

**Elements of representation within Iowa soil**

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: Political Science

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2006

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## **Abstract**

Representation is key to the field of Political Science. Behavior of representatives and conditional factors affect representation. Previous research is lacking in information about representation on a small scale. This paper hypothesizes that representation at the local rural level is also affected by behavior and conditional factors. This paper uses Iowa rural community and city council data to explore the relationship between behavioral and environmental factors and citizen satisfaction ratings. Correlation and regression analysis was run on data from the RDI project and CCS project. The results show relationships between economic factors and population and the dependent variables, citizen satisfaction with police services, and citizen satisfaction with overall government services. Relationships between representation and behavior or conditional factors exist, even at a rural level, and are worth adding to the field of Political Science.

## **CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION**

Understanding how elected officials represent their constituents is central to the field of Political Science. Despite representation's importance, many questions remain unanswered. Previous theories of representation attempt to discern if personal characteristics, environmental factors, and attitude affect how elected officials represent their constituents. This paper will use rural Iowa city council and town data to examine which factors yield predictive power over quality of representation, and thus citizen satisfaction. The dependent variable includes citizen satisfaction ratings for a variety of community services. The independent variables measure environmental factors, personal characteristics, and job orientations. This study employs both correlation and regression models to examine the relationship between elected official and constituent. The results show few relationships between behavior or traits of representatives and citizen satisfaction. Population and economic factors are most frequently related to citizen satisfaction.

First, previous ideas of representation will be explored, as will their relevance to this study. Then the relevance of rural Iowa to this paper and the general topic will be explained. This paper will then describe the data from which this study is built. The following section describes the two surveys used in this study, the survey done within the Rural Development Initiative, and the following city council survey. Data from rural Iowa towns and city councils will be used to determine if any patterns exist between the aforesaid factors and citizen satisfaction with government services.

### **1.1 Representation**

Representation is the cornerstone of politics, at least as we know it in the United States. Citizens allow representatives decision-making power over society and economy, to

increase efficiency of government. If individuals all acted as their own representatives, the political arena would be both noisy and slow. At all levels of government, representatives stand in for a collective of citizens. Each citizen has goals, which cannot be voiced individually because of their number and complexity. The concept of representation assumes that voters are aware of outcomes and representative behavior. The voter assumes their choice of representative will provide for an adequate number of their goals (Alvarez and Gronke 1996). It follows that citizen satisfaction with services perceived as government's responsibility should measure in some way the job performance of their representatives in government. Citizens place their goals in the hands of representatives, and citizens' satisfaction should increase as these goals are fulfilled. Representation, although essential to politics, is also complex, and studies have yielded no clear answer of its workings or proper descriptions of the players.

Rural Iowa should fascinate representation scholars. Political interest is essential in supporting the structures and system which allow representatives to produce outputs on behalf of their constituencies. (Roth and Boynton 1969). Iowa's history of civic involvement makes it an ideal place in which to study features of local government. According to Roth's logic, support for political systems in Iowa stabilizes the structures and methods through which outputs are produced.

The key areas of representation this study addresses include environmental factors, representatives' style, behavior, and personal characteristics. Previous literature addresses some of these questions.

First, a representatives' orientation to his or her position may play a part in citizen satisfaction with governmental services. In this study, job orientation is expressed in several



forms, including representatives' job satisfaction, their reasons for running for office, the level of competition in seeking office, time spent on the job, and representational style. The importance of these factors to the field of political science will be discussed, followed by a discussion of the other important factors, conflict among representatives, qualifications for office-holding, and demographic characteristics of representatives.

According to political scholars, the lack of job satisfaction can lead to several outcomes: exit, voice, neglect, or loyalty (Daley 1992). Each of these has an effect on the relationship between the employer (citizenry) and employee (representative). "Exit" refers to quitting, "voice" refers to seeking reform, "neglect" refers to a passive attitude, and loyalty refers to sticking it out despite dissatisfaction. Exit and neglect are considered destructive avenues for dissatisfaction, while voice and loyalty are more positive. (Daley 1992) In the case of destructive dissatisfaction, job performance is damaged. Representative dissatisfaction may thus affect citizen satisfaction, a proposal examined by this study.

Political ambition is an interesting facet of representation, but it does not receive much attention from scholars. Gordon Black acknowledges this neglect, stating that there is a lack of knowledge about political ambition within the field (Black 1972). The exception, he writes, comes from the work of Joseph Schlesinger (Black 1972), who theorized that politicians behave according to the goals of the office they seek. Previous approaches to political ambition assume that politicians are motivated primarily by self-interest. Black writes, "most politicians try to promote the fiction that their motives are unsoiled by private ambition" (Black, 1972). This study examines representatives' reasons for running, in order to determine the ambitions of Iowa city council members, as well as to measure ambitions relationship with citizen satisfaction.

Previous scholars have examined margin of victory as it relates to legislative behavior. Miller and Stokes examined the affect of margin of victory and voting in self or constituent interest. They found that representatives were more likely to vote according to self-interest in closely contested elections. This seems counter-intuitive, as it counters the hypothesis that wide margins of victory promote safety, which would lead to self-interested action (Jewell and Patterson, 1966). This study asks if voting according to constituent interest raises citizen satisfaction, and if this relationship is affected by margin of victory.

Representational style became a focus for social scientists in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, beginning with a new understanding of legitimacy. Pitkin, in her work, *The Concept of Representation*, challenged the status quo notions of authorization (having been selected by the public) and accountability (having to be reelected to stay in office) as the only measures of a representatives' legitimacy. She believed that neither term described how public officials behaved as representatives (Pitkin 1967). She maintained that representatives are responsible for acting on behalf of their citizens, while using their own judgment in determining the right course of action. The term delegate refers to a representative standing in and espousing the preferences of constituents, while trustee was coined to describe a representative who makes up their own mind about the well-being of the constituency and how best to achieve it. These distinctions are referred to as representational style (Wahlke et al, 1962). Wahlke and co-authors also coined the term politico, describing a representative in the middle of the trustee to delegate spectrum. In their research, they found that a large number of representatives fell into this middle category (Wahlke et al, 1962).

The factors discussed above; job satisfaction, political ambition, margin of victory, and representational style, are all used in this study as measures of a representatives' job

orientation. Also included in this category is time spent on the job, which has received very little attention from students of political science. This paper will now turn to a discussion of other factors affecting quality of representation, including conflict among representatives, job qualifications, and personal characteristics of representatives.

The amount of conflict present within the governing body is a possible factor affecting citizen satisfaction. Past literature regarding conflict among representatives is notably lacking. Studies have examined inter-party conflict at the state level and intra-party competition in elections (Dawson and Robinson 1963). However, the present study's focus is town-level conflict, in most cases in a non-partisan setting, on which no notable studies have been done. This study hypothesizes increased levels of conflict yield reports of lower citizen satisfaction.

Qualifications for office holding, such as tenure, education, or contact with constituents might have a relationship with citizen satisfaction. These characteristics have some similar properties, and are all named "qualifications" because they are all standard characteristics of representatives. For the most part, voters expect representatives to be in contact with them and be educated enough to make decisions on their behalf.

Also included in analysis are a few average demographic characteristics of rural Iowa city council members. Both age and income, while not addressed much in previous representational literature, are included in analysis.

The answers to questions of representation no doubt vary depending on the level or type of governance involved. Despite the importance of representation to understanding politics at all levels, most studies done have focused on large governing bodies, either at the federal level, or within large cities (Pelisserro and Krebs 1997). A clearer picture of politics at

a smaller, local level has yet to be developed, even when local decisions may impact citizens as strongly as those made at the federal level. This study will use town and government data to explore the relationship between representatives and citizens in rural Iowa. The goal is to examine these questions of job orientation, perception of conflict, qualifications, and demographic characteristics as they relate to citizen satisfaction among rural communities in Iowa. Studies of representation often occur at the state, national, or big-city level. Theories of representation as they apply to rural local government are largely absent in the discipline of Political Science. The study will examine which factors affect representation in small communities and how this differs from findings at state and national levels.

## **CHAPTER 2. RDI AND CITY COUNCIL DATA**

This study draws on two sets of data, in order to analyze factors relating to citizen satisfaction in rural Iowa. The first set of data includes characteristics and satisfaction measures of rural Iowa citizens (RDI Homepage). The second set of data includes the characteristics and satisfaction measures of rural Iowa city council members (City Council Survey Data, 2004). Combining them provides a way to measure which factors of local government affect citizen satisfaction with government services.

### **2.1 RDI Background and Data**

The citizen measures analyzed in this study come from the Rural Development Initiative within the Department of Sociology at Iowa State University. The Rural Development Initiative (RDI) started as a response to decline of rural Iowa communities, and the lack of information possessed about this decline. In 1994, the RDI began surveying citizens in rural communities. The data collected by the RDI has a span of at least 10 years, with the most recent report detailing 2004 survey results. (RDI Homepage)

The population from which the RDI drew its sample includes communities within the state of Iowa ranging from a population of 500 to 10,000. In addition, communities adjacent to a metropolitan area were excluded from the sample. One community within each of the ninety-nine counties in the state was randomly selected. Citizens within the selected communities were randomly picked from telephone directories. Surveys were sent to citizens in each of the selected communities, and the response rate was over 70%, yielding a representative sample (Ryan, Terry and Woebke 1994).

The RDI survey was designed in response to a perceived decline in the population and quality of life of rural Iowa communities. The purpose of the RDI surveys is to gather

information about quality of life and citizen opinion, in order to provide suggestions for policy implementation. It follows that the goal of improved policy decision-making is to slow the decline of rural Iowa communities (RDI Homepage).

In order to assess what is of value to Iowa citizens, the RDI survey asks citizens to rate various goods and services in their communities. Citizens were asked their opinions on several items, including quality of community and government services, their attachment to their town, and the character of the community. (Ryan, Terry and Woebke 1994). The results yield a variety of citizen data relating to rural Iowa communities. This study will examine ratings related to government services, and these variables will be explained in depth later.

## **2.2 City Council Background and Data**

To add to the citizen data gleaned from the RDI survey, this paper draws on a second data set which contains city council data. To add to the existing database of rural Iowa citizen information, a survey was sent to Iowa council members in the same communities surveyed by the Rural Development Initiative. This survey recorded various characteristics of council members and their perception of local government.

