9389*	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	3.17	7.2424		

*Significant at the .05 level

Indicated in Table 5 are the results of the t-Test for the Special Services Department. According to the critical value of 1.7958 and the t-Score of .0943 at the .05 alpha level, there was no statistically significant change in the number of complaints concerning the Special Services department from 1993 to 1994.

Table 5

t-Test Results Regarding the Change in Number of Special Services Complaints for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	1.08	3.1742	.0943	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	1.00	4.0000		

Finally, with respect to the Miscellaneous category, there appeared to be no consistent pattern to the number of complaints reported in the first three quarters during both years. The 4th quarter seemed to show a slight pattern whereby the number of complaints decreased during the fall months.

Table 6 contains the t-Test findings regarding the Miscellaneous Issues. With a critical value of 1.7958 and a t-Score of -0.4545 at the .05 alpha level, there was no statistically significant change in the number of complaints concerning Miscellaneous Issues from 1993 to 1994.

Table 6

t-Test Results Regarding the Change in Number of
Miscellaneous Issues Complaints
for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	4.67	7.8787	-0.4545	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	5.08	10.9924		

Average Words per Complaint

In 1993, there was an average of 110 words per complaint for Public Safety during the first quarter. In the 2nd quarter, the average number of words increased by 70 words, to 180. The average decreased in the 3rd quarter by 77 words, leaving an average of 103 words. The 4th quarter again fell by 53 words, with an ending average of 50 words per complaint for that quarter. The annual average for 1993's Public Safety Department was 111 words per complaint.

In the 1st quarter of 1994, Public Safety complaints had an average of 122 words. There was a 46 word decline in the 2nd quarter, bringing the average down to

76. In the 3rd quarter, there was an increase of 59 words, making the average for that quarter 135 words. The 4th quarter for Public Safety, at an average of 150 words per complaint was the greatest average for the second year only. The annual average for 1994's Public Safety department was 121 words per complaint.

Revealed in Table 7 are the t-Test results for the Public Safety department of City Hall. The test indicates that there was no statistically significant change in the average number of words per complaint concerning the Public Safety department from 1993 to 1994. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was -.2210 at the .05 alpha level.

Table 7

t-Test Results Regarding the Average Number of Words per
Public Safety Complaint for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	110.92	8551.9020	-.2210	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	120.83	8543.0606		

During the 1st quarter for Development Services, the average was 103 words per complaint. There was a substantial decrease in the 2nd quarter with the average declining to 67 words. The average number of words per complaint continued to decrease in the 3rd and 4th quarters, to 57 words per complaint in the 3rd quarter and 43 words in the 4th quarter. The annual average for 1993 in the Development Services Department was 68 words per complaint.

There was an average of 65 words per complaint in the 1st quarter of

Development Services in 1994. The average in the 2nd quarter decreased to 50 words. In the 3rd quarter, there was a 31 word increase in the average, to 81 words. There was yet another increase in the 4th quarter by 50 words, producing 131 words as the average in the last quarter. The annual average for 1994's Development Services department was 82 words per complaint.

Indicated in Table 8 are the t-Test findings regarding the Development Services department of City Hall. The critical value of this test was 1.7958 and the t-Score was -.6099 at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, there was no statistically significant change in the average number of words per complaint concerning the Development Services department from 1993 to 1994.

Table 8

t-Test Results Regarding the Average Number of Words per Development Services Complaint for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	67.67	2744.6060	-.6099	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	81.75	3725.4772		

For Public Works, 58 words was the average for the 1st quarter of 1993. The average for the 2nd quarter dropped, to 47. The 3rd quarter had the largest average for this department, at 76 words per complaint. The average of the 4th quarter of Public Works was 59 words per complaint. The 1993 annual average for the Public Works Department was 60 words per complaint.

In 1994, the 1st quarter of Public Works had an average of at 65 words per complaint. In the 2nd quarter, the average increased by 43 words, with the resulting average being 108 words. There was still another increase to 132 words per complaint for the 3rd quarter average. In the 4th quarter, the average dropped off to 100 words. The annual average for 1994's Public Works department was 101 words per complaint.

Reported in Table 9 are the t-Test results for the Public Works Department. The test indicates that there was a statistically significant change in the average number of words per complaint concerning the Public Works department from 1993 to 1994. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was -3.1137 at the .05 alpha level.

During the first three quarters of 1993 for the Utilities Department, the average number of words per complaint steadily increased from 84 words in the 1st quarter, to 92 words in the 2nd quarter to 122 words in the 3rd quarter. Then there was a substantial decrease in the 4th quarter to 56 average words per complaint. The annual average for 1993 in the Utilities department was 89 words per complaint.