The City Council Survey (CCS) was sent to Iowa city-council members within the 99 communities chosen by the RDI team. The survey was sent to nearly five hundred officials, given that each community has four or five city council members. Of these, 62%, or 303 responded.

The purpose of the CCS was threefold. First, the purpose is to gauge council members' opinions of their town's character and services. Second, the CCS explores council members' attitudes about local government and their involvement in the community. Third, the CCS was designed to find out who Iowa citizens choose as their council members. To

achieve the third goal, the survey included questions of description, such as age, sex, income, education, etc. This data, combined with the citizen opinion data, has the potential to explain variation in citizen satisfaction in terms of services available in any given community.

The first third of the CCS aims to measure council members' satisfaction with community and government services, as well as the character of their community. To achieve this, the survey asked council members to rate those services classified by the RDI team as those provided by community or government. Community services include things like schools, jobs, housing, recreational opportunities, and social opportunities for groups of all ages. Government services include police, fire, emergency response, parks, water, garbage, and streets. In addition to rating services, council members were asked to rate the character of their community, choosing between adjectives like friendly or unfriendly, dangerous or safe, supportive or indifferent, prejudiced or tolerant, open or rejecting of new ideas, trusting or not, and well-kept or run down. While the data from this section has potential to compare council members' opinions with that of citizens, it is not the main focus of this paper. Instead, this study will focus on the attitudes of city council members toward local government, and descriptive characteristics of council members. This data is gleaned from the latter sections of the CCS. The latter thirds of the survey ask council members a variety of questions about their role as representative.

The next section of the survey aims to discover how council members interact with their constituents. The CCS respondents were asked how long they have lived in their community, how long they have served in local government, and how often they interact with citizens by attending organizations. These questions lend measures of interactions between council and constituency.

In addition to measuring interactions between representative and constituency, the survey contained questions about the conditions of local government in each community. Council members were asked if they perceive their role as that of delegate or trustee. They were asked to identify conflicts within the community and on the council. Finally, to examine conditions of local government, representatives were asked to rate their job satisfaction and various reasons for running for office.

Finally, the CCS asked representatives to disclose demographic information, including age, income, and education level. This data is used to determine if demographic similarities or differences between representatives and constituents affects citizen satisfaction with government services.

The city council data that resulted covers many topics. It includes council members' opinions of community and government services, as well as a measure of community character. It also includes information about council interactions with the public, including the length of council members' residency, tenure, and organizational attendance. The city council data includes measures of the conditions of local government. These measures include conflicts perceived within town and council, the representational role adopted by council members, their level of job satisfaction, and reasons for running for office. With this data, this paper can address the effect of environmental factors, interactions between representatives and constituents, conditions of local government and the representational role adopted by council members, and descriptive representation on citizen satisfaction with government services in rural Iowa communities.

The citizen and town council surveys contain valuable information that can be used to examine the effect of environment, interaction, perceived role, and descriptive characteristics



on citizen satisfaction with government services in rural Iowa. The following section describes the setting from which this data was taken.

### **CHAPTER 3. AVERAGE RURAL IOWA TOWN**

Studies of representation often focus on theories of representation at the state or national level. Differences between national and local representation exist, due to constituency size and composition. Thus it is important to understand the setting in which this study takes place. This section will describe the average rural Iowa community and the average citizen, to describe the environment in which this study examines representation.

Iowans take a lot of pride in being Iowan, despite the state's small size and notoriety. On the other hand, it is an example of civic responsibility. Iowa is known for a few things, being a good place to raise a family, the Midwestern work ethic, the Iowa caucuses, and corn. This perception of Iowa is not too far off. Most of that which Iowa has to offer is related to its low population density and political action among the citizens. The average rural Iowa town is described below.

As previously stated, Iowa is a small state. Most of Iowa is rural, with a population of only 3 million. Its population density is 52.4 per square mile, which is more than 30% below the national average, 79.6. In terms of growth, it follows behind the majority of the nation, its rate of 5.4% below that of 41 other states. While most of the 3,141 counties in the country experienced population gain between the 1990 and 2000 census counts, many in Iowa did not. Of the 99 counties in the state, 54 experienced population growth, while 45 experienced decline. (Perry and Mackun 2001).

The report generated by the RDI study of rural Iowa describes the average rural town. The report compares populations among the sample and Iowa in general. The communities picked were similar to the make-up of all rural Iowa in terms of adults per household, adults in the workforce, and population. The purpose of these measures is to determine if the

sampled population is representative of the general population within rural Iowa communities; the diagnosis, yes. (Ryan, Terry and Woebke 1994).

According to the report, while most of Iowa is technically rural, those communities that do exist have been vital in providing services to sustain the agricultural industry within the state. Many of those living in rural Iowa depend on their communities for goods and services, so though the towns are small, they are important to the health of the state and its primary industry. At the same time, the report warns of the danger of population loss in the rural communities in Iowa. According the report, the migration of youth, less revenue, and apathy are increasing threats for Iowa communities. (Ryan and Grewe 1999)

The average community described by the RDI report, “Sigma: A Profile of Iowa’s Rural Communities” describes the average rural town in Iowa. It is important in setting the scene to properly describe representation in Iowa. The report describes “Sigma” (the average community) as small, with a population of under 2000. Its population is fairly old, at an average of about 55. In addition, the population is aging, with few young people (two-thirds of households have no one under the age of 18), and fewer young adults. The average residency is about 32 years. (Ryan, Terry and Woebke 1994)

The RDI report, “How Size of Town Affects Quality of Life” also describes patterns of population migration. The survey data the RDI report draws upon includes measures of additional communities citizens might have lived in, and the populations of those communities. The obvious trend is population movement from smaller communities to larger ones, indicated by population loss in smaller communities, and population gain in larger ones. (Ryan and Grewe 1999) This is backed up by town and county data collected by from the Iowa League of Cities. The average population of towns within counties

experiencing population decline is lower than the average population of towns within counties experiencing gain. This picture of rural Iowa is valuable in evaluating representation in these communities. Because external factors such as population loss affect the political scene within Iowa communities, results of any analysis should be considered within the context of population migration.

The effect of the political environment, including population of constituency, has implications for the study of representation in Iowa communities. Population affects all aspects of government, including revenue, the amount to which council members interact, the conditions of local government, and the demographic features of a community. The influence of population on these variables is potentially quite large, so understanding this environmental factor is essential to understanding rural city council representation in Iowa.

### **3.1 Population and Population Growth**

Population decline is an important issue for the state of Iowa. A stable population is important to maintain the quality of life in a community. Stable or growing populations increase a community's tax base, and maintain the infrastructure, both essential in providing services to citizens through local government. For many small towns in Iowa, a declining population leads to decreased opportunities and services. Urban areas are challenged to react to exploding infrastructure needs, as well as other problems that accompany a rapidly increasing population, such as urban sprawl or an increase in crime. The trend in Iowa is population migration from small to larger towns. This poses a problem for the state then, as many of the towns in the state are quite small and shrinking, and left with economic or infrastructure trouble. The few urban areas in the state are growing rapidly, and face the other aforesaid problems.

Most of the state has very low population density. 61% of Iowa's 3 million citizens live within an urban area or an urban cluster. Urban clusters can still be quite small, as they are defined as areas with 2500 or more people. True urban areas, of 50,000 or more, are fewer. Less than half of Iowa's citizens reside in these larger urban areas. (Census Bureau 2005).

As previously discussed, Iowa lags behind the rest of the nation in population growth. Not only is its population growth much slower than the national average, it is not evenly spread throughout the state. 45% of Iowa counties experienced population decline, while the other 54% grew. The population migration from less to more densely populated areas is illustrated by the fact that the average population in 1990 for counties that would experience growth in the next ten years was over twice that of counties which would experience decline. (Perry and Mackun 2001)

According to the RDI of Iowa citizens, quality of life varies by community size, but not always to the favor of large cities. In 1997, the Rural Development Initiative within the Department of Sociology at Iowa State University conducted a survey of citizens in the state from three population tiers. When asked to rate community services, residents of rural towns rated most of the possible services as poor, while residents of small and metro cities rated their services good or very good. On the other hand, rural residents reported stronger community support and cooperation than residents of larger towns. (Ryan and Grewe 1999)

Iowa is facing a population restructuring that changes the quality of life in its large and small towns. For small towns, the changes include economic losses, including a decline in privately owned farms and small businesses. Larger towns face increased crime, an

increasingly disconnected community, and rapid infrastructure and economic advances. The pressure of these challenges is felt within local government.

### **3.2 Citizen Dissatisfaction**

Citizens in rural Iowa towns perceive challenges to their communities that are largely due to population decline and problems posed to revenue and infrastructure. Within a community, there are a variety of service providers. Individual citizens or groups have separate responsibilities from government, and citizen opinion seems to reflect this division of services.

According to the report, “Sigma: A Profile of Iowa’s Rural Communities”, most of the areas of concern for Iowa citizens fall within the RDI classification of “community services”. When asked about community services, many of them received a poor rating from rural citizens. Community services measured by the RDI survey include jobs, public schools, shopping, housing, medical, recreation, child, youth, and senior services. Of these, only public schools and senior programs were given a “good” or “very good” rating by at least half of the community’s citizens. The other community services; child care, housing availability, medical services, programs for youth, recreational opportunities, jobs, and shopping facilities received less support, ranging from 44% “good” or “very good” to 15% in the case of shopping facilities (Ryan, Terry and Woebke 1994). According to the RDI report, community services have the most room for improvement.

On the other hand, many services classified as “government services” by the RDI rated quite favorably. Those services included police and fire protection, garbage collection, water quality, emergency response systems, and conditions of streets and parks. According to the 1994 RDI report “Sigma: A Profile of Iowa’s Rural Communities”, fire and

emergency response have the highest approval ratings, with 90% of citizens rating these services as either “good” or “very good”. These are followed by garbage at 88%, parks at 81%, water at 70%, police at 57%, and finally, streets at only 50% (Ryan, Terry and Wuebke 1994). As an interesting side note, the RDI report draws special attention to the decline of approval with police protection. While it is not the lowest rated service, this category has experienced decline, so it is an area of concern. When all the government services are considered together, 60% of citizens rated them as favorable, and 40% rated them “fair” or “poor”. All of these services received a favorable rating by at least half of citizens. Of these, street conditions and police protection were lowest, with strong support for emergency response and fire departments (Ryan, Terry and Wuebke 1994).

Many community services were poorly ranked, while government services scored better with residents of rural Iowa. This study will focus on government services, determining which factors of local government have a significant relationship with citizen satisfaction. Citizen ratings show a greater dissatisfaction with services which are not inherent in the function of local government. Those which are clearly government domain, public safety and public spaces, tended to rate highly (Ryan, Terry and Wuebke 1994). This is of little comfort to local government, though. Even if the services provided officially are adequate, the threats incurred by a lack of community services are a danger to their town.

### **3.2.1 Pressure on Local Government**

In small communities, such as those examined in this study, local government does much more than provide only official government services. Rural communities, even if ensured public safety, might decline in population due to a lack of opportunity and recreational facilities for young people. While it is not necessarily in the job description of

local officials to solve these problems, it is essential to the survival of their communities. Local government takes on the role of community service provider, in cases when the community itself can not garner enough resources.

For example, many local governments occupy themselves with economic development. Although jobs and shopping facilities are categorized by the RDI as “community services”, some governments take an active role in recruiting or supporting businesses through tax or development incentives (Clingermayer, 1995). This is true also of initiatives behind housing or recreational facilities. These are traditionally responsibilities of individual citizens unless local government possesses one of the only adequate pools of resources to accomplish these goals. In rural Iowa, this is the case, and so the pressure to provide these services to citizens is felt by local government officials.



## **CHAPTER 4. VARIABLES**

This study examines which characteristics of rural towns and city councils relate to citizen satisfaction. The next section introduces the three models to be subjected to regression analysis with citizen satisfaction as the dependent variable, the theory behind their potential affect, and how they were measured. All variables are reduced to town-level variables, using an average of the respondents from each community.

Citizen satisfaction is the dependent variable used to examine whether characteristics of a representative affect job performance. Within all styles of representation, and among all behaviors, one common theme is present. Representation is aimed at improving the quality of life among constituents. To remain a representative, one must satisfy at least some requirements of one's citizens. It follows then, that citizen satisfaction with government-provided services is a proper measure of the job performance of a representative. As previously described, the Rural Development Initiative survey asked citizens to rate government services, including police, fire, emergency response, parks, water, garbage, and streets. The responses were recorded on a scale from 1 (good) to 5 (poor). An average by town of these service ratings will be used as this study's measure of citizen satisfaction. Now that citizen satisfaction has been described, the next section will describe the three models held to regression analysis with citizen satisfaction as the dependent variable.

### **4.1 Job Orientation**

The first group of independent variables (Model 1) deals with council members' orientations to their jobs. Variables within this model include measures of competition among council elections, job satisfaction, reasons for running, time spent as a council

member, and measures of representative style. To measure competition, council members were asked, on a scale of 1 to 5, if the race in which they were elected had a narrow or wide margin of victory. Job satisfaction was also measured on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being least satisfied and 5 being most satisfied with their time on council. Reasons for running are on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (most important), and they include the following; no one else wanted to, part of civic duty, stone to another office, asked to, to increase business contacts, enjoy politics, strong concern for specific issue, or to serve the community as a whole. Time spent as a council member was an hourly value, averaged by town. The last variable within model 1, representative style, asks council members to choose whether they vote for what their citizens want, or what they think is best for their citizens. This variable is labeled the delegate/trustee measure. All the aforementioned variables are included in Model 1.

#### **4.1.1 Competition**

One measure of the job orientation of council members is the atmosphere in which they were elected. Council members were asked whether they were elected by a wide or narrow margin. As previous scholars have hypothesized, a wide margin of victory might lead a representative to a different course of action than a narrow election (Jewell and Patterson, 1966). The hypothesis in this study is that wide margins of victory correlate to greater citizen satisfaction.

#### **4.1.2 Job Satisfaction**

The next measurement of job orientation is the job satisfaction rated by city council members. The hypothesis is that the more services a council is adequately providing for its citizens, the greater job satisfaction the council member would perceive. Thus, job

satisfaction will be examined for a potential relationship to citizen satisfaction in each of the included rural Iowa communities.

#### **4.1.3 Reasons for Seeking Office**

An important factor to consider is a council member's impetus for running. One would assume that council members running to fulfill a sense of civic duty, or to serve the community would attempt to meet citizen goals more wholeheartedly than those who ran because no one else wanted to, or because they wanted to increase business contacts. Citizen satisfaction should be higher in instances when council members run for altruistic reasons than it is when council members run out of personal interest or a lack of alternatives. Various reasons for running will be analyzed for their relationship to citizen satisfaction.

#### **4.1.4 Time Spent as Council Member**

Another possible factor affecting representative behavior, and thus citizen satisfaction is the amount of time a council member spends on the job. In the city council survey, this was an open ended question in which council members were asked to estimate the number of hours they spent working in an official capacity. In addition, council members were asked how much of their time is spent networking in an unofficial capacity. Increased time on the job could relate to increased information about city issues, which in turn might lead to greater citizen satisfaction. This hypothesis is included in testing.

#### **4.1.5 Perception of Role**

As previously stated, some representatives perceive their roles as those of delegate, while others perceive themselves as trustees. Representatives act for a variety of reasons, and previous studies have attempted to discover which impetuses to action are strongest. Some hypothesize that representatives act as delegates, carrying the will of their constituents

to the table. (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979). Others understand representatives as trustees, given power by their citizens to decide what choice to make. (Miller and Stokes 1963). Delegates are told by the constituents of their will, and try to achieve it in office while trustees have the autonomy to deduce the will of constituents without necessarily interacting. It is possible that the role a representative adopts affects their ability to serve constituents. Presumably, delegates have a direct link to constituent will, while trustees decide on behalf of citizens. Both could feasibly serve the goals set forth by citizens, but is one more successful in increasing citizen satisfaction? Previous works show that representatives are more likely to perceive their role as that of delegate if they are unsure of public opinion. Representatives who are comfortable with their knowledge of public opinion perceive their role as that of trustee (Alpert 1979). Thus, in towns where representatives act as trustees, citizen opinion might be systematically higher than towns where representatives act as delegates. This will be checked, to see if the role adopted by a council member affects citizen satisfaction.

#### **4.2 Perception of Conflict**

The second group of independent variables (Model 2) addresses questions of conflict on the council. Council members were asked to rate various types of conflict on a scale of 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The conflict types include proponents or opponents of tax cuts, geographic areas, socio-economic divisions, old and new residents, religious differences, age, development proponents or opponents, or political divisions. These areas of potential conflict on city council are all included in the second model of independent variables held to regression analysis against citizen satisfaction.

The hypothesis is that higher levels of conflict indicate a decrease in citizen satisfaction. Conflict would mean divided attentions and efforts, with one group of council members headed one direction, and another pulling the other way. In a council with little conflict, goals are agreed upon, and can be worked toward more efficiently. This hypothesis will be checked by comparing reported levels of conflict to citizen satisfaction.

### **4.3 Qualifications**

The third group of independent variables (Model 3) includes qualifications for running for office. Included are level of education, duration of residence, tenure on the council, and organizational attendance. Council members were asked to select their level of education among seven groups; up through 9<sup>th</sup> grade, up through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, high school graduate, some college, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and graduate or technical degree. Duration of residence and tenure on council are both measured simply by years, and as with all the variables, are town-level averages. Organizational attendance is a town-level average of the number of organizations a council member belongs to. All of these qualification related variables are included in Model 3.

This group of variables is labeled "qualifications" because the variables contained within deal with a representative's interactions with citizens, and with characteristics that improve one's chances of employment in general.

Those who support the delegate concept of representation would say that the representative acts as a conduit between the constituency's opinion and law. This relates to the Model 3 variables other than education. In order to know constituency opinion, a communication channel must exist between representative and citizens. (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979). Therefore, citizens communicate their goals when they have the chance to

interact with council members (Drechsel 1987). On the other hand, the trustee school of representation would claim that representatives are obligated to follow their own judgment for the common good (Eulau et. al. 1959). This does not necessitate interactions between representative and constituent. This is interesting to study then, as the data could indicate whether or not interactions effect citizen satisfaction. Interactions could increase with longer residency, a longer tenure in office, and their organizational attendance. All of these will be examined for their effect on citizen satisfaction.

#### **4.3.1 Education**

Education is an important variable to consider. Councils comprised of highly educated members might be better able to recognize and address citizen dissatisfaction. It could also be the case that towns with good services can attract and retain highly educated council members. Because of this potential relationship, education will be examined to determine its relationship to citizen satisfaction.

#### **4.3.2 Residence**

Residency is examined as an indicator of a representative's qualification for office holding. The longer a person lives in a town, the greater number of people he or she has the chance to meet. Since council members have been elected, presumably they know a fairly large group of people already, and length of residency might not increase the number of contacts. However, it is possible that in such small communities, there is very little competition for council positions. In the city council survey, council members were asked the margin by which they won their elections. The level of competition in rural Iowa towns is very low, so it is still possible that a person could get elected without knowing a large

portion of the electorate, so length of residency might still indicate increased contacts with citizens.

#### **4.3.3 Tenure**

A council member's tenure in office would also tend to indicate a greater chance to build relationships with citizens. The longer he or she has served, the more events attended and contacts increased. In addition, longer serving council members might have had more practice at delivering quality services, and be better able to gauge what citizens want. Therefore, duration of tenure will be examined for an effect on citizen satisfaction with government services.

#### **4.3.4 Organizational Attendance**

Organizational attendance is the final measure of the social connectivity, and thus job qualification, of council members. As was claimed of both residency and tenure, increased attendance in groups or clubs would increase the chances for interaction between resident and representative. Interacting in clubs or organizations would allow for the constituent to communicate their needs or approval to their representative. The rate of organizational attendance of council members will be compared to citizen satisfaction, to see if a pattern can be detected.