Table 9

t-Test Results Regarding the Average Number of Words per
Public Works Complaint for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	59.92	293.9015	-3.1137	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	101.17	2831.2424		

*Significant at the .05 level

There was also a similar pattern of growth in the averages throughout 1994. There was a starting average of 36 words in the 1st quarter. In the 2nd quarter, there was a slight increase to 40 words as the average. A large jump of 87 words brought the average to 127 words for the 3rd quarter. In the 4th quarter, the average of 325 words per complaint represented the single largest increase, at 198 words (according to the data, several complaints during this quarter were quite lengthy and detailed). The annual average for 1994's Utilities department was 132 words per complaint. Revealed in Table 10 are the t-Test findings regarding the Utilities department of City Hall. The change in the average length of complaints was not statistically significant concerning the Utilities department from 1993 to 1994. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was -.6806 at the .05 alpha level.

Table 10

t-Test Results Regarding the Average Number of Words per Utilities Complaint for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	88.67	2932.0610	-.6806	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	135.42	42178.4470		

There were no complaints reported in 1993 during the 1st quarter for Special Services. Therefore, the average number of words per complaint was zero. The 2nd quarter had an average of 34 words. A slight decrease to 21 words per complaint was calculated for the 3rd quarter. The 4th quarter Special Services department grew to 75 words per actual complaint. The annual average for 1993's Special Services

Department was 33 words per complaint.

The averages for the four quarters of 1994 in Special Services were sporadic. In the 1st quarter the average was 49 words per complaint. The 2nd quarter dropped to an average of 16 words and then increased dramatically to 108 average words in the 3rd quarter. The 4th quarter dropped back to an average of 28 words per complaint. The annual average for the Special Services Department in 1994 was 50 words per complaint.

Indicated in Table 11 are the t-Test results for the Special Services department of City Hall. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was -.5865 at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, there was no statistically significant change in the average number of words per complaint concerning the Special Services Department from 1993 to 1994.

Finally, in 1993, the average number of words per Miscellaneous complaint varied a great deal over the four quarters. The 1st quarter had an average of 65 words per complaint. There was a decrease to 34 words in the 2nd quarter. The 3rd quarter increased to 77 words per complaint. The 4th quarter decreased yet again to an average of 44 words per complaint. The 1993 annual average for Miscellaneous issues was 55 words per complaint.

During 1994, all four quarters were within 10 words difference. There was a 61 word average per complaint in the 1st quarter. The 2nd quarter average did not vary much from that at 56 words and the 3rd quarter average was 65 words. The 4th quarter decreased slightly, bringing the average down to 55 words per complaint for

Table 11

t-Test Results Regarding the Average Number of Words per Special Services Complaint for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	32.75	2907.2950	-.5865	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	50.33	7088.0606		

that quarter. The annual average for 1994 Miscellaneous issues was 59 words per complaint.

Reported in Table 12 are the t-Test findings regarding the Miscellaneous Issues of City Hall. There was no statistically significant change in the average number of words per complaint concerning Miscellaneous Issues from 1993 to 1994. There was a critical value of 1.7958 and the t-Score was -.4357 at the .05 alpha level.

Table 12

t-Test Results Regarding the Average Number of Words per Miscellaneous Issues Complaint for 1993 and 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
1993 Complaints	11	55.08	1468.8810	-.4357	1.7958
1994 Complaints	11	58.92	708.6287		

Differences in the Numbers of "Reported" and "Actual" Complaints - 1993

These next two sections of analysis are somewhat different from the others. Instead of the data being looked at from 1993 to 1994, date are analyzed separately for 1993 and 1994. The data examined in this section are the numbers of "reported" (i.e.,by the C.A.C. Coordinator) and "actual" (i.e., by the researcher) complaints received in 1993. The data for 1994 are examined in the next section.

In 1993, concerning Public Safety, there was no difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints.

Table 13 presents the 1993 t-Test results for the Public Safety Department. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was 1.0317 at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, there was no statistically significant change in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Public Safety department in 1993.

Table 13

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of "Reported" and "Actual" Public Safety Complaints for 1993

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	3.92	2.6287	1.0317	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	3.42	2.8106		

In 1993, the complaints received by the City, concerning Development Services showed that there was a substantial difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. More were recorded by the CAC Coordinator than were recorded by the researcher. Indicated in Table 14 are the 1993 t-Test findings regarding the Development Services Department. There is a statistically significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the

Development Services department in 1993. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was 2.4189 at the .05 alpha level.