This study will examine these indicators of social connections and education in order to determine their relationship with citizen satisfaction. If communication between citizens and representatives is necessary in order for representatives to gauge citizen need, a positive relationship between these measures of job qualifications and citizen satisfaction should be apparent.

#### 4.4 Controls

All of the regression analysis undertaken by this study includes two control variables. These two control variables are population and average citizen income. Population was selected as a control variable due to its potential correlation with the dependent variables. Before any regression analysis, population will be examined for its independent affect on citizen satisfaction, as will population change. One would expect population to be related to citizen satisfaction. In theory, very small rural communities produce very little revenue, so services might be at a minimum. Larger communities may have more infrastructure costs, but their tax base should be greater, allowing them to hire staff and offer a greater range of services. Town size should appear to have an effect on citizen satisfaction with government services. Previous studies support this, showing that representatives and constituents are closer in smaller population states than larger ones. (Oppenheimer 1996).

The second question is whether a town's rate and direction of population change affects citizen satisfaction. Consider how population change might affect satisfaction. In both towns with rapidly gaining and diminishing populations, local governments will be challenged to react to changing infrastructure needs. In rapidly growing towns, need for services might outpace the ability to provide quality services. In towns with small and dwindling populations where services are already minimized, rapid population loss means less revenue. A stable population is vital in providing the tax base and man-power to provide services. As population declines (and ages), resources are lost, so it follows that citizen satisfaction should be related to population change. On the other hand, it might take time for population change to affect services within a community. Resources diminish as populations



decline, but the gain or loss might not be apparent to citizens immediately. So, this study looks to find a pattern between rate of loss or gain and citizen satisfaction.

Population will be examined independently as it relates to citizen satisfaction with services in rural Iowa, and will be used as a control variable during regression analysis, as it correlates to many of the important independent variables. In addition to population, citizen income was included as a control variable. This is to account for any correlation between income and satisfaction. Now that the control variables have been described, the three models of independent variables will be introduced. The first model centers around council members' orientation to their job, the second examines conflict on council, and the third looks at their qualifications for office holding.

The goal of this study is to measure any effects of population, job orientation, perception of conflict, or office holding qualifications on citizen satisfaction. The following section will describe the methods used within this study. Finally, the data will be subjected to correlation and regression analysis, and results discussed.

## **CHAPTER 5. METHOD**

In order to examine the effect of the three models on citizen satisfaction with government services, this study follows several steps. The following sections involve running correlations between citizen satisfaction with government services and the three models of independent variables, in addition to two important demographic characteristics. The three models will be subject to regression analysis, in order to determine how much variation in citizen satisfaction these three models can explain. Regression analysis was conducted on the three models of independent variables, with all models combined, and with the significant independent variables only. Regression was done using citizen satisfaction ratings for the category “overall quality of government services” as a dependent variables. Due to the importance of police services as indicated by results of correlation analysis, regression analysis was also run using citizen satisfaction with police services as a dependent variable. This wave of regression analysis should show if any of the three models display explanatory power over citizens’ ratings of all government services or police services. Finally, the significant relationships found within will be described, and implications discussed.

### **5.1 Reliability Analysis**

This study starts by running correlations between all variables. Several groups of variables were all significantly correlated. These were examined further, as they could be measures of the same phenomenon. Reliability analysis was conducted on each of these groups of correlated variables.

First, there is a strong correlation among all of the dependent variables, the measures of government service quality among citizens. This group includes all the government services individually (police, fire, water, parks, streets, garbage, and emergency response), as

well as the question asking of “overall quality of government services”. This is to be expected for several reasons. First, one would expect a community’s services to be of like quality. If a town’s streets are suffering, it is likely due to an overarching cause such as a budget problem, than to the specificities of street maintenance. When reliability analysis was done, all the variables excluding water yield a measure of .79, high enough to claim all the variables are measuring the same trend. This observation is interesting, but this study does not condense the values of the dependent variables into one measure. Each of the services included as a dependent variable is unique, and could be affected differently by each independent variable. The dependent variables will be used individually when running correlations with independent variables.

There were several groups of independent variables that displayed high correlations as well. These include measures of a council member’s role, perceptions of conflict, and reasons for running for office. When reliability analysis was done on these variables, they appeared to be highly related, indicating the likelihood that they all measure the same phenomenon.

The first group of highly correlated independent variables included those variables relating to the delegate trustee question. Council members were asked whether they act according to what their citizens want, or act according to what they think. They were asked this about a variety of services, including zoning, economic development, community development, personnel, services, and infrastructure. This group of variables too, seems to be measuring the same trend, with reliability analysis yielding a value of .80. This also is as expected. First, the survey items were displayed in tables of like items, meaning the respondents likely circled similar values for all items in a table. Second, the variables all get

at the respondents attitude toward governance, whether they view their role as that of a delegate or trustee.

The second group relates to council members' reports of conflict between groups of people. The groups surround issues of tax, geography, affluence, length of residence, religion, age, development, and political party. First, they were asked about conflict among various groups within the community itself. These measures of perceived conflict are also highly related, scoring a .76 when subjected to reliability analysis. In addition, they were asked about perceived conflict among members of the city council. The measures of conflict on council were equally highly related among themselves, also yielding a .76. The questions of conflict among community and conflict among council members were asked in different sections of the survey, in order to avoid confusion between the two. As it turns out, both end up measuring the same general trend. When all questions of conflict (both within community and council) are figured together, they still produce an alpha of .7.

The third group of variables tested for reliability includes council members' reports of reasons they ran for office. While several of these variables appear correlated, reliability tests resulting in a value of .41 show that they do not measure the same general phenomenon. This is expected, as the reasons for running vary greatly, and one would not expect a council member to embody all of them at once. The correlations among reasons are predictable. Running because "no one else wanted to" was only highly correlated with running because "I was asked to". Both would occur in towns where local government service is seen as an obligation, rather than a sought office. Also, running to fulfill a civic duty has a positive relationship with running to serve the community as a whole, both indicating altruism toward the community. Running because of enjoyment in politics, to increase business contacts, and

as a stone to another political office are all significantly positively related as well. Thus, three measures can be deduced; a measure of obligation, one of altruism, and one of personal interest. When the variables are subjected to reliability analysis in this manner, they still do not appear to measure the same phenomenon, so they will be included in regression analysis individually.

The final measure of reliability worth noting is that between a community's 1990 population and the current population. The relationship between the two is very high, scoring a .99. Because the two variables are measuring the same trend, only the current population will be used in analysis, as both would be redundant.

The purpose of the prior analysis was to determine if any groups of variables measure the same trend or phenomenon. The higher a group of variables' reliability score, the more they can be understood as measuring the same trend. For purposes of future regression analysis, groups of like variables can be condensed into one measure. Now that the groups to condense have been determined, this paper will begin to explore relationships between the dependent and independent variables. For purposes of description, the condensed measures will not be used, as the influences of each factor on the dependent variables are nuanced, and interesting relationships would be missed by using aggregate measures.

## CHAPTER 6. FINDINGS AND DESCRIPTION

The following section will display the results of analysis between citizen satisfaction and the independent variables included in this study. First, analysis is done with population as an independent variable. Then the three models are subject to examination. Finally, two demographic characteristics are held to analysis opposite citizen satisfaction. After describing the results of analysis, this paper will discuss the implications of the findings for rural Iowa and representation studies in general.

### 6.1 Results: Population and Population Change

The first variables to be examined include population and population change of rural Iowa towns. The towns included in the survey ranged from a population of 500 to just over 10,000. When examined further, it is clear that population growth in large towns is different than that of growth in small towns. To account, the sample was divided into two groups; those under 2500 and those over 2500. As Table 1 shows, towns over 2500 grew at an average rate of 5.74 percent, as opposed to towns under 2,500, which grew at an average rate of 3.32. Table 1 describes the average populations and population change from 1990 and the present, divided among towns under 2,500 and over 2,500.

<b>Table 1: Rural Iowa Population</b>	All Towns	Towns < 2500	Towns > 2500
Average 1990 Population	1799.3	1053.1	4980.47
Average Current Population	1882.85	1079.28	5308.58
Average % Population Growth (15 Years)	3.78	3.32	5.74

As table 1 shows, the average population of rural Iowa communities included in this study is just under 2,000. The average population growth rate for all communities is 3.78, with quite a variance between the growth rate in small (3.3) and larger towns (5.7). One outlier, the town of Atkins, had a growth rate of 104%. With this unusually large growth rate

removed, the average percent growth for all towns drops to 2.77% and the average for towns under 2500 drops to 2%. The differences in population and growth rate are both examined below for their effect on citizen satisfaction.

Table 2 describes the relationships between citizen satisfaction, population, and the percent change in population over a 15 year time span.

<b>Table 2 : Population and Service Ratings</b>	Police	Streets	Parks	Water	Fire	Garbage	Emergency response	Overall quality
Current population	-0.55** (0.00)	-0.10 (0.32)	-0.09 (0.36)	-0.13 (0.21)	0.04 (0.73)	0.13 (0.20)	0.09 (0.35)	-0.22* (0.03)
Percent Δ in population	-0.03 (0.75)	-0.06 (0.53)	-0.01 (0.91)	0.01 (0.93)	-0.09 (0.40)	0.25** (0.01)	-0.05 (0.62)	0.01 (0.93)
* = significant at .05 level								
** = significant at .01 level								

Population has a significant effect on citizen satisfaction in two cases. First, the relationship between police services and population is highly significant in a negative direction, meaning communities with lower populations report less favorably on police protection. Similarly, overall quality of government services is negatively related to population. Communities with lower populations report poorer quality services overall. As demonstrated, population does indeed have an effect on citizen satisfaction ratings, so is an important variable to include in additional regression analysis.

The next question is the effect of population change on citizen satisfaction with government services. As displayed in table 2, population change does not significantly relate to citizen satisfaction, even with the Atkins outlier removed. The only case of the significance of population change is in relationship to garbage services (.25, .01). This indicates that as rate of population change increases, garbage service quality decreases.

Because of the wide range of populations studied (500 to 10,000), a nuanced measure of populations affect on satisfaction is valuable. Table 3 displays the average citizen satisfaction rating received for each service, both for towns under and over 2,500 residents.

In addition, the relationship between population and satisfaction is displayed for both groups of communities.

<b>Table 3: Under and Over 2,500</b>	Police	Streets	Parks	Water	Fire	Garbage	Emergency response	Overall quality
Under 2,500	-0.511** (0.00)	-0.01 (0.94)	-0.05 (0.68)	0.01 (0.94)	-0.09 (0.44)	0.01 (0.97)	-0.15 (0.19)	-0.17 (0.12)
Average	2.57	2.55	2.06	2.28	1.66	1.78	1.63	2.20
Over 2,500	-0.52* (0.02)	-0.57* (0.01)	-0.30 (0.22)	0.01 (0.96)	-0.10 (0.69)	0.16 (0.50)	-0.13 (0.60)	-0.40 (0.09)
Average	2.02	2.59	2.04	2.14	1.70	1.83	1.73	2.13

\*=significant at .05 level

\*\*=significant at .01 level

Towns of populations under 2,500 and over 2,500 rate services quite similarly on average. Only police protection and quality of streets were significantly related to population. Police service ratings had a negative correlation of .51 (.00) in small communities, and a negative correlation of .52 (.02) in large communities. This indicates that smaller communities tend to report poorer police services than larger communities, whether the towns are very small or of a more moderate size. Quality of streets in towns over 2,500 is also related to population with a negative correlation of .57 (.01). As population decreases, quality of street services decreases. This is only true of towns with at least 2,500 residents. This implies a bottom limit to street service which people in very small communities have come to accept. To a lesser degree of significance, overall quality of government services is related to population of towns over 2,500 (-.40 at .09). For all sizes of rural communities, population affects police service quality. In large towns, the overall quality of government services and streets specifically are affected by population.

### 6.1.1 Population Revisited

Citizen satisfaction with government services in rural Iowa towns relates to population in only two categories; police protection and overall quality. When towns are divided into populations of under and over 2,500, streets gain significance for the latter



group. The other service types have weak, fairly insignificant relationships to population. The actual relationship between population and citizen satisfaction is much weaker than the expected relationship. The implications of these finding will be discussed to a greater degree in the concluding section of this paper.

## 6.2 Results: Job Orientation

In addition to community population, the job orientation of a representative might impact output and thus citizen satisfaction. Several questions on the city council survey aimed at describing the perceived atmosphere of local government. Job orientation variables include role perception (as delegate or trustee), job satisfaction, margin of victory, time spent on the job, and reasons for running. These will be examined for any effect on citizen satisfaction.

### 6.2.1 Competition

Table 4 displays results of correlation analysis between citizen satisfaction measures and margin of victory. Council members were asked to report on a scale of 1 (close) to 5 (wide) the margin of victory with which they were elected. Citizen satisfaction with both fire protection and emergency response services is related to margin of victory.

<b>Table 4: Margin of Victory</b>	Police	Streets	Parks	Water	Fire	Garbage	Emergency response	Overall quality
Margin of Victory	-0.09 (0.39)	-0.06 (0.57)	-0.06 (0.55)	-0.05 (0.59)	-0.22* (0.03)	-0.18 (0.08)	-0.19* (0.05)	-0.19 (0.06)

\*=significant at .05 level  
 \*\*=significant at .01 level

The results of table 4 imply that as margin of victory decreases, so does citizen satisfaction with fire protection (-.22, .03) and emergency response systems (-.19, .05). This relationship could be due to divided efforts during times of competitive elections. None of the other measures of citizen satisfaction responded to a change in margin of victory.

### 6.2.2 Job Satisfaction

Another variable indicating job orientation measures the council members' job satisfaction scores. Job satisfaction was rated on a scale from 1 (not satisfying) to 5 (very satisfying). Table 5 shows job satisfaction is not related to citizen satisfaction, .04 with a significance of .68. Instead, job satisfaction is correlated with several of the reasons for running for office. Higher job satisfaction was reported from those who ran because they enjoy politics (.25, .01), because they felt it was part of their civic duty (.24, .02), or because they wanted to serve the community as a whole (.40, .00). The reasons for seeking office are described further, as well as their relationship with citizen satisfaction.

### 6.2.3 Reason for Seeking Office

Council members were asked to rate the importance of several reasons in their decision to run for council. The reasons, displayed in the table below, are also scaled from 1 (not important) to 5 (very important). The average for each reason is included, as well as its correlation to the government service rating and job satisfaction.

<b>Table 5:</b>										
<b>Reasons for Running</b>	<b>Ave.</b>	<b>Job satisfaction</b>	<b>Police</b>	<b>Streets</b>	<b>Parks</b>	<b>Water</b>	<b>Fire</b>	<b>Garbage</b>	<b>Emergency response</b>	<b>Overall quality</b>
Nobody else	2.21	-0.09 (0.38)	-0.08 (0.44)	-0.08 (0.46)	-0.01 (0.92)	-0.08 (0.41)	0.02 (0.83)	0.06 (0.55)	-0.05 (0.59)	-0.09 (0.40)
Civic duty	3.94	0.24* (0.02)	-0.12 (0.23)	0.07 (0.50)	0.14 (0.17)	-0.06 (0.54)	0.16 (0.11)	0.06 (0.55)	0.06 (0.59)	0.07 (0.51)
Stone to office	1.36	0.07 (0.49)	-0.03 (0.74)	-0.03 (0.78)	-0.15 (0.16)	0.02 (0.82)	0.08 (0.41)	0.14 (0.17)	0.22* (0.03)	0.01 (0.90)
Asked to	3.42	0.12 (0.23)	-0.03 (0.81)	0.01 (0.92)	-0.13 (0.21)	0.00 (0.99)	-0.06 (0.59)	-0.06 (0.56)	-0.01 (0.92)	-0.08 (0.45)
Increase bus. contacts	1.41	0.07 (0.49)	0.19 (0.06)	0.04 (0.68)	0.04 (0.67)	0.19 (0.06)	0.28** (0.01)	0.18 (0.07)	0.31** (0.00)	0.23* (0.03)
Enjoy politics	2.47	0.25* (0.01)	-0.14 (0.17)	-0.04 (0.68)	-0.07 (0.50)	-0.03 (0.75)	0.07 (0.47)	0.10 (0.33)	0.10 (0.32)	-0.10 (0.33)
Specific issue	2.74	0.08 (0.45)	0.07 (0.47)	0.18 (0.07)	-0.02 (0.82)	-0.12 (0.23)	-0.06 (0.58)	-0.19 (0.06)	-0.10 (0.32)	-0.07 (0.47)
Serve whole community	4.42	0.40** (0.00)	0.02 (0.85)	0.26** (0.01)	0.17 (0.10)	0.05 (0.60)	0.15 (0.14)	0.01 (0.94)	0.01 (0.93)	0.19 (0.06)
Job satisfaction	4.01		-0.01 (0.91)	0.11 (0.27)	-0.01 (0.91)	-0.01 (0.94)	0.08 (0.47)	0.05 (0.66)	0.02 (0.84)	-0.01 (0.94)

\*=significant at .05 level

\*\*=significant at .01 level

There are some interesting findings here. First, job satisfaction has more of a relationship with a council member's reasons for running than it does with citizen satisfaction. Three reasons for running had an effect on at least one government service rating. Running for council as a stepping stone to higher office relates to emergency response service quality (.22, .03). Running to increase business contacts relates to fire (.28, .01), emergency response (.31, .00), and overall quality of government services (.23, .03). The government service ratings scale 1 (very good) to 5 (poor), so a positive relationship indicates a decline in government service quality. Interestingly, the final significant reason for running, "to serve the community as a whole", had a positive relationship with quality of streets (.26, .01).

#### 6.2.4 Time Spent as Council Member

Another variable examined for an effect on citizen satisfaction was the amount of time a council member spent as either an official or unofficial representative. Council members were asked to list the amount of hours spent acting in an official capacity and the hours spent interacting informally with citizens. Table 6 shows the average results for both variables, as well as the correlations to citizen satisfaction.

**Table 6:**  
**Time Spent**  
**as Council**

Member	Average	Police	Streets	Parks	Water	Fire	Garbage	Emergency response	Overall quality
Official		0.10	0.12	0.09	0.09	0.07	0.06	0.16	0.21*
Capacity	3.94	(0.31)	(0.25)	(0.35)	(0.40)	(0.51)	(0.56)	(0.12)	(0.04)
Unofficial		0.06	0.08	0.05	0.04	-0.05	0.08	-0.02	0.09
Capacity	4.69	(0.56)	(0.44)	(0.64)	(0.68)	(0.61)	(0.44)	(0.85)	(0.35)

\*=significant at .05 level

\*\*=significant at .01 level

As table 6 shows, time spent in an official capacity is related to citizen ratings of overall quality of government services (.21, .04). This indicates that as council members spend more time in an official capacity, citizen satisfaction with overall quality of

government services decreases. One possible explanation is an increase in problems in a town might lead to an increased time commitment by city council members.

### 6.2.5 Perception of Role

Table 7 identifies the relationship between a council member's perception of their role as delegate or trustee, and resulting output (citizen satisfaction). Council members were asked the importance of putting constituent views into policy, versus convincing citizens of what they think is best. In addition, on a variety of issues, council members were asked if they vote for what the citizens want, or if they vote for what they think is best for the community. Council members were asked specifically how they would act on zoning, economic development, community development, city personnel, city services, and infrastructure cases. The data shows that representatives do not perceive one as mutually exclusive of the other. If these concepts were opposing, one would expect to see a negative relationship between the measures of delegation and trusteeship. Instead, there is a strong positive relationship, indicating similar ratings for both measures from the same individual. Included in table 7 are the relationships between citizen satisfaction, the delegate question, the trustee question, and the average of the scores across all service areas.