Table 14

t-Test Results Regarding Difference in the Number of
"Reported" and "Actual" Development Services
Complaints for 1993

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	4.58	5.9015	2.4189	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	2.92	2.9924		

*Significant at the .05 level

In 1993, the complaints received by the City, concerning Public Works showed that there was no significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Reported in Table 15 are the 1993 t-Test results for the Public Works department of City Hall. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was -1.5414 at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, there was no statistically significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Public Works Department in 1993.

In 1993, the complaints received by the City concerning Utilities showed that there was no significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Table 16 displays the 1993 t-Test findings regarding the Utilities Department. There was no statistically significant difference between the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Utilities department in 1993.

Table 15

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of "Reported" and "Actual" Public Works Complaints for 1993

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	5.25	12.9318	-1.5414	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	6.75	5.6590		

In 1993, the complaints received by the City, concerning Special Services showed that there was no significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Indicated in Table 17 are the 1993 t-Test results for the Special Services Department. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was 1.0230 at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, there was no statistically significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Special Services Department in 1993.

Table 16

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of "Reported" and "Actual" Utilities Complaints for 1993

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	1.67	2.6060	-.1428	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	1.75	1.6590		

Table 17

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of
"Reported" and "Actual" Special Services
Complaints for 1993

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	1.08	3.1742	1.0230	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	.50	.6363		

In 1993, the complaints received by the City, concerning Miscellaneous Issues showed that there was a substantial difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Table 18 displays the 1993 t-Test findings regarding Miscellaneous Issues. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was 2.7214 at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, there was a statistically significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning Miscellaneous Issues in 1993.

Table 18

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of
"Reported" and "Actual" Miscellaneous Issues
Complaints for 1993

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	4.83	8.6969	2.7214	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	2.67	1.6969		

*Significant at the .05 level

Differences in the Numbers of "Reported" and "Actual" Complaints – 1994. In 1994, the complaints received by the City concerning Public Safety showed that there was no difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Revealed in Table 19 are the 1994 t-Test results for the Public Safety Department of City Hall. There was no statistically significant difference between in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Public Safety department in 1994. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was 0 at the .05 alpha level.

Table 19

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of "Reported" and "Actual" Public Safety Complaints for 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	2.75	6.0227	0	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	2.75	8.0227		

In 1994, the complaints received by the City concerning Development Services showed that there was no significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Table 20 shows the t-Test findings regarding the Development Services department of City Hall. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was 1.3319 at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, there was no statistically significant difference between the number or "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Development Services Department in 1994.

Table 20

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of
"Reported" and "Actual" Development Services
Complaints for 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	3.75	8.0227	1.3319	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	3.33	8.7878		

In 1994, the complaints received by the City concerning Public Works also showed that there was no significant difference in the numbers of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Reported in Table 21 are the 1994 t-Test results for the Public Works department of City Hall. There was no statistically significant difference between the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Public Works department in 1994. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was -.6504 at the .05 alpha level.

Table 21

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of
"Reported" and "Actual" Public Works
Complaints for 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	5.08	8.9924	-.6504	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	5.42	15.5378		

In 1994, the complaints received by the City concerning Utilities showed that there was a substantial difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Table 22 displays the 1994 t-Test findings regarding the Utilities department of City Hall. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was 2.5690 at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, there was a statistically significant difference between the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Utilities department in 1994.

Table 22

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of
"Reported" and "Actual" Utilities
Complaints for 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	3.17	7.2424	2.5690	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	2.17	3.0606		

*Significant at the .05 level

In 1994, the complaints received by the City concerning Special Services also showed that there was no significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Table 23 contains the 1994 t-Test results for the Special Services department of City Hall. There was no statistically significant change in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Special Services department in 1994. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was .3899 at the .05 alpha level.

Table 23

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of
"Reported" and "Actual" Special Services
Complaints for 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	1.00	4.0000	.3899	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	.75	.7500		

Finally, in 1994, the complaints received by the City concerning Miscellaneous Issues showed that there was no significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints. Reported in Table 24 are the 1994 t-Test findings regarding Miscellaneous Issues of City Hall. The critical value was 1.7958 and the t-Score was 1.4591 at the .05 alpha level. Therefore, there was no statistically significant difference in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning Miscellaneous Issues in 1994.