<b>Table 7:</b> <b>Delegate/Trustee Measures</b>	Police	Streets	Parks	Water	Fire	Garbage	Emergency response	Overall quality
Delegate question	-0.12 (0.22)	0.00 (0.98)	0.06 (0.57)	-0.04 (0.66)	0.00 (0.99)	0.14 (0.16)	-0.04 (0.67)	-0.06 (0.53)
Trustee question	-0.17 (0.09)	-0.11 (0.27)	-0.03 (0.79)	-0.01 (0.94)	-0.02 (0.85)	-0.07 (0.49)	0.02 (0.85)	-0.08 (0.46)
Average delegate/trustee score	0.00 (0.97)	-0.03 (0.80)	-0.05 (0.62)	-0.13 (0.19)	0.09 (0.38)	0.09 (0.38)	0.09 (0.37)	0.01 (0.93)

As the preliminary analysis in table 7 shows, measures of a council member's role do not adequately predict citizen satisfaction scores in the respective community. Considering the high correlation between the delegate and trustee question, this makes sense. Rural Iowa

council members do not perceive a difference between the two role types, and likely embody parts of both of them. According to correlation analysis, there is no discernable pattern between the role a representative adopts and citizen satisfaction with government services.

#### **6.2.6 Job Orientation: Regression Model #1**

The job orientation model is then subjected to regression analysis. The first dependent variable is average citizen ratings for “overall quality of government services”. The independent variables include representational style, job satisfaction, reasons for running, margin of victory, and time spent as a council member. Job orientation measures how council members approach their jobs, and the expected relationship is for citizen satisfaction to relate to the various measures of job orientation (representational style, satisfaction, reasons for running, margin of victory, and time). As representational style moves from a trustee to a delegate model, citizen satisfaction should increase. In addition, citizen satisfaction should increase with an increase in job satisfaction. Altruistic reasons for running should yield an increase in citizen satisfaction, while selfish reasons for running should yield a decrease in citizen satisfaction. Additionally, an increase in margin of victory should show a decrease in citizen satisfaction. Finally, an increase in time spent as a council member should show an increase in citizen satisfaction. The following chart displays results of regression analysis, followed by a synopsis of the results.

Table 8 shows that the job orientation model is not ideal for predicting citizen satisfaction with government services. As shown in table 8, the results of regression analysis show little statistical significance, with an adjusted R squared value of .10. This implies that much variation in the dependent variable can not be explained by the job orientation model. Two reasons for running for office appear significant, “to increase business contacts” with

beta of 0.11 and a significance of .01 and “to serve the community as a whole” (.12, .02).

For each unit increase in these reasons for running, citizen satisfaction yields a higher rating (but lower favor) by .12.

Table 8: Model 1 Regression	Overall Quality of Government Services			Police Services		
	Adjusted R	F Statistic	Degrees of	Adjusted R	F Statistic	Degrees of
	Square		Freedom	Square		Freedom
N=100	0.10	1.73	15	.26	3.23	15
	B	St. Error		B	St. Error	
Constant	2.13** (0.00)	0.34		2.96** (0.00)	0.66	
Average Delegate/Trustee score	0.00 (0.93)	0.04		0.00 (0.99)	0.09	
Job satisfaction	-0.04 (0.26)	0.04		-0.01 (0.93)	0.07	
Nobody else wanted to	0.01 (0.71)	0.03		-0.01 (0.91)	0.06	
Part of civic duty	-0.01 (0.76)	0.03		-0.06 (0.34)	0.07	
Stone to other office	-0.02 (0.72)	0.05		-0.08 (0.47)	0.11	
Asked to	-0.03 (0.22)	0.03		-0.02 (0.63)	0.05	
Increase business contacts	0.11** (0.01)	0.04		0.23** (0.00)	0.08	
Enjoy politics	0.01 (0.87)	0.03		-0.03 (0.67)	0.06	
Strong concern over specific issue	-0.03 (0.13)	0.02		0.01 (0.78)	0.04	
Serve the community as a whole	0.12* (0.02)	0.05		0.08 (0.45)	0.10	
Time spent officially	0.01 (0.18)	0.01		0.01 (0.74)	0.02	
Time spent informally	0.00 (0.90)	0.01		0.00 (0.84)	0.01	
Competition	-0.06 (0.06)	0.03		-0.05 (0.42)	0.06	
Average citizen income	-0.01 (0.89)	0.04		-0.06 (0.50)	0.09	
Current population	0.00 (0.07)	0.00		0.00** (0.00)	0.00	

\*=significant at .05 level

\*\*=significant at .01 level

This means that citizens are less satisfied with government services in cities whose council members rated running for office to increase business contacts and to serve the community as a whole as highly important. Margin of victory is also an important variable, with a standardized beta of -.06 and a significance of .06. In cities with wider margins of victory for council elections, citizens report higher government service satisfaction ratings.

Table 8 also shows results of the same analysis, but with police service ratings as the dependent variable. With police service quality as the dependent variable, the model has an R squared value of .26. The only significant non-control variable describes running for office to increase business contacts (.23, .01). This means citizens in cities whose council members reported high importance on running to increase business contacts, citizens report less favorably on police services. Contrary to expectations, the job orientation model is only moderately successful in predicting citizen satisfaction with government services.

### **6.2.7 Job Orientation Revisited**

Several measures of job orientation yielded interesting information. Conflict based on affluence, the old-guard, and development interests related to citizen satisfaction with government service ratings. Running as a stone to another office and running to increase business contacts both have a significant relationship to citizen satisfaction. As does running to increase business contacts. All of the data indicate the importance of economic development for rural Iowa and its ability to affect town quality. Neither job satisfaction nor council members' perception of their role as delegate or trustee was significantly related to citizen satisfaction. Regression analysis shows little relationship between a model of job orientation and citizen satisfaction with overall government services. However, a third of the variation in satisfaction with police services can be explained through Model 1. Next, the relationship between perceptions of conflict on city councils and citizen satisfaction will be explored.

## **6.3 Results: Perception of Conflict**

The next measure of council climate is the representative's perception of conflict. Council members were asked to rate conflict on a scale from 1 (not important) to 5 (very

important). Table 9 displays the correlations between each type of conflict and citizen satisfaction across all service types.

	Average	Police	Streets	Parks	Water	Fire	Garbage	Emergency response	Overall quality
Taxes	2.68	0.04 (0.68)	0.12 (0.23)	0.06 (0.54)	0.06 (0.57)	0.09 (0.37)	0.12 (0.22)	0.08 (0.42)	0.09 (0.40)
Geography	2.09	0.07 (0.49)	0.00 (0.98)	-0.01 (0.93)	0.10 (0.35)	0.01 (0.92)	-0.04 (0.67)	0.02 (0.84)	0.05 (0.65)
Affluence	2.33	0.01 (0.94)	0.32** (0.00)	0.24* (0.02)	0.05 (0.60)	0.19 (0.06)	0.13 (0.19)	0.13 (0.19)	0.20* (0.04)
Old-Guard	2.53	-0.01 (0.93)	0.20* (0.04)	0.16 (0.11)	-0.02 (0.88)	0.20* (0.04)	0.11 (0.30)	0.19 (0.06)	0.17 (0.09)
Religion	1.63	0.09 (0.36)	0.04 (0.71)	0.02 (0.82)	0.17 (0.09)	-0.05 (0.60)	-0.14 (0.18)	-0.09 (0.38)	0.04 (0.73)
Age	2.31	-0.02 (0.86)	0.16 (0.12)	0.04 (0.67)	0.06 (0.55)	0.08 (0.46)	-0.02 (0.87)	0.06 (0.54)	0.10 (0.35)
Development interests	1.76	-0.08 (0.44)	0.04 (0.73)	0.06 (0.55)	0.10 (0.34)	0.19 (0.07)	0.14 (0.18)	0.27** (0.01)	0.15 (0.15)
Political party	3.18	0.08 (0.42)	0.01 (0.95)	0.19 (0.95)	0.19 (0.07)	0.09 (0.40)	-0.03 (0.78)	0.06 (0.56)	0.08 (0.41)

\*=significant at .05 level  
\*\*=significant at .01 level

The average scores listed in table 9 indicate how important each type of conflict was perceived by Iowa council members. Only development interest rated over 3, or of moderate importance. Apparent from the table, three types of conflicts relate to citizen satisfaction with various services. Conflicts involving affluence affect citizen satisfaction as it relates to street quality (.32, .00), parks (.24, .02), and overall government service quality (.20, .04). Conflicts between old-guard and new residents relates to citizen ratings of street (.20, .04) and fire services(.20,.04). Conflict between development interests relates to citizen ratings of emergency response systems. (.27, .01). Conflict on council relates to citizen satisfaction in several areas, specifically conflict based on affluence, residency, and development interest.

### **6.3.1 Perception of Conflict: Regression Model #2**

Model 2, the conflict model, then is subjected to regression analysis. Two dependent variables are tested, overall quality of government services, and quality of police services in rural Iowa communities. The independent variables in this case represent levels of conflict



on the city council, as described by council members. The expected relationship is for increases in each type of conflict to lead to a decrease in citizen satisfaction. The following table shows the results of regression analysis, followed by a description of the results.

Table 10: Model 2 Regression	Overall Quality of Government Services			Police Services		
	Adjusted R	F Statistic	Degrees of	Adjusted R	F Statistic	Degrees of
	Square		Freedom	Square		Freedom
N=100	0.04	1.37	10	.28	4.68	10
	B	St. Error		B	St. Error	
Constant	1.86** (0.00)	0.24		2.33** (0.00)	0.45	
Conflict: Tax cutters	0.01 (0.81)	0.04		0.06 (0.35)	0.07	
Conflict: Geographic	-0.04 (0.29)	0.04		-0.05 (0.55)	0.08	
Conflict: Affluence	0.08 (0.09)	0.05		0.09 (0.30)	0.09	
Conflict: Old-Guard	-0.00 (0.99)	0.04		-0.03 (0.66)	0.08	
Conflict: Religion	0.03 (0.64)	0.06		0.18 (0.11)	0.11	
Conflict: Age	-0.02 (0.66)	0.04		-0.04 (0.58)	0.08	
Conflict: Development Interests	0.04 (0.18)	0.03		0.01 (0.92)	0.06	
Conflict: Political Party	0.02 (0.59)	0.04		0.01 (0.86)	0.08	
Average citizen income	0.02 (0.67)	0.05		-0.01 (0.88)	0.09	
Current population	0.00** (0.01)	0.00		0.00** (0.00)	0.00	

\*=significant at .05 level

\*\*=significant at .01 level

As table 10 shows, when the dependent variable is “overall quality of government services”, model 2 yields little significant predictive value, with an R square value of .04. This implies that four percent of variation in the dependent variable can be explained by variance in conflict reports. Contrary to expectations, there were no significant conflict subcategories. Model 2 in regards to overall quality of government services has very little explanatory power.

Table 10 also shows results of regression analysis with police service ratings as dependent variable. Model 2 is slightly stronger in regards to police service ratings. The R

squared value of regression analysis with conflict subcategories and police services is .28, yet no variables other than population appear significant. Population yields a zero reading across all qualities, dampening its apparent significance.

These results imply that citizens' reports of government services can not be explained by patterns in the level of conflict present within the community's city council.

### **6.3.2 Perception of Conflict Revisited**

Data analysis shows council members' perception of conflict to be important only in a few cases of correlation. Quality of street services seems to vary depending on conflict based on affluence or "old-guard" members of council. However, overall quality of services is not adequately described by any of the measures of conflict. This might mean several things. First, some conflict may be beneficial. Second, conflict might not exist in some of the towns, due to their extremely small size and relatively homogeneity of the population. In either case, conflict does not appear significant for predicting citizen satisfaction with government services in rural Iowa.

## **6.4 Results: Qualifications**

The next variables to be examined are measures of qualifications of office for council members. The term "qualification" is used to describe council members' education, length of residence, tenure, and organizational attendance. Variables in this group include length of residency, tenure in office, and organization attendance of council members. First, general trends among rural Iowa council members will be discussed. Following this general description, correlations will be examined and then regression analysis applied.

Length of residence is measured by the average residence of council members in each community. Average citizens' length of residence is also included in table 11. Tenure is also an averaged town level variable, as is the number of organizations attended by rural Iowa council members. As shown in table 11, the average length of residence was around 33 years for both city council members and citizens. Also displayed are average tenure (about 6 years) and the average number of organizations attended (almost 4) by each rural Iowa council member.

**Table 11:**  
**Residence, Tenure, Organizational Attendance**

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Length of Residence Council	32.81	12.39
Length of Residence Citizen	33.07	5.56
Tenure	6.36	3.38
# of Organizations Attended	3.46	1.37
Education Level	4.22 (some college)	.87

The tests of correlation for these measures of qualification are displayed in table 12.

This step's purpose is to determine which of these variables appear to relate to citizen satisfaction.

<b>Table 12:</b> <b>Qualification and</b> <b>Citizen Satisfaction</b>	Ave. service rating	Police	Streets	Parks	Water	Fire	Garbage	Emergency response	Overall quality
Residency	-0.07 (0.52)	-0.07 (0.50)	0.06 (0.58)	-0.01 (0.91)	-0.12 (0.22)	-0.05 (0.63)	-0.07 (0.47)	-0.07 (0.47)	-0.03 (0.77)
Tenure	-0.13 (0.20)	-0.14 (0.18)	-0.03 (0.79)	-0.12 (0.25)	-0.16 (0.11)	-0.01 (0.91)	-0.08 (0.42)	0.02 (0.83)	-0.11 (0.27)
Organizational Attendance	-0.16 (0.12)	-0.38** (0.00)	-0.08 (0.41)	-0.03 (0.80)	0.02 (0.84)	0.01 (0.90)	0.05 (0.60)	-0.05 (0.65)	-0.16 (0.12)
Average council education	-.15 (.13)	-0.22* (0.03)	-0.15 (0.13)	-0.02 (0.87)	-0.12 (0.26)	0.00 (0.99)	0.01 (0.94)	0.00 (0.99)	-0.15 (0.13)

\*=significant at .05 level

\*\*=significant at .01 level

### 6.4.1 Education

Education, an averaged town-level characteristic might have a relationship with citizen satisfaction. Among citizens, education should have a relationship with satisfaction because of population's effect on education. The average council member's education might feasibly

have an independent effect on citizen satisfaction. Higher average council education might mean more organizational or administrative experience, meaning better executed service provision. Table 12 displays the results of correlative analysis between average council member education and citizens' government service ratings. Education does not appear related to service quality across many categories, but it does stand out in one case. Council education is negatively related to police service ratings (-.22, .03). As education level increases, so does satisfaction with police services.

#### **6.4.2 Length of Residence**

Residency is examined first. Length of residency appears to have no significant effect on citizen satisfaction with government services. A long-time resident of a town has no better ability than a new one of providing government services to citizens.

#### **6.4.3 Tenure**

The second factor, tenure, has a negative relationship with average citizen satisfaction on government services. The relationship between average citizen satisfaction and tenure is only significant at .20, but it still indicates that as tenure increases, citizen satisfaction with government services increases. Other than this weak relationship, tenure shows few significant relationships to citizen satisfaction measures.

#### **6.4.4 Organizational Attendance**

The next measure of qualification, organization attendance, also appears to have little significance, at least for the average of all government service ratings. It has a slightly negative relationship (-.16), with only 88% confidence. When each type of service is compared individually, organizational attendance relates to satisfaction with police services.

Organization attendance is correlated to satisfaction with police services with a score of  $-.38$ , and significance at the  $.01$  level.

#### **6.4.5 Qualifications for Office: Regression Model #3**

Model 3, containing independent variables relating to qualifications for office, is then used to perform regression analysis. The independent variables include the average length of time a council member has lived in the community, amount of time they've served on council, organizational attendance, and education level. The two dependent variables are overall quality of government services, and quality of police services.

The expected relationship is for increases in qualifications to lead to more favorable citizen accounts of government services. Table 13 displays the results of regression analysis, followed by a description of the findings.

Table 13 displays the results of analysis for this model. As the table shows, model 3 is of little value in predicting citizen satisfaction with overall quality of government services. For overall quality of government services, the R squared value is  $.03$ . This means that only 3 percent of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the qualification for office model. Model 3 is able to explain a fair amount of the variance in satisfaction with police services, with an R squared value of  $.35$ . Model 3 is able to explain over 30 percent of the variation in citizen satisfaction with police services by using the qualification for office model. In model 3, organization attendance has a significant effect on citizen satisfaction with police services ( $-.25$ ,  $.01$ ). This means that communities in which council members attend more organizations tend to report more favorably on police services in those communities.

<b>Table 13: Model 3 Regression</b>			Overall Quality of Government Services			Police Services		
N=100	Adjusted R	F Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	Adjusted R	F Statistic	Degrees of Freedom	B	St. Error
	Square			Square				
	0.03	1.50	6	0.35	9.80	6		
Constant	B 2.40** (0.00)	St. Error 0.25		B 3.19** (0.00)	St. Error 0.42			
Average Residency	-0.00 (0.78)	0.00		-0.00 (0.45)	0.00			
Average Tenure	-0.01 (0.35)	0.01		-0.01 (0.50)	0.01			
Average Organizational Attendance	-0.01 (0.61)	0.02		-0.08** (0.01)	0.03			
Average Education	-0.03 (0.27)	0.03		-0.03 (0.53)	0.05			
Average citizen income	0.01 (0.79)	0.05		0.01 (0.93)	0.08			
Current population	0.00 (0.06)	0.00		0.00** (0.00)	0.00			

\*=significant at .05 level

\*\*=significant at .01 level

#### 6.4.6 Qualifications Revisited

Citizen satisfaction with government services relates significantly to qualification measures in one case. Organizational attendance displays a significant negative relationship to ratings of police protection. The duration of residence and tenure display no effect on citizen satisfaction with government services. Measures of a council members “qualification” for office seem to be anything but. In theory, the variables in this model should be important to representation. A council member should live in the area he or she represents. He or she should have achieved some level of education. In practice, these characteristics seem of little importance to citizen satisfaction with government services. The important relationship found in this analysis is that between police protection and organizational attendance.

## **6.5 Results: Demographic Characteristics**

As previously discussed, characteristics such as age and income could affect policy outcomes, and therefore affect citizen satisfaction with government services. First citizen and then council age and income are analyzed to determine any effect on citizen satisfaction. In addition, a measure was created by subtracting the average council response from the average citizen response. This difference between council and community is explored for any relationship to citizen satisfaction.

### **6.5.1 Age**

Age is one of several demographic factors worth considering for its effect on citizen satisfaction. Citizen age is valuable to examine, because of the changing nature of populations in Iowa towns. The citizens in small, declining towns are increasingly older on average, as the RDI report states. (Ryan, Terry and Wuebke 1994). Council age, in addition to being a reflection of town age, could serve as a measure of experience. Does age bring wisdom? Conceivably, as age increases, so should knowledge of the community, the services needed, and the means to achieve them. Thus, while citizen age might correlate positively with government service ratings, council age might have a negative relationship. (Keep in mind that positive relationships indicate descending service quality, and negative relationships indicate ascending government service quality.) The results of analysis for these measures are displayed in table 14. In addition, the difference between average citizen and average council member age is compared to citizen satisfaction. Conceivably, members of a community interact with those of like kind, and a homogenous group might have better communication, yielding greater citizen satisfaction. So, the expectation is for proximity in age to be positively related to government service ratings.

<b>Table 14:</b> <b>Age</b>	Police	Streets	Parks	Water	Fire	Garbage	Emergency response	Overall quality
Average citizen age	-0.05 (0.65)	0.05 (0.60)	0.01 (0.90)	-0.01 (0.95)	-0.11 (0.24)	-0.27** (0.01)	-0.12 (0.23)	-0.06 (0.54)
Average council age	-0.15 (0.15)	0.06 (0.57)	-0.04 (0.71)	-0.06 (0.56)	0.04 (0.67)	-0.05 (0.60)	0.03 (0.77)	0.02 (0.85)
Difference citizen/council	0.10 (0.34)	0.04 (0.68)	0.08 (0.45)	0.04 (0.69)	-0.09 (0.36)	-0.03 (0.77)	-0.01 (0.94)	-0.02 (0.87)

\*=significant at .05 level

\*\*=significant at .01 level

The results deny most expected relationships between council or citizen age, and citizen satisfaction. Citizen satisfaction is unrelated to all measures of age, across all service types, with the exception of garbage services. This negative correlation means that towns with higher average citizen age tended to report more favorably on garbage services. Age of citizens or council members is not a useful factor in predicting quality of government services as reported by citizens.