Table 24

t-Test Results Regarding Differences in the Number of
"Reported" and "Actual" Miscellaneous Issues
Complaints for 1994

Source of Variance	Degrees of Freedom	Mean	Variance	t Score	Critical Value
Reported Complaints	11	5.08	10.9924	1.4591	1.7958
Actual Complaints	11	4.08	4.6287		

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

There was a consistent pattern in the content or types of complaints concerning the Public Works department from 1993 to 1994. However, there was no consistent pattern for any of the other categories of complaints. Statistically significant changes were found in the number of complaints concerning the Public Safety and Utilities departments from 1993 to 1994. Statistically significant changes were also found in the average number of words per complaint concerning the Public Works department from 1993 to 1994. Statistically significant differences were also found in the number of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the Department of Development Services and Miscellaneous Issues in 1993, and the Utilities Department in 1994.

A major finding of this research is that there was no consistent pattern of content or types of complaints concerning the various City Hall departments from 1993 to 1994, with the single exception of the Public Works department. For Public Works, insufficient snow and ice removal and excessive trash accumulations at curbsides were consistently reported. While the finding is important to the Public Works Department, it does not correspond with Wagenheim and Reurink's (1991) conclusion that once the citizens' service needs have been identified, City departments must develop revised service delivery systems to respond to those needs. Perhaps the department's ability to respond will require more time than was available in this study. In a similar vein, the Public Works Department was the only department showing a statistically significant increase in the average number of words per complaint from 1993 to 1994, while the five other departments showed no statistically significant changes. This too could be attributed to the lack of response during 1993.

Another finding from this research is that there was a statistically significant change in the numbers of complaints concerning two City Hall departments from 1993 to 1994: Public Safety and Utilities. The number of complaints regarding Public Safety dropped considerably from 1993 to 1994, while the number of complaints for Utilities increased dramatically.

Although the reasons for such changes cannot be determined from the current study, it is at least reasonable to speculate that the decline in complaints about Public Safety may be related to improvements in response to complaints over time. By the same token, the increase in complaints for Utilities suggests a need for improving their response to citizen concerns. The other four departments, Development Services, Public Works, Special Services, and Miscellaneous Issues showed no statistically significant changes in the number of complaints from 1993 to 1994. Finally, in 1993, there was a statistically significant difference between the numbers of "reported" and "actual" complaints concerning the departments of Development Services and Miscellaneous Issues. In 1994, there was also a statistically significant difference between the numbers of "reported" and "actual" complaints regarding the Utilities Department. Since such diffences in result are presumably due to differences in data handling between the CAC Coordinator and the researcher, it is not clear that any inference can be drawn. However, the fact that in all three instances the "reported" are higher than the "actual" does suggest that there is the possibility that selected complaints may not have initially recorded as accurately as they might have been.

This study suggests that there are areas where city governments need to continually work at improving their services. Manion (1993) suggests that this improvement can be gained through TQM. However, the acceptance of such a program by the rank-and-file workers is critical to the success of TQM, and especially improvements in customer service. If this is accomplished, employees may be more eager to assist citizens with their complaints and grievances, therefore creating at least the perception of a more smoothly run government.

Recommendations

The researcher recommends that future studies of departmental complaints focus on the content of the complaints in more depth. It is also recommended that larger cities in different geographic locations be studied and over longer periods of time. Perhaps such a study could be conducted to examine seasonal changes in complaints for each department. Of particular interest is the manner in which citizens perceive the handling of complaints. The current findings suggest that these may be related to the nature and extent of subsequent complaints. More city departments could also be included in future studies in hopes of improving the delivery of services across the board.

Some literature also suggests that surveys can be used as a feedback mechanism to see what kinds of services are being rendered by city departments (Yin, 1975). Such surveys, or even focus groups, could be used in conjunction with descriptive analyses of departmental complaints. These and other various mechanisms should provide a well rounded view of the quality and quantity of the services that a city government is delivering.

Finally, the researcher recommends that the CAC remain in existence and ongoing modifications to its operations should be made to better meet the needs of Kalamazoo's citizens. It clearly is an important source of citizen feedback, and improvements in the speed and accuracy of its reports, (as well as referrals to appropriate city departments) can only improve the public's perception of the way city government is managed.

APPENDIX A

HSIRB APPROVAL LETTER

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board

Kalamazoo, Michigan 4900
616 387-8293

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Date: Feb 2, 1995

To: Moore, Monique Renee

From: Richard Wright, Interim Chair

Richard A. Wright

Re: HSIRB Project Number 95-01-18

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "An evaluation of Kalamazoo, Michigan's city hall departmental complaints process for the years of 1993 and 1994 has been approved under the exempt category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you must seek specific approval for any changes in this design. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: Feb 2, 1996

xc: VanValey, SOC

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