### 6.5.2 Income

Income is the other demographic factor examined for its effect on citizen satisfaction. Average citizen income, average council member income, and the difference between the two are all examined for their effect on government service ratings. Average citizen income might indicate a greater tax base, which could lend better resources to be used for services. Average council income does not necessarily mean more resources for services, so no relationship is expected. The results are displayed in table 15.

<b>Table 15:</b> <b>Income</b>	Police	Streets	Parks	Water	Fire	Garbage	Emergency response	Overall quality
Average citizen income	-0.16 (0.12)	-0.06 (0.55)	0.01 (0.89)	0.02 (0.87)	0.05 (0.64)	0.09 (0.36)	0.05 (0.59)	-0.03 (0.75)
Average council income	-0.18 (0.09)	-0.16 (0.13)	0.02 (0.84)	0.18 (0.09)	-0.07 (0.48)	-0.21* (0.04)	-0.07 (0.53)	-0.16 (0.12)
Difference citizen/council	0.12 (0.24)	0.13 (0.21)	-0.02 (0.85)	-0.16 (0.12)	0.07 (0.48)	0.23* (0.03)	0.07 (0.48)	0.15 (0.16)

\*=significant at .05 level

\*\*=significant at .01 level



As it turns out, citizen income does not have a relationship with any of the government service ratings. Citizen perception of services does not vary depending on the average income for the community. Council income too, does not impact many of the services measured. Only in the case of garbage service does council income seem to have an effect. The direction is negative; communities with higher average council incomes tend to report better garbage service. The final observation from table 15 is that a difference between citizen and council income has little relationship to government service ratings. Garbage is the only service category to display a relationship with the difference between average council and citizen incomes (.23, .03). Communities in which the average council income is higher than citizen income tend to show the best garbage ratings, followed by towns where incomes were equal. The poorest services occurred in those communities in which the average citizen income was higher than that of the council members. While income is significant in the case of garbage services, it is not otherwise helpful in predicting government service satisfaction.

### **6.5.3 Demographics Revisited**

In this section, two demographic characteristics were examined for their effect on citizen satisfaction. Correlations between citizen and council age and income show that neither of these characteristics substantially impact citizen satisfaction with government services. In addition, the differences between citizens and council members are not influential in terms of government service ratings. When examining age, only one relationship between average citizen age and garbage services stood out. The other demographic variable, income, is also related to few government service ratings. The average council income and difference between citizen and council incomes are both related

to garbage services. Demographic statistics have a few interesting relationships, especially for garbage and police services. Other than these few relationships, demographic statistics do not provide a useful measure for predicting citizen satisfaction with government services.

## CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

This paper has examined several factors for their impact on citizen satisfaction with government services. The citizen satisfaction measures include citizen ratings for quality of police services, conditions of streets, conditions of parks, water quality, fire protection, garbage collection, emergency response quality, and the overall quality of government services. These measures of citizen satisfaction are derived from survey data from the Rural Development Initiative, within the Department of Sociology at Iowa State University (RDI Homepage). Measures of citizen satisfaction were compared to local government factors; population, job orientation, perception of conflict, qualifications for office, and demographic characteristics. Measures of population included population and population change. Included in analysis of job orientation are council members' perception of role, margin of victory, time spent on the job, job satisfaction, and reasons for seeking office. Conflict on council was measured for its affect on citizen satisfaction. Qualification measures included duration of residence, tenure, education, and organizational attendance. Demographic characteristics included in analysis were age and income. Most of the independent variables were gleaned from the city council survey, but also included some citizen measures, including average age and income.

Several interesting themes resulted from the aforesaid analysis. First, population decline, while not as important as expected, is still influential in determining quality of government services as perceived by rural Iowa citizens. Measures of social connectivity, condition of local government, and demographics were not significant across all service types, and much of the significance appeared to be economic in nature. These two themes are expounded upon below.

### **7.1 Future for the state of Iowa**

The decline of population affects all aspects of life in rural Iowa. Population has a significant effect on the overall quality of life in rural Iowa communities. However, it does not have a significant relationship to many services provided by the government. In areas with declining population, community services see the brunt of this decline in quality of life. Both citizens and council members reported government services higher quality than community services. This is important to note, if one's goal is to help towns in Iowa survive. It implies efforts should be made to improve community services before government reform. Despite the general approval of government services, there are some differences that can be seen between small and large towns. Considering the sample as a whole, rural Iowa communities with a large population tend to report more favorably on overall government services than those towns with smaller populations. This is intuitive, as a larger community means a larger tax base and work force with which to provide services. Given that this is the trend, and that the population of many rural Iowa towns continues to decline, what approach can council members adopt to improve services despite population loss? It seems that government services are not the problem on which to focus. Government services were rated highly among Iowa citizens. Community services, on the other hand, are rated more poorly, and local government officials are aware of this decline.

Representatives in rural Iowa towns repeatedly report the importance of economic development in their communities. Despite their focus on economic development, this is typically assumed to be a community service. The RDI survey asks of the local economy within its community service category, and jobs and shopping facilities received the lowest ratings from citizens. (Ryan, Terry and Wuebke 1997).

Economic factors appear important in many relationships explored within this paper. Perceived conflicts over economics, economic reasons for running, and differences in income between council and citizens all have a positive relationship with citizen satisfaction ratings. As these variables increase, quality of services decreases in rural Iowa communities. First, conflicts among socio-economic groups and development interests are related to citizen ratings of government services. Increasing conflicts based on economic factors correlate to a decline in quality of services. In addition, running for personal economic reasons is also correlated with a decline in quality of services. As the difference in income between citizens and council increases, citizens report services less favorably. Finally, council members were asked to identify the two biggest problems facing their local government. Economic development was by far the most common answer for council members, supporting the idea that councils have become responsible for this community service.

The problem of service decline due to population loss will pose a challenge for rural city council members. According to the analysis on population, job orientation, perception of conflict, qualifications, and demographics, not many other factors significantly impact citizen satisfaction. Councils must work to increase or at least retain the populations of their communities. In order to do this, councils have begun to focus on economic development. While it is not the express responsibility of local government to encourage business growth in the area, it is an increasing need. As stated near the beginning of this paper, local governments have begun to feel pressure from citizens to provide the community economic growth.

Citizen satisfaction was the measure of job performance laid down at the beginning of this paper. If it is truly any measure of performance, Iowa city council members have done

well. For the most part, government services are viewed favorably by citizens. The characteristics council members are free to change only have a minimal effect on government service satisfaction. Satisfaction is largely due to environmental factors, including a shift in societal values from dependence on local retail and production. Economic development is the most important quality of life issue council members recognize. Rural Iowa representatives are examples of dutiful civil servants, carrying out the will of their constituency while the community faces continuing challenges.

## **7.2 Implications for representation**

This study examined several theories on the behavior of representatives and voters. Included were environmental impacts on representation, social connectivity, conditions of local government, and descriptive representation.

The first implication for the study of representation is the effect of population on citizen satisfaction. Overall services diminish with population, as reported by the citizen data. This is contrary to previous findings in which citizens responded favorably to smaller governments. (Oppenheimer 1996). This difference is due mostly to the circumstances of the two studies. Oppenheimer focused on representatives to the federal government, whose communication with constituents is quite different than that of city council members in towns ranging only to 10,000. Communication becomes more difficult as size of constituency increases, but there is a base under which communication does not vary in its ease. This is an important subject to political science, as future research might lend advice on a healthy size of constituency for efficient communication.

The second subject relevant to representational studies is the representatives' perception of their role as that of delegate or trustee. Previous studies have yielded no clear

answer on the proper role for representatives. Some claim that a representative should act as delegate, carrying the will of their constituents to the governing body. (McCrone and Kuklinski 1979). In order to do this, the representative must acknowledge this role of delegate, and a communication channel must be present between representative and constituent. Others believe that the proper role for a representative is that of trustee, either because they are better informed or because trustees have been shown to identify public opinion more accurately than self-reported delegates. (Miller and Stokes 1963). (Alpert 1979). According to the survey responses of rural Iowa city council members, the proper role for a representative is to adopt both roles. Council members were asked the importance of acting as delegate and the importance of acting as trustee, and the responses were significantly positively correlated. This indicates that council members do not perceive these roles as mutually exclusive. This is a valuable finding for the field of political science, for it shows that at least in small constituencies, representatives do not perceive a problem of mutual exclusion for the roles of delegate and trustee.

The final conclusion relevant to the study of representation deals with descriptive representation. Previous authors have concluded that the demographic make-up of a legislative body alters policy outcomes. (Bratton and Ray 2002). (Haider-Markel, Joslyn and Kniss 2000). (Herring 1990). These studies focused on female, gay, and black representatives and the resulting increase of legislation focused on gender, orientation, and race issues. Rural Iowa is home to very few open or visible minorities, and female representation stands at about 25% of responding council members. Important divisions in Iowa include variables like age, education, and income. Representation based on these variables has almost no significant effect on citizen satisfaction with government services.

Only in the case of income difference are any relationships significant, and then only garbage services. This indicates that representatives to the city council do not represent small factions of the population similar to themselves. This is due to the fact that the representatives studied by Bratton and Ray, Haider-Market et al., and Herring were members of larger governments. This is the arena in which issues of gender, race, and sexual orientation are raised. City councils deal with infrastructure and services, and do not have jurisdiction over socio-economic or education related issues.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

This study has covered much in regards to representation and quality of life in rural Iowa. Rural Iowa city council members do not vary much in their ability to service citizens based on population, social connectivity, conditions of local government, or demographic features. Iowa quality of life in very small communities is declining due to population loss, but government services remain stable. Most of this decline is due to economic conditions worsening, and while it is not the express responsibility of local government to solve economic development issues, addressing them is necessary for the survival of Iowa communities. Representatives to Iowa city councils are aware of this need, and are adding economic development to their list of responsibilities.

Iowa's people and their government are resilient, and have started to adapt to declining quality of life and population shifts. Small towns will continue to carry on as long as the remaining citizens and local governments live. New generations will slowly fill in rural areas when housing and space become rare commodities in urban areas. Iowa has space and community to offer, and the value of these things varies over time. Eventually the value



of space, privacy, and community will again rise, and Iowa communities will survive in the meantime.

